

# Final Message

*Yogyakarta, July 29, 2011*

At the end of our days together, it is right to thank God for this opportunity to share, to reflect, and to plan our life as Dehonians on this huge continent.

In this gratitude we include the hospitality of the Indonesian Province and the spirit that reigned among us, the sharing of our life, dreams and concerns and your commitment to our mission in each of our entities and to the world.

## **1. A rich, diversified and challenging reality**

This week was, above all, an occasion to share our common vocation and our work for the sake of the Gospel in our Asian entities. We got a picture of a continent, which is experiencing *a period of growth* that raises our hopes, locally and throughout the Congregation.

Mainly young in their membership, the entities of Asia are showing growth, not only in numbers, but also in their capacity for formation, in the affirmation of their identity and in their generosity toward the mission in Asia and in the entire Congregation. Our members in Asia help us to enhance our formation, international collaboration and creativity for the Congregation, not only in Asia but also elsewhere.

We were not unaware of *the difficulties* that have imposed limits and a certain harassment to the life and mission of our confreres at this moment particularly in India but also elsewhere. The limitations to work freely and to announce the Gospel in some Asian countries are not new, but they form part of our everyday life. These factors present serious difficulties but they also mobilize us: in our attempts to understand this time, in our acceptance of the hope and suffering, often inherent to the service of the Gospel, in our experience of the same confidence and trust of the apostle Paul: "I am content with weaknesses...for the sake of Christ; for whenever I am weak, then I am strong. (2 Cor 12:10)

In fact, it is not the external factors that endanger our life and mission. Times of difficulty can become also times of grace, if they unite us around our vocation and our mission, if they allow us to discover new capabilities and personal gifts; if they teach us to be more fraternal and ready to share responsibilities; and, above all, if they lead us to understand that our projects are not ours but God's, who can draw good from evil and who shows the strength of his Spirit, also in suffering and death.

In our days together, we were made aware once again of the *diversity of cultures, histories and traditions* in each of your countries. They also allow us to understand differently our common spiritual heritage and to find a new expression of our charism and mission in the Church. These are precious moments allowing us to open our hearts to the richness and possibilities hidden in difference. Our ability to live with other people and to open our hearts to other cultures and traditions begins within us. It is a gift to let go of our own ego, to under-

stand the other's point of view and to collaborate with them, without pretending that they are just other ways of expressing the same values as ours.

## 2. A meeting guided by the concept of dialogue

The meeting unfolded under the umbrella of the notion of *dialogue*. The concluding text presents it as a threefold dialogue - with the poor, with the people of different religions and with the diversity of cultures - inviting us to let our life be enlightened by this triple action. This is not a new principle that we are introducing only now just to adapt to the present reality in Asia. In fact, these conclusions come directly from the gospel and from our own spiritual heritage.

Openness to dialogue within a diversified world is very much *in line with the spirit of the mission of Jesus*. The Father sent Him to the world not to condemn the world but to save it, because God loved the world so much, in spite of its weakness, corruption and sin.

To this world Jesus came and made himself similar to us in all things except sin. He was made sin for us, living our condition, in order to fill us with the gracious and saving love of God. In this endless love of God there are no favorites; it reaches out to all in their differences of faith, traditions and cultures, but also in the urgency of the announcement of the Gospel of salvation.

We are *called to be as respectful as Jesus was*, even to sinners and enemies, because is in this way that the Father loves the world. Like the apostle Paul, we feel compelled to announce with all faithfulness and courage the truth about God, who is love. This is the specific meaning of reparation: to accept to be part and to carry the burden of this world, in its beauty and capacities, but equally in its fragility, corruption and sin.

The triple dialogue expresses this fundamental attitude for the mission:

The *dialogue with the poor* is the expression of the love of God for us, starting with the little ones and with those who have no power. In this way we show his love and powerful care for the humble and the hungry ones of the earth. The poor are not only those who do not have daily bread for themselves and for their families, but also those who do not have access to the bread of education, friendship, dignity or liberty; and ultimately, those who don't have the gift of the relationship with the love of God. These are for us the motive for our attention, commitment and active solidarity.

The *dialogue with other religious traditions* asks us to accept humbly that, in spite of the revelation in Christ, we are just beginning to learn how to understand God and to accept His invitation to dialogue. The dialogue comes also from the conviction that the call to faith in Jesus Christ can never be an object of manipulation, or violence. It is a work of the Spirit and is able to grow only in the fruitful and peaceful field of liberty.

The *dialogue with the cultures* is the first expression of the incarnation. It is a condition for being understood and it is the way to reach the heart of the persons. It requires from us the same "kenosis" as that of Christ, in order to make ourselves free from our personal "richness" but rich with others, so that the Gospel can take flesh in every culture.

### 3. The accent in formation

Specifically in relation to our Dehonian presence in Asia, formation has been *foremost in our attention*. As I said at the beginning of the Asia Conference, this point is crucial for developing and deepening our life and for our mission.

A special focus is placed upon the *collaboration among the Asian Entities*. It allows for a blending of our Dehonian identity and culture in Asia and for creating the conditions to work together in the future. At the practical level, it is also a way of dealing with the lack of prepared formators and of stimulating the sharing of experiences and the solidarity among the entities. This sector remains open to the creativity and the planning and organization of the different parts of the Congregation. In fact, from the initial formation to ongoing formation and specialization, the range of possible initiatives for growth and unity of the Dehonians in Asia are multiple. The Superiors of the Asian entities have already begun to look more carefully at its possibilities. I hope that this attention can continue and be shared in the other sectors of our life.

The reference to *Manila* as a center for ongoing and specialized formation is something to be considered not only by the District of Philippines, but also by the other entities. From the side of the General Administration, I will fully support your efforts, counting on the initiatives of the District and the collaboration of the other Asian confreres.

### 4. The need for continental/international collaboration

I would like to consider *the continental sharing and collaboration* as a prolongation of the dialogue. It is part of the consequence of being the Church and of our belonging to the Congregation. In a world of globalization with all its divisions and exclusions, we see in our collaboration and sharing a basic witness to the work of the Spirit who unites people from all nations and cultures to be about the project of God for a better humanity.

Our project of continental collaboration is done in the face of *a divided and often closed world*, which does not allow the free exchange of people. Under such conditions, our project of international communities must find ways of coping with these limitations, even if it means a more temporary exchange of persons and short-term international initiatives for formation and specific missions. We do so, so that the spirit of communion and the sharing of our abilities will go ahead among us.

This will also allow you to remain *open to the entire Congregation* and to make a contribution with your life, cultural experiences and to the reflection and the mission to which you have been called.

### 5. The continuation of the mission in Asia

Mission, correctly understood, bears the *face of dialogue*. In fact, it is first of all God's offering of dialogue with humanity. Of this ministry, we are only ambassadors, as Paul says. We are collaborators in the work of reconciliation that comes from the love of God (2Co 5:18-19). In this process, the international composition of the mission is a sign and a way of witnessing to the universality of the Gospel and to our spirituality.

With this in mind, I strongly support the request of the Superior of the Indonesian Province to have confreres from other entities take part in the new *mission in Taiwan*.

The planning for the *new presence in Asia* (...) was given a significant amount of time during our meeting and caught the sympathy and support of all the participants. We look at this mission with humility, generosity and openness of heart, asking the Lord of the mission to guide and make us ready to respond to this challenge. The Superiors of Asian entities and the General Administration are working together to look for contacts and to prepare this mission. In this the Asian confreres are the first to be invited to take part.

These kinds of missions represent a challenge for each one of us, but first of all for the confreres of Asia. We are looking for persons who will take part in it, who have the maturity to face its difficulties, who have the ability to learn a difficult language and above all, who are ready to respond to the call of God.

## 6. A word of gratitude

- ❖ To each one of you for your active and fraternal participation.
- ❖ To the Indonesian Province for its generous and wonderful hospitality, for the organization and for the logistics of the meeting.
- ❖ To those who prepared the meeting and were at our service during these days: the facilitator; the steering committee, the secretary, and the many other services.
- ❖ I would like to thank especially the students of scholasticate of Yogyakarta for their service to our group. You have a joyful sense of hope and service. It is fully in line with our vocation and style of life. We hope you and the other students have found through your participation the inspiration for a fuller insertion into the life and mission of the Congregation.
- ❖ We are equally grateful to the friendly and efficient “minute takers.” Thank you for your work. May the Lord bless you for this beautiful service and help you to use wisely your abilities. We pray that you will be able to build an happy future for yourselves and to work toward a new world.
- ❖ Finally, we are very grateful to the Carolus Borromeus Sisters for their fantastic hospitality, for the creation of these peaceful and inspiring surroundings. It was a great support for our work. But through your excellent kitchen, you may well have contributed to the elevation of the weight of the Asian sector of the Congregation.

To the Lord, in whose name we began this meeting, we entrust its fruit and working out of the recommendations that we have approved. May His Spirit open our hearts to His living and creative word, so that, like Mary, we can reflect upon it in our hearts and make it become flesh in our fraternal life and mission.