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Vol. XX, No. 8
August 2005

PHILIPPINES: MAJOR RELIGIOUS SUPERIORS TAKE ON COMMUNICATION

The Association of Major Religious Superiors of the Philippines (AMRSP) organized a two-day seminar-workshop on social communication at St. Paul's University, Quezon City August 9-10. Some 40 participants representing 21 different religious congregations attended the workshop whose theme is "Communicating Christ in a New Communication Culture." After listening to talks of five media experts, the participants agreed that members of religious congregations will benefit from media literacy. But more than skills for critical media consumption, the participants felt the need to have the communicating disposition and attitude of Jesus Christ. In a final statement, the participants resolved to network with existing Church media organizations like Signis Philippines and the Philippine Association for Media Education (PAME). They also urged to look at the existing structures of religious communities for possible consolidation of communication efforts. The participants also recommended media education programs for religious formators and the harnessing of communication talents among their members. The seminar-workshop was organized by the AMRSP secretariat, FABC-Office of Social Communication, and the National Office of Mass Media (NOMM) under Fr. James Reuter.

HONG KONG: CHURCH SPONSORS UNIVERSITY'S CATHOLIC RESEARCH CENTER

Hong Kong Catholic diocese has reached an agreement with the Chinese University of Hong Kong on August 4 to establish a center for continued research on Catholicism. The diocese also pledged to donate HK\$7 million (US\$900,866) to the university to set up the Catholic Research Centre in its Department of Cultural and Religious Studies. The research centre will focus on the history of Catholicism, its spread in China over the centuries, its conceptual development and its relationships with society and local culture. Active research on religions can help promote interreligious dialogue, Father Edward Chau Kingfun, chairperson of the Diocesan Commission for Interreligious Dialogue, said. The only researcher on Catholicism in the university before the research centre was conceived was Jesuit Father Bernard Joseph Shields. He died last April. (UCAN)

INDIA: CHURCH MAGAZINE MADE POPULAR BY FIGHTING FOR SOCIAL CAUSES TURNS 50

"Suvārtha" (good news), a Marathi-language monthly publication of Vasai diocese, celebrated its 50th anniversary in a August 14 function held in Vasai, about 1,120 kilometers southwest of New Delhi. Several local leaders in the diocese attended the function, which exalted the magazine's 50 years effort to protect drinking water and the environment, promote social justice and religious freedom. From a four-page newsletter, the now 64-page magazine has about 13,000 circulation each month. (UCAN)

JAPANESE SCULPTOR FOUND FAITH BY STUDYING ANTONI GAUDI

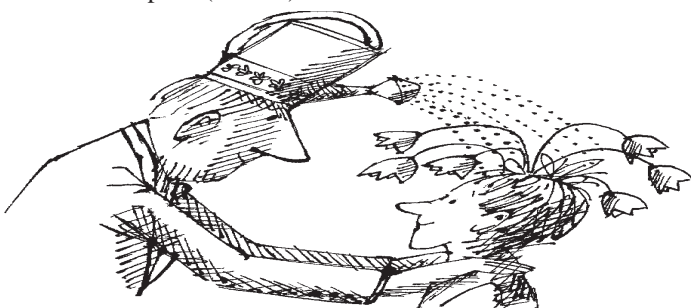
A famous Japanese sculptor Etsuro Sotoo testified in a Communion and Liberation meeting held in Rimini, Italy August 21 that he found faith while studying the works of Spanish architect Antoni Gaudi. On a visit to Barcelona in 1978, Sotoo was fascinated by the Church of the Holy Family, the unfinished masterpiece of Gaudi (1852-1926) whose cause for beatification is underway. According to the Japanese sculptor, the imposing character of the church is not meant to be a display of the proud power of the artist but a work dedicated and maintained by God, of whom Gaudi regarded himself a collaborator. "Gaudi's architecture indicates, it does not oblige, it is something human. This is also Jesus' way. He does not oblige us to do anything, but guides us," Sotoo said. Sotoo who was baptized in 1989 said that since his conversion, his way of working has become "easier and more secure" and fills him with "pleasure and freedom." (ZENIT)

KOREA: EVANGELIZATION ON THE STREETS

A team of 26 newly ordained priests of Taegu archdiocese embarked on a "Mission on the Streets" movements in the summer months, giving talks in public places and distributing information on Church activities, Jesus Christ and his message. The mission is proving to be fruitful, says one priest-member of the group. Meetings are attended by an average number of 200 people. (FIDES)

CAMBODIA: PARISH FOSTERS TRADITIONAL DANCE AMONG RURAL CHILDREN

A parish in Taken, some 290 kilometers northwest of Phnom Penh, is helping keep Khmer traditional dance alive by training rural young people to perform it during Church feasts. The parish project currently has 43 students, grouped according to age. Lessons include folk music, classical Khmer songs and traditional dances for Church feasts. But teachers are also creating new dances for use in the church. Cambodia was virtually destroyed during the brutal rule of the Khmer Rouge from 1975 to 1979. The radical communist group tried to reinvent Cambodian society from Year Zero but although they did not succeed, much was lost. The parish project is an attempt to help save Cambodian traditions. (UCAN)



INDIA: SCHOLARS ASSESS JESUIT MISSIONER'S EVANGELIZING METHODS 400 YEARS AGO

Some 40 scholars and specialists discussed "Dialectic of Religion and Culture: Robert de Nobili's Critique of Cultural Nationalism" in a three-day seminar in Chennai, capital of Tamil Nadu state, August 2-4. Jesuit Father Robert de Nobili is credited with "Indianizing" the Church, finding a Church image for India. That helped the Church develop in interior Tamil Nadu. Before the Italian missionary arrived, evangelization was limited to the region's coastal area. To help Christianity become acceptable to Indians, de Nobili learned local languages, including the Sanskrit used in Hindu scriptures, and tried to present Christian faith in India without demanding cultural changes. He also studied Indian religions and scriptures and adapted many of their elements to Christianity. One of the aims of the seminar is to encourage further research on the Church in its present-day context where religious fundamentalism is a reality, an organizer said. (UCAN)

TAIWAN: TAIPEI CHRISTIAN BOOK FAIR

The Chinese Christian Literature Association (CCLA) organized the first Taipei Christian Book Fair from April 27 to May 1 at the Pacific Commercial Center. The book fair with theme "Reading: Beautify Your Life" aimed at building relationships between publishers and churches. Participants included publishers from Taiwan, Hong Kong and North America. The event demonstrated that publishers are a logical resource for Christians seeking materials for evangelism and training, and that books are effective spiritual teachers. Because of their success, the CCLA plans to hold the Christian Book Fair annually, and to give CCLA Gold Medallion Book Awards every two years to encourage quality Christian publications. (INTERLIT)

INDIA: DELHI ARCHDIOCESE USES 'BOLLYWOOD' FORMULA TO BATTLE AIDS, VIOLENCE

Delhi archdiocese has completed shooting the movie "Aisa Kyon Hota Hai" (why does this happen?) that uses a popular Hindi film formula to champion social causes. The "Bollywood" formula consisting of song-and-dance numbers is used in the film to deliver serious social messages about the need for greater AIDS awareness and communal harmony. The movie tries to highlight the need for spousal fidelity and maintaining sectarian harmony where many minority faiths coexist with Hinduism, the dominant religion in India. Movies are considered affordable entertainment throughout India, where about 12 million people are estimated to attend cinemas each day. India produces about 800 films a year, and roughly 200 of them are in Hindi, India's national language. The Church-sponsored film is expected to be released in October. (UCAN)

MACAU: CARITAS-RUN THEATER HOPES TO STIMULATE YOUTH CULTURAL ACTIVITIES

Caritas Macau re-opened a former cinema hall into a performing arts theater on August 2 to help promote cultural development. Part of the program is also to set formation activities to gather especially young people and develop a sense of community among them, says Caritas Macau Secretary General Paul Pun Chi-meng. The theater is named after Portuguese Saint John de Brito and the late Clementina Leitao Ho, wife of Macau gambling tycoon Stanley HoHung-sun. The theater is located in the northern part of the peninsula where one-third of Macau's population lives. It is adjacent to Escola Sao Joao De Brito (St. John de Brito) which Caritas Macau also runs. (UCAN)

KOREA: BISHOPS CONSIDER MEDIA RELATIONS OFFICE

During a May 17 meeting, the Korean bishops' Permanent Council has asked their social communications committee to explore the possibility of establishing an office for public relations in the Korean church structure. The executive secretary of the bishops' social communications committee then conducted a survey August 10-29 and found that, for reporters, Catholicism is the most difficult religion to cover mainly because access to Church sources is not easy and Korean Catholic clergy do not want media exposure. The committee expects to submit a detailed plan for setting up a media relations office by September. (UCAN)

INDIA: BENGALI CHANNEL TAKES PRIEST TO ANCHOR PEACE SERIES

"Tara News" (Star News) channel based in Kolkata has launched a half-hour weekly series entitled "Amrita Katha" August 7 featuring Salesian Father Robin Gomes, Rector of Nitika Don Bosco, as anchor. The series discusses issues like violence, terrorism and militancy, and hopes to evoke reflections on socio-cultural issues among viewers. The series is aired every Sunday, and for the month of August the theme "The Great Value of Peace Must Replace Terrorism" was chosen. (SAR NEWS)

CHINA: CHURCH ATTRACTS KOREAN CATHOLICS AS 'HOLY PLACE'

The Immaculate Conception Church, popularly known as "Jinjiaxiang Church" and one of the oldest churches in Shanghai diocese, has become a "holy place" for Korean Catholics because the first Korean priest, Saint Andrew Kim Tae-gon, was ordained there in 1845. He was martyred in Korea the following year at age 25 after renouncing ancestor veneration at the instruction of the bishop of Beijing. The Church is located in Pudong, a coastal area which has been a Catholic stronghold for several centuries. The original Church stood till March 2001 and a new site was erected about one kilometer to the south west. But despite its relocation, Jinjiaxiang Church continues to attract Catholics, particularly Korean pilgrims. Pope John Paul II canonized Saint Andrew in 1984 as one of the 103 Korean Martyrs. (SE)

INDIA: GLOBALIZATION AND MEDIA ARE POWERFUL MEANS TO CREATE NEW SOCIETY

The Family Commission of the Conference of Catholic Bishops' of India organized a four-day seminar in Old Goa, August 12-15, on the theme "Family Spirituality to Build a New Spirituality." Some 48 participants came from southern India and other parts of the country. In a keynote address on August 12, Goa and Daman Archbishop Filipe Neri Ferrao said globalization and modern media are closely linked as powerful means for ushering in a new society. Recalling Pope John Paul II's teaching on family, the archbishop stressed the need for families to draw inner strength from the Holy Eucharist. The archbishop also urged couples to share in the Church's life and mission by helping form a community of persons, serving life, and participating in human development efforts. (SAR NEWS)

INDIA: KANNADA TV CHANNEL ATTACKS PRIESTS

The half-hour serial "Crime Story" aired over Udaya TV, a private Kannada television channel, made serious allegations against priests and the Catholic Church complete with video footages apparently spurred by a couple with personal grievance towards some Franciscan clergy. Archbishop Bernard Moras of Bangalore has called for a discussion among priests and Catholic laity concerning the allegations which shocked several Christians in Karnataka. (SAR NEWS)