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JAPAN: CATHOLIC TV PROGRAM ENDS AFTER 39 YEARS

The weekly program "Kokoro no Tomoshihi" (Light of the Heart) which has a 39-year history of presenting Catholicism to a broad section of the public in Japan ceased broadcasting on March 30. The television program lost much of its audience eight years ago, when a major television network that had been airing the 15-minute program stopped doing so. Since then the program has been available only on local or satellite channels but at a 5:00 am timeslot with very few viewers. Maryknoll Father James Hyatt, founder of "Yoki Bokusha Undo" (YBU, Good Shepherd Movement) which produces the program, said when Nippon Television Network (NTV) decided to stop broadcasting "Light of the Heart" eight years ago it lost its access to audiences in Fukuoka, Hiroshima, Nagoya, Osaka and Tokyo. YBU, however, will continue to produce radio programs as well as weekly brochures for parishes, and will maintain its Internet website at <http://www.tomoshihi.or.jp> (UCANEWS)



PHILIPPINES: SOUTHERN DIOCESES PLAN COORDINATED MEDIA

APOSTOLATE TO BOOST EVANGELIZATION

More than 40 directors of Church media centers and ministries, radio and TV station managers, and editors in the ecclesiastical province of Davao, covering four dioceses, gathered for a three-day summit on "Has the Catholic Media Failed?" March 8-10 in Mati Town, Davao. In his talk on "Stewardship and Ownership of Media," Bishop Guillermo Afaible of Digos challenged participants to "move toward a more unified, centralized management of Church media" and bridge "fragmentation" of the Church's ministry. Bishop Afaible also referred to a report in the May 2005 issue of "Impact" Magazine that described the Catholic media network in the country as a "sleeping giant" because it is "diverse," "fragmented" and "not appropriately organized or centralized." The report said only six of the country's 86 Church jurisdictions have a diocesan newspaper or regular news publication. Meanwhile, Bishop Patricio Alo of Mati, a member of the bishops' Commission on Social Communication, said the "media are so important for evangelization." Bishop Alo manages a diocesan TV station and a cable TV company in Mati. The participants resolved to collaborate in evangelizing the easternmost Philippine Church region while addressing particular local needs. Davao City lies 965 kilometers southeast of Manila. (UCANEWS)

PHILIPPINES: CHURCH RADIO NETWORK LAUNCH SIMULTANEOUS BROADCAST

The Philippine Federation of Catholic Broadcasters known as the Catholic Media Network (CMN) started on May 1 a one-hour "Veritas Pilipinas" program over a radio channel of Dream Satellite, the same company that carries Manila archdiocese's "TV Maria" station since January 1. Fr Francis Lucas, CMN president and chief executive, said the program will focus on news and public affairs. Broadcasts originating from Radio Veritas (Philippines) 846 station in Quezon City will be transmitted simultaneously by the 48 Catholic radio station-members of CMN. (UCANEWS)

INDIA: CARDINAL DIAS DEPLORES ANTI-CHRISTIAN FILMS, LAUNCHES PRAYER CRUSADE

Cardinal Ivan Dias, Archbishop of Bombay, has deplored films that offend Christian principles and practices and urged parishioners to "earnestly implore" divine forgiveness on people behind them. In an April 30 circular sent to all parishes in Bombay, the prelate also called for a "prayer crusade" to help enlighten those behind the production of anti-Christian films. On May 12, the Catholic Social Forum has called for a "fast unto death" against the release of controversial films "The Da Vinci Code" and "Tickle My Funny Bone" in Indian cinema houses. (THE HERALD)

SINGAPORE: YOUTH STAGE RALLY ON ENCOUNTERING JESUS

Over 700 young people, priests, nuns and seminarians attended a "Crossroads Rally" at St Joseph's Institution Performing Arts Centre March 11 which featured a drama skit on how a former party girl, a self-proclaimed "ah beng" (Chinese man in early teens to late 20s often stereotypically portrayed to be anti-intellectual, superficial and materialistic and shallow), and an ex-lesbian encountered Jesus in their lives. The cast explored real issues faced by today's youth and offers hope for a change in the way they live. The evening accompanied by song and dance climaxed with the exposition of the Blessed Sacrament. (CN)

INDIA: MUSIC VIDEO ON JESUS

The first music video on Jesus in Bengali language was released on May 9 at Don Bosco School Park Circus, Kolkata marking the 145th birth anniversary of Bengal's poet laureate Rabindranath Tagore. The event was a gathering of Christians and well-wishers from other faiths, as well as Bishops of Bengal, both Catholic and Church of North India. The entire crew of both the audio and video production was honored. "This popular production could prove to be an ideal medium to present the life and message of Jesus to the 175 million Bengali language speakers in India and Bangladesh," says president of Signis Bengal and the video's producer Salesian Fr C.M. Paul. The video is based on Nitika Don Bosco's Millennium double album "Manobtrata Jisu" (Jesus the Savior). (NITIKA)

INDIA: SPANISH MISSIONER MAKES SUNDAY READINGS MORE ACCESSIBLE

Salesian Fr John Larrea's three-volume work entitled "The Word of God" have become popular with missionaries and catechists in northeastern India and beyond. It comprises Sunday Mass readings accompanied by Fr Larrea's interpretations, corresponding to the Catholic Church's three-year cycle of Sunday readings from the New Testament. The commentaries include explanations for catechists using local examples. Fr Larrea, 85 has worked in northeast India since 1948. He said he decided to interpret the Bible readings for tribal people after realizing that their languages do not have words for many abstract concepts in Western theology. (UCANEWS)

KOREA: BUDDHIST DANCE RITUAL PERFORMED AT CATHEDRAL

Buddhists were invited by Seoul archdiocese's cable TV station Pyeonghwa Broadcasting Corporation (PBC) to perform the "Yeongsanjae" ritual at Coste Hall in Myongdong Cathedral on April 19. The performance was part of a musical program for an audience of about 200 Buddhists and Catholics. "Buddhists and Catholics have exchanged congratulatory messages on the occasions of Vesak, Easter and Christmas in recent years," program producer Michael Sung said. "I hope this will be another chance to acknowledge and understand other religions," he added. Yeongsanjae, a local tradition, re-enacts Buddha's teaching of the Lotus Sutra some 2,600 years ago. Commonly performed with the intention to ease the passage of the dead into paradise, the ritual has been called an "Intangible Cultural Asset" by the Korean government. (UCANEWS)

INDIA: SANTHOME CATHEDRAL ATTAINS NATIONAL SHRINE STATUS

The Catholic Bishops' Conference of India (CBCI) has declared Santhome Cathedral a "national shrine." It was built in 1896 over the tomb of St Thomas, who brought Christianity to India in 52 AD. The basilica is one of three basilicas in the world to be built over the tombs of Christ's disciples and is of international historic interest. As a national shrine, it will attract more visitors, said Fr Lawrence Raj, rector, who renovated the basilica. Church authorities have applied to the Vatican for "international status" and is likely to receive it. (TNL)

VIETNAM: YOUNG CATHOLICS TOUCHED BY JESUS' PASSION, VOW TO IMPROVE SELVES

Some 7,000 young Catholics from various parishes of Ho Chi Minh archdiocese attended a six-hour Lenten gathering on April 8 featuring cultural performance, passion play, Mass and confessions. The young audience were particularly touched by the dramatic passion play, acted out mostly by young people, and vowed to change their lifestyles. (UCANEWS)

NEW HONG KONG CARDINAL ON THE AIR TO CHINA

Immediately after the sixth Chinese cardinal concelebrated Mass with the Pope and his newly installed peers on March 25, Bishop Joseph Zen Ze-kiun broadcast a Mass in Mandarin, which was beamed into China by Vatican Radio. He told his listening audience that Pope Benedict XVI has appointed him to the College of Cardinals as a sign of appreciation and love for all Chinese Catholics. The new cardinal also said that he hopes to contribute to a better understanding between the Holy See and the Beijing government. He asked the listening audience to pray for and obey the Pope as well as keep the Church united, bring harmony into society and help to develop the country. (SE)

INDIA: CATHOLIC PRESS DISCUSSES 'STING JOURNALISM'

The Indian Catholic Press Association (ICPA) organized the 12th National Journalism Conference and Award Ceremony at St Francis Xavier's Girl School in Bangalore April 28. The theme "Sting Journalism and the Future of Media" was expounded by guest speaker Tarun Tejpal, editor-in-chief of "Tehelka" magazine. Mr Tejpal told some 250 participants that "sting journalism should expose corruption in high places and ensure a moral code of conduct among public servants." He said journalists should have the ability to withstand the pressures of the powerful and report without fear. Media should be the conscience of the nation, Mr Tejpal added. This year's ICPA awards went to C.K. George of SAR News for best reporter, Subhad Prasad Charles of Varanassi for best Hindi journalism, Ajith Lawrence for best reportage on scheduled castes, and Vincent D'Souza of "Mylapore Times" for best community journalism. The Lifetime Achievement went to Pauline Father Alphonso Elengikal. (THE HERALD)

Asian Mission Congress

October 18-22, 2006
Lotus Pang Suan
Kaew Hotel
Chiang Mai, Thailand

THEME:

**The Story
Of Jesus In Asia:
A Celebration of
Faith and Life**



To register, visit
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to your national
Pontifical Mission
Society (PMS) director

INDONESIA: MULTI-FAITH RALLY UNITES PEOPLE TO HELP THREE CONDEMNED CATHOLICS

About 20,000 people of various faiths gathered at a Catholic high school in Atambua April 27 to pray, rally and appeal for the release of three Catholic men condemned to death for riots that killed hundreds in 2000. Among them were representatives of the youth wing of Nahdlatul Ulama, Indonesia's largest Muslim organization. Divine Word Bishop Antonius Pain Ratu of Atambua said the peaceful rally aimed to touch the hearts of law enforcers so that they would work for justice for small people. (CN)

SINGAPORE: JOHN PAUL II BRONZE-STATUE TO MARK 25 YEARS OF SINGAPORE-VATICAN DIPLOMATIC RELATIONS

The Archdiocese of Singapore dedicates a life-size bronze statue of Pope John Paul II to mark 25 years of diplomatic relations between the Holy See and the Republic of Singapore this year. Cardinal Renato Raffaele Martino, who represented the Holy See at the commencement of the diplomatic relations with Singapore in 1981, returns to Singapore as the special envoy of Pope Benedict XVI to celebrate the occasion. (CN)

11th annual FABC-OSC Bishops' Meet

Theme> "Managing Communications for Bishops' Conferences"
Bukal ng Tipan Activity Center, Taytay Rizal, Philippines
November 20-25, 2006