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## **PHILIPPINES: CHURCH-MEDIA FORUM CALLS FOR CREATIVE MEDIA USE**

A forum entitled "Media Power in the Church: Do We Have It?" was organized by the Commission on Social Communications of Jaro archdiocese in central Philippines and the radio apostolate called "Katesismo sa Kahanginan" (catechism on air) on March 12 in Iloilo City. Speaking at the forum was the director of Communications Foundation for Asia (CFA), Ms Teresita Hermano, who challenged Catholic media workers to get creative and compete with the fantasy and action shows that dominate local television. Hermano cited the January 2007 Nielsen study which pointed out that the top 20 TV programs Filipinos watched in January were fantasy, action and drama series or soap operas. She said Church media productions "cannot compete" with commercial products in attractiveness and impact. But the Church could use its extensive experience in values education and pastoral work to upgrade Philippine media. (UCANEWS)

## **INDIA: SIGNIS-INDIA ASSEMBLY EXPRESS CONCERN OVER YOUNG WORKERS IN CALL CENTERS**

Some 80 members of Signis-India met in Bangalore, southern India March 16-18 to discuss the role Catholic media could play in helping young workers in call centers or round-the-clock offices, usually outsourced by international firms, that provide technical support for customers and clients worldwide via telephone. Fr Dominic Emmanuel, president of Signis-India, said the meeting made the Catholic media people "aware of problems" of call center workers and helped them develop empathy with the workers. The Divine Word priest said that Signis-India would develop appropriate programs aiming at personal, social and spiritual development of young call center workers in collaboration with the bishops' youth commission, Indian Catholic Youth Movement, parents, social workers, psychiatrists and other groups. (UCANEWS)

## **THAILAND: CONVERTS FIND FAITH VIA MEDIA**

Twenty three catechumens from Bangkok archdiocese were baptized Catholics at a solemn rite held in Assumption Cathedral. They were all adults who attended a special program called "Rite of Christian Initiation of Adults" (RCIA) headed by Fr Vira Aphonratana, secretary general of Thailand's Catholic Commission for Catechetical Education. Fr Aphonratana said "each year there are about 200 converted Catholics among 70 parishes within Bangkok archdiocese." Some of them, he said, learn about the RCIA through the website (<http://www.catholic.or.th>), or "Udomsarn" Catholic weekly or monthly magazine. Some are persuaded by Catholic friends to attend the Sunday Bible class before entering the RCIA program. Both website and periodical are maintained by the Catholic Social Communications of Thailand (CSCT) headed by diocesan Father Vorayuth Kitbamrung. (ASIANEWS)

## **KOREA: ONLINE BIBLE-TYPING OPENS NEW CHAPTERS OF FAITH**

The Bible typing program found in "Good News," the largest Catholic Internet portal in South Korea (<http://www.catholic.or.kr>) has opened new chapters of faith according to individuals who took part in it. A 45-year-old housewife said the Bible typing program has brought her back to the Church after a lapse of six years. Father Patrick Joo Ho-sik, director of Seoul archdiocese's Systems and Information Department, who owns the "Good News" portal said the program launched April 20 last year has helped local Catholics familiarize themselves with the Bible. But beyond that, it has also brought Catholics closer to each other. In Songsan Church, in Uijeongbu diocese, Fr John Bosco Chi Cheong-tae said the program has brought together 70 parishioners. Aside from their meeting online, the parishioners also come for offline discussions enriching their faith and community life further. Fr Chi calls the Internet Bible typing "a pastoral ministry relevant to today's modern high-tech world." (UCANEWS)



## **INDIA: PROTEST OVER DISCOVERY CHANNELS DOCUMENTARY ON JESUS**

Catholic Secular Forum (CSF), a Catholic group based on Bombay archdiocese, India, has launched a protest over Discovery Channel's airing of a documentary entitled "The Lost Tomb of Jesus." The documentary suggests that a 2,000-year-old Jerusalem tomb could have once held the remains of Jesus Christ and his alleged family. CSF General Secretary Joseph Dias said the documentary seeks to "confuse and confound the masses." The Discovery Channel aired the program internationally on March 4 but did not schedule for broadcast in India. CSF said its protest forced the TV channel to stop airing in India. (UCANEWS)

## **KOREA: BISHOPS TO SHUTDOWN PERIODICAL, PASTORAL INSTITUTE**

A press release issued at the end of the March 12-15 plenary meeting of the Catholic Bishops' Conference of Korea, held in Seoul, announced the closure of a 40-year-old publication and an associated pastoral institute which used to disseminate information on the Second Vatican Council. The bishops stopped "Samok" (pastoral review) monthly after the April issue and dissolved the Pastoral Institute of Korea, which edited the periodical. Samok's significance diminished as seminaries throughout Korea established their own theological periodicals. The monthly was also facing financial constraints. (UCANEWS)

## **INDIA: A PAT ON THE BACK IS BETTER THAN A MAIL IN INBOX, PRIEST TELLS JOURNALIST**

At a conference of Catholic journalists organized by the Indian Catholic Press Association (ICPA), Father Adolf Washington said “Don’t avoid personal contacts with people in the pretext of staying in touch with them through Internet and email.” Today’s ministry should really consider the possibilities of digital communications for pastoral work, the vice president of ICPA said. “You can inform through websites and blogs, counsel people in distress through Internet voice and webcam, collaborate and network with people and organizations, communicate with your flick even when you are on the move. And to start your own website, you don’t even need to spend anything as there are several free web domains like wetpaint.com, blockstar.com or bravenet.com to name a few,” the priest added. On the cost factor, the priest cited the possibility to acquire free computers from MNCs (multi-national companies) and BPOs (Business Process Outsourcing) that give-away every year to socially productive organizations. (SARNEWS)

## **THAILAND: RADIO BROADCAST REACHES OUT TO HILLTRIBE PEOPLE THRU SMOKE WARNING AND EVANGELIZATION**

Radio Veritas Asia-Hmong service aired smoke warnings mixed with evangelization on March 15 in view of the worst smoke pollution ever experienced in northern Thailand. The daily broadcast from Manila which is directed to Hmong listeners inhabiting the region typically consists of Hmong news, international news as well as commentaries on the Bible and the Catholic faith. But because of the thick smoke blanketing the area in March, causing illnesses and the Thai government to declare the north an emergency zone, the station editors decided to include commentaries on culture and nature. The pall of smoke was partly attributed to the “slash and burn” agriculture practiced by Hmong farmers, traditionally clearing land by burning dry grass, bushes and trees. (UCANEWS)

## **HONG KONG: SIGNIS AWARD GOES TO RUSSIAN MOVIE**

This year’s Signis Award at the April 3 Hong Kong International Film Festival (HKIFF) was conferred to Russian movie “The Italian” directed by Andrei Kravchuk. A special Signis commendation was also given to the film “Fresh Air” directed by Agness Kocsis (Hungary) and “The Island” directed by Pavel Lounguine (Russia). The Signis Jury who scrutinized this year’s festival entries was composed of Jesuit Father Jerry Martinson of Kuangchi Program Service (Taipei), Samson Irudayam of Malaysia, and Catherine Wong of Signis-Hong Kong. Present at the award ceremony was Bishop John Tong of Hong Kong, board member of the FABC-Office of Social Communication. Signis is the world Catholic organization for broadcasting and cinema. (SIGNIS)

## **INDIA: TAMIL EDITORS VOW TO MONITOR HATE CAMPAIGN AGAINST CHURCH**

Catholic journalists present at the Indian Catholic Press Association (ICPA) assembly in Chennai April 12 promised to keep watch on the anti-Church campaign being perpetrated by certain newspapers and television channels in India. The Tamil Nadu Bishops’ Council Commission for Social Communication has also organized a “Media Watch Forum” which, along with the editor-members of ICPA, will document and archive hate messages directed to the Church. There have been known cases of the media making false allegations of scandals in the Church in order to “defame and disfigure the image of the Church, said Dr L. Anandam, editor of the Tamil magazine “Nam Vazhyu” (our life). (SAR NEWS)

## **PHILIPPINES: BISHOPS GET INTO ‘YOUTUBE’ TO SPREAD THE WORD**

The Catholic Bishops’ Conference of the Philippines (CBCP) has started a video blog on April 2 via the popular video-sharing website, YouTube, to reach out to the tech-savvy faithful, particularly the young. Nine short video clips on Church teachings and Lenten reflections were posted on Holy Week at ([www.youtube.com/cbcpmmedia](http://www.youtube.com/cbcpmmedia)), “it being the appropriate time to issue short catechesis on the liturgical significance of the Lenten celebrations,” said Msgr Pedro Quitorio III, spokesperson of the CBCP and director of its Media Office. The Philippine-Church on YouTube is an interactive forum, with visitors posting their opinions, beliefs and personal convictions. In early April, the web blog registered 47 subscribers; its most popular clip gained more than 2,000 views. (INQUIRER.NET)

## **INDIA: CATHOLIC TAMIL WEEKLY CELEBRATES 100<sup>TH</sup> ANNIVERSARY**

“Sarva Vyabi” (the omnipresent) Catholic weekly marked its 100<sup>th</sup> year of publication this year. At the centenary celebration in Puducherry April 14, the popular Catholic Tamil language weekly produced by the Catholic archdiocese of Pondicherry and Cuddalore, was hailed as a great contribution of Puducherry to the Tamil literary world. Archbishop A. Anandarayar said the weekly “has changed and fuelled changes in the minds of people throughout the world. Editor Father S. Maria Joseph said Sarya Vyabi is perhaps the first Catholic journal to be printed in India in an Indian language. It was first published on March 1, 1907 at the time of Archbishop Adolf Joseph Gandhi. (SAR NEWS)

## **MALAYSIA: ASIA-WIDE POSTER COMPETITION LAUNCHED**

Signis-Malaysia and Cahayasuara Communications Center announced an Asia-wide poster making competition in March. The theme “Children and Media: A Challenge for Education” is the same theme chosen by Pope Benedict XVI for the World Communications Day celebration on May 20, 2007. Winners will be awarded with Asian Certificates and other prizes. (CANNEWS)

## **INDIA: AMID CONTROVERSIES, EVERY PRIEST SHOULD SPEAK UP**

French priest and Scripture scholar Dr Lucien Legrand of St. Peter’s Institute, Bangalore shared with SAR News his views about films that build controversy and challenge church teachings, like Mel Gibson’s “The Passion” and “The Da Vinci Code.” Dr Legrand said “every priest should speak up amidst controversies” created by such films, whether they are “fundamentalism-based” or “hostile, antagonism-based.” “Every diocese should have a Biblical commission,” the Paris Foreign Missionary added. Dr Legrand spent over 50 years in India and was involved in the translation of the Bible into Tamil. He said, he regrets the gap between biblicists, who are “not sufficiently involved in theological research,” and systematic theologians, who are “not much rooted in Scripture. There needs to be communication between these two lively disciplines.” (SAR NEWS)



