

The role of women in the church and in society

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“You go into the vineyard too” (Mt. 20:3-4)

This was the call of our Lord Jesus to those “standing in the market place”, a call addressed to every person in this world and a call that prays and hopes for a response.

This Congress of Asian Catholic Laity now gives the Asian lay faithful the golden opportunity to respond and share the fruits of their various apostolate in the field of Evangelization (evangelizing the unreached and re-evangelizing those in need of renewing their faith), proclaiming and witnessing the Word of God, addressing women’s issues and problems, the protection of life, care of God’s creation, and active participation in renewing politics in accordance with the values of the Good News.

ROLE OF WOMEN IN CHURCH

- Play a consultative role in preparing and implementing pastoral programs for women
ex. Proposed integration of women’s perspective in seminary formation (approved and currently implemented in the seminaries in Philippines)
- assist in the formative clarification and dissemination of some Church documents
ex. clarified the message “The Letter to the Bishops of the Catholic Church on the Collaboration of Men and Women in the Church and in the World”. Such information was disseminated to the feminist groups and to all concerned.
- Participate in liturgical services, provide the needs of the Church for liturgical celebrations and assist in organizing major events of the church.
- Participate in the decision making process of the Church at some levels.

THE ROLE OF WOMEN IN SOCIETY

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God's gift of compassion, sensitivity, femininity, and their "feminine genius" enabled women to participate fully in the life of the Church and Society thereby becoming the source of hope in renewing and humanizing society.

In several meetings organized by the Women's Desk of the Federation of Asian Bishops Conference (FABC), Office of the Laity and Family, participants from Asian countries, (Thailand, Philippines, Malaysia, India, Mongolia and Indonesia) have identified their common problems affecting women – poverty, violence of all forms, trafficking, prostitution, the social impact of migration on the family, exploitation in the media, lack of education, discrimination, dysfunctional families, and women in areas of arm conflict. These are the "shadows in the lives of suffering women, but then, what gives us comfort is the cliché " there is always light (hope) at the end of the tunnel". The following pastoral programs in place are the light and hopes that brightens the horizon of women for a better future.

- Poverty – programs on education to increase women's capabilities and creativity, micro-financing, organizing cooperatives and building small scale industries.
- Organizing Women's desk that gives counselling to women in crisis and provides shelter to the abandoned.
- Work for the enactment of laws friendly to women such as: the protection of life, the promotion of her dignity, laws on violence against women, against trafficking and prostitution, discrimination, exploitation in the media and laws for the protection of the environment.
- Migration – orientation seminars for families of departing workers.

Much have been accomplished but more needs to be done to lighten the burden that women in Asia carries. Ours is a long journey of prayers, commitment, and meeting challenges that we have to overcome, but given this inspirational message of His Holiness Pope John Paul II, "Without the contribution of women, society is less alive, culture impoverished, and peace less sustainable"¹, we will continue to respond to the call of Our Lord Jesus.

¹ JOHN PAUL II, Angelus, Papal Summer Residence, Castel Gandolfo, 23 July 1995.

Invoking the blessings of God the Father, the guidance of the Holy Spirit and the love and the intercession of our blessed Mother we will continue, to journey to the vineyard of the Lord.