



The Holy See

**ADDRESS OF THE HOLY FATHER PAUL VI
TO THE FIRST GENERAL ASSEMBLY OF THE FEDERATION
OF ASIAN BISHOPS' CONFERENCE**

Saturday, 20 April 1974

*To Our Venerable Brothers
The Bishops of Asia*

On the occasion of the First General Assembly of the Federation of Asian Bishops' Conferences we gladly send you our fraternal greetings. You have chosen to discuss during this Assembly the question of Evangelization. You will examine how best you can proclaim Christ, "the way, the truth and the life" (Jo. 14, 6) to the peoples of Asia-to more than half of mankind.

The immensity of this Evangelization is both a challenge and a consolation. It constitutes a burden which in human terms may seem unbearable, but which you know can easily be borne, because it was given to you by Christ, whose yoke is easy and whose burden is light (Cfr. *Matth.* 11, 30).

At the same time the very vastness of your task gives you a special position and the results of your present deliberations can prove to be of great help to your brother bishops and to the whole Church during the forthcoming Synod.

You know of our personal affection for you and for all the peoples of Asia, both those who have already received the Message of Christ, and those to whom it has still to be proclaimed, not by force or by imposition, but in an open and friendly approach which demonstrates Christian love. We have given testimony to this affection in the visits which we were privileged to make to Asia.

Dear Brothers in Christ, because of this love which we have for the peoples of Asia, because of the importance of Evangelization in your countries, and because of the value which we attach to your discussions, we now take this opportunity to share with you some of our thoughts, and to

reiterate some of the things we said when we stood in your midst on Asian soil in 1970.

You have the consolation and the inspiration of going forth to sow the seed of Christ's Message in fertile ground. The persuasion of spiritual values, the high degree of ascetical discipline, the family-oriented sense of filial devotion and the thirst for spiritual culture shown by your nations through their different religions—all these things are indisputable pointers to the primacy among your peoples of the things of the spirit. The propagation of the Christian Message must in no way cancel out or lessen these cultural and spiritual values, which constitute a priceless heritage. The Church must make herself in her fullest expression native to your countries, your cultures, your races. Let the seed, which is the word of God, put down deep roots in the fertile soil of Asia. Let the Church draw nourishment from the genuine values of venerable Asian religions and cultures. Her own contribution to Asia will surely be welcomed by your peoples, who are accustomed by centuries of spiritual formation to recognize and acknowledge what is good in others. Let the Church be seen, therefore, as a community of brethren, distinguished by their love for one another and for all men, imitating their founder who went about doing good (Cfr. Act. 10. 39).

It is our earnest and constant prayer that the increasing pace of Evangelization may help to preserve your peoples from the danger of materialism. Let it do so, not by ignoring material needs, but by responding to the hunger for bread, for responsibility, for freedom and for justice. Let Evangelization respond to these needs by demonstrating that practical and all-embracing brotherly solidarity with one another under the common fatherhood of God which typifies our Christian Religion (Cfr. Message to the Peoples of Asia, 29 Novembre 1970: AAS 63, 1971, pp. 35-40).

Finally, we hope and pray that the Evangelization of Asia will give great glory to God in heaven and bring peace on earth, peace of heart, peace within families, peace among nations. Blessed indeed are those who spread the Gospel of peace.

Beloved Brothers, in pledge of our enduring spiritual affection we gladly impart our Apostolic Blessing.

From the Vatican, 30 March 1974

PAULUS PP. VI