

**SIXTH INTERNATIONAL CONFERENCE  
THE FAMILY AND CONTEMPORARY SOCIAL REALITY:  
PASTROL PRIORTIES AND CHALLENGES**

AUGUST 13- 19, 1999

**CHENNAI-INDIA**

**STATEMENT OF THE BISHOPS, CHAIRMAN OF FAMILY LIFE COMMISSIONS IN THE  
COUNTRIES OF ASIA**

**1. PREAMBLE**

1.1 We, the Bishops, Chairman of the Family Life Commissions of the ten countries listed below: Bangladesh, India, Indonesia, Korea, Malaysia, Myanmar, Nepal, Pakistan, Srilanka, Thailand met at Chennai, India for an International Seminar on the family, with the theme ***"The Family and Contemporary Social Reality, Pastrol priorities and Challenges"***, from August 13 - 19 -1999.

1.2 This International Seminar was hosted by the Archdiocese of Madras - Mylapore, India and organised and sponsored by the Service and Research Foundation of Asia on Family Culture (SERFAC) for the purpose of discussing the pressing problems and challenges affecting the family in contemporary society and also seeking ways and means to effect a solution

1.3 This seminar adopted a pro-active approach to the understanding of those problems which are causing serious breakdown in relationships and values, thereby leading to a weakening in faith and fragmentation of the family

1.4 The deliberation of this seminar took place in an atmosphere of prayer and in the contextof The Church's Teachings enunicated in Vatican II: "Guardium et Spes" and other papal Documents: *"Humanae Vitae"*, *Familiaris Consortio"*, *"Evangelium Vitae"*. etc. We are also aware of the importance accorded to the famioly in the Synod of Bishops for Asia held in 1998.

**2. ANALYSIS OF FACTORS AFFECTING MARTIAL AND FAMILY RELATIONSHIPS:  
PASTROL PRIORITIES AND CHALLENGES**

2.1 The Seminar comprised two major segments:

a Offering of a framework for a better understanding of the human person in marriage and family life in the changing context of Asia.

Focussing on the development processes helped s to understand better the growth of the individual and one's relationshipwith self, with society and with God

b. The second segment focussed on the various issues that affect family life and family relationships, such as Alcoholism, Drug abuse, Mareralism, Contraception, Abortion and such other anti life issues.

### 3. TOWARDS THE FAMILY IN THE THIRD MILLENNIUM

3.1 We, the bishops, Chairmen of the Family Life Commissions in the countries of Asia, are convinced that, unless authentic human and adult relationships within the family are fostered and promoted, it would be impossible to renew and strengthen the family in the third millennium

3.2 Such pastoral care of the family will strengthen the faith and one's relationship with God and consequently influence the other aspects and totality of life

3.3 A life rooted in adult faith and rooted in God will have the strength to withstand the pressures, tensions and problems inherent in our society today It will also promote a genuine appreciation and understanding of the sacredness of human sexuality

3.4 Such an understanding will contribute to the enhancing of the quality of family life as well as that of society.

### 4. RECOMMENDATIONS

In the light of the above, we unanimously recommend the following:

4.1 That the recommendation made in the Sixth Plenary Assembly of FABC held in Manila 1995(*Pastoral Recommendation E. No 4*) and subsequent meetings of the FABC, be followed up by a decision to constitute an **"Office for the Family"** at the next Plenary Assembly of FABC to be held in Bangkok, January 3-12, 2000

4.2 That whatever it does not exist, each Conference of Bishops and Diocese in Asia take up with utmost urgency the matter of constituting a Commission for the Family at the National and Diocesan level

4.3 That for the effective functioning of these Commissions, full time trained persons be appointed to co-ordinate programmes and animate this Apostolate giving immediate attention to and carrying out programmes on **Marriage Preparation and Pastrol Counselling.**

4.4 That adequate finances be allocated for this purpose

### 5. AS AN IMMEDIATE FOLLOW-UP

5.1 SERFAC envisages the one-month training Programme for full time National Co-ordinators/Animators of the Family Life Commissions

5.2 We endorse this proposal and urge that this programme be held at the beginning of the year 2000.

5.3 We request that a fully documented report of this seminar be brought out by SERFAC and copies be made available to this Bishops is Asia

5.4 We further recommend that SERFAC, a Non-Governmental Service Research Centre for the Family, which has the necessary infrastructure, staff, documentation and facilities be called upon to assist in preparing the syllabus in Seminaries and Houses of Formation for the Family Apostolate (*Ref No 60: Directories on the Formation of Seminarians concerning problems related to Marriage and The Family - Congregation for Catholic Education - Rome 1995*)

5.5 That the Major Religious Superiors be made aware of, and avail themselves of the services that SERFAC offers for better collaboration in the Family Apostolate in the local Church

5.6 SERFAC may also be called upon to render services at International, National and Diocesan levels.

## **CONCLUSION:**

We are privileged to have his Eminence Alfonso Cardinal Lopez Trujillo, President of the Pontifical Council for The Family, Address us and preside over the Valedictory session of the Seminar.

We are grateful and place on record the contribution made by The Faculty of this Seminar who came from India, Australia and the United States, not only by their presentations and insights but also by their facilitating building relationships

We commend the pioneering work of SERFAC in the area of Marriage and Family and thank them for organising and sponsoring this seminar.

May the powerful Spirit of God who guides the destiny of human kind bless all our endeavours for the promotion of stable and healthy family life in the contemporary society of Asia May the Blessed Virgin accompany us in this Apostolate of defending life and strengthening the family