

The III Continental Assembly of Asia – Pacific Region
Vocational Culture, Synodality, Interculturality
Manila, Philippines (6 to 10 Nov 2023)

Day 1: 6th November, 2023

The III Continental Assembly of Asia Pacific region commenced with the Eucharistic celebration at 7:00 am presided by Rev. Fr. Angeles Javier P. San Jose, CRS. In his homily, he highlighted the importance of Synodality which includes the journeying together with the poor, the beggars, the mentally challenged, the destitute, and the underprivileged. He also stressed that it is imperative for us to go out of our comfort zones to the marginalized. He encouraged us saying that we are a Congregation that is attuned to the signs of the times serving the poorest, incarnating the love of the Holy Trinity.

Then Rev. Fr. Javier San Jose enlightened the participants by his enlightening inputs on the theme of the III Continental Assembly of the Asia-Pacific region. Here are some of the highlights of his talk:

*To be hospitable to the least, the last and the lost. Synodality – We are never alone; we are communitarian, journeying together in dialogue and apostolate. Isaiah 54:2-10. “Sing barren woman...” We are barren as we do not have vocations at the moment, but God has a plan to make us fruitful just as He had for the Israelites. Spiritual barrenness is to be used as a blessing to the world. God gives her (barren woman) hope and vision: “**Widen the space of your tent**” meaning to widen the space of our hearts, our communal hearts, a magnanimous heart which opens and serves. God dwells in a tent. **Open the window** of your hearts, your communities to the world. **Extend or stretch your curtain wide** so that fresh air may enter in, that we may breathe normal. Peace of God has no walls, no borders. **To lengthen your cords** like Abraham who believed and trusted in God’s promise without questioning. What are the promises and desires of our founders? A religious who does not pray is not a religious. We are women of prayer. Deepening our relationship with God in prayer is lengthening the cord of the tent. **Spread out to the right and to the left**, as Abraham was instructed, and we will find vocations. Evangelium Gaudium: We bear the Word of God in us... radiate it to the world. Religious life is not a funeral procession, but we are heralds of good news. Love is compensated with love... God loved us first. He will never abandon our Congregation. It is His own identity.*

Besides, the participants assembled in front of the Assembly Hall, where we were instructed the procedure for the Enthronement of the Word of God. Thereafter, we proceeded to the entrance of the Assembly Hall from where we commenced the procession.

Procession with Bible and Candles: The Bible was brought in by Sr. Carmen Mora, the Superior General, accompanied by Sr. Maria Pilar Omella, the General Councilor and Sr. Rolita Nuevaespaña, SFX Provincial Councilor with candles. Sr. Crisanta Cordero, the General Councilor, brought in the Constitutions and Sr. Gracy Joseph, the General Councilor, the jar of lilies. All the other Sisters followed them placing their left hand on the shoulder of the one in front as a symbol of synodality, holding a flaglet of the working document, and holding a lighted candle in their right hand. A background song “Carry your candle” was played. After the enthronement of the Word of God, the Sisters placed the candles in the place assigned for it.

The Opening Prayer was read by Sr. Leena John, the Provincial Superior of SFX Province. This was followed by the Scripture reading from Ephesians 4: 1-7, 11 by Sr. Lucy Joseph, the Provincial Superior of Mother Pabla Province. Sr. Gracelin Rose Mary, the Provincial Superior of John Bonal Province read the Psalm 119: 105, after each verse of which, the Assembly responded the following: **Your word is a lamp to my feet and a light to my path.** This was followed by the Song: **Oh, the Word of my Lord...** Then, the concluding prayer was recited by all the participants of the Assembly.

Furthermore, Sr. Carmen Mora, the Superior General gave her Opening Address. She started with the

expression of her gratefulness to the Province of St. Francis Xavier for facilitating this Assembly in this house. She quoted our challenges in Asia Pacific: Vocational Culture, Synodality and Interculturality. It is **to widen the space of our tents**.

She emphasized that we need to prepare ourselves, to expand our tent, our heart, the horizons of our life and people. We need to approach the Lord in the Tabernacle so that He may meet us at the tent of encounter. When Moses approached the Tent of Meeting, the people stood at the entrance of their tents, and followed Moses with their eyes. As long as Moses remained in the tent of Meeting, the people remained prostrating, contemplating the pillar of cloud.

In order to live this important event in the history of our family, we need to cultivate some attitudes as follows:

Gaze towards our Sisters, and towards the reality of our continent, Asia Pacific region, a clean gaze. Unlimited trust in God. Vulnerable listening. Humble, respectful, courageous and free word. Full docility to what God asks us. Let us widen the space of our tent.

Thenceforth, with these words, **she declared the III Continental Assembly of Asia – Pacific region Open**.

Then followed by the election of the Scrutinizers, Moderator and the Secretary.

In order to know the realities of the Provinces, the three Provincials presented the Situational Report of their respective Provinces; Fr. John Bonal Province by Sr. Gracelin Rose Mary (Provincial Superior), Mother Pabla Province by Sr. Lucy Joseph (Provincial Superior) and St. Francis Xavier Province by Sr. Leena John (Provincial Superior).

Before we concluded the session of the day, the time for personal study and reflection of the documents for the next day was discussed, and finalized.



Sr. Leena John, SFX Provincial introduced Rev. Fr. Angeles Javier P. San Jose, CRS to the Assembly



Photo shot after Doctrinal Enlightenment Rev. Fr. Angeles Javier P. San Jose, CRS



Sister General Carmen Mora Sena gave her Opening Address to the Assembly



Methodology and Work plan



A glimpse of the group work