



Incarnating the Good News in the Multilingual and Multicultural Context of Vietnam

ABSTRACT

One assumes that in a country like Vietnam that there would have been a strong push towards a national identity as expressed in the use of one language. This paper proves otherwise; like many countries in Southeast Asia, Vietnam is a multicultural and multilingual nation. Missionaries among Vietnamese communities have to take this reality into consideration, if they are serious about pursuing inculturation. This paper deals with the mission context of Vietnam, focusing on the role of language. It juxtaposes the dominant national culture and language while privileging the reality of the ethnic peoples and their struggle to preserve what is left of their cultural domain, identity, and spirituality.

INTRODUCTION

Language has played a vital role in the entire history of the Church's mission work. The Bible has been translated into different languages, for instance, and missionaries are required to learn the local tongue in order to seamlessly permeate, engage with, and immerse themselves in different cultures. As Franz Josef Eilers puts it, communicating the Gospel in a people's language is an important need for the Christian Churches.¹ It allows them to dialogue with and between cultures, thus making the Gospel more widely known.

¹Franz-Josef Eilers, *Communicating Between Cultures* (Manila: Divine Word Publications, 1992), 53.



Louis Luzbetak, meanwhile, has pointed out the need for the effective translation of texts and the construction of local theologies within the local culture.² To be inculturated, the Church needs to rebirth herself in the culture of the local people where she would discover her Catholic identity. That is why communicating via the people's language provides a strategic entry point for inculturation.³

By incarnating the Gospel in the culture and language of the ethnic communities, the clergy plays a prophetic role in laying the groundwork for better respect and appreciation among peoples and their cultures. It is with this same concern and background that I enthusiastically pursued a study on incarnating Christian faith in the multicultural and multilingual context of Vietnam, given my own experiences in Vietnam.

This study is hinged on the mission context of Vietnam, with the discussions focused on the role of language within such a mission context. It looks into a dominant national culture and language that confronts ethnic peoples and their struggle to preserve what is left of their cultural domain, identity, and spirituality. In particular, this paper seeks to answer the following questions:

1. What languages of communication should be learned by one who intends to be a missionary in Vietnam?
2. How are these languages connected with the rest of Southeast Asia?
3. What missiological discourses affirm and challenge the role languages play in the task of evangelization?
4. How then do we incarnate the Christian faith in the multicultural and multilingual context of Vietnam?

²Louis Luzbetak, *The Church and Cultures* (New York: Orbis Books, 1990).

³Mario Saturnino Dias, ed. *Rooting Faith in Asia: Source Book for Inculturation* (Bangalore: Claretian Publications), 2005.

In answering these questions, this paper undertakes an anthropological study of the origins and evolution of languages, particularly of the Austronesian family of Asia-Oceania and Madagascar. The study is framed by theories from Peter Bellwood and Wilhelm Solheim, among many other sources.⁴

The study looks into the Jiaray and Banar ethnic tribes living in the central mountains of Vietnam, popularly known as the Tay Nguyen area bordering the secular provinces of Kontum and Jiaray. It is situated north of Sai Gon (now Ho Chi Minh), and south of Ha Noi (Hanoi). The place is located at the heart of Kon Ka Kinh National Park, an enormous tract of forested land and mountains, which has been officially declared an ASEAN Heritage National Park.

During the South Vietnamese regime which ended in 1975, the provinces formed one political unit called Kontum. For the purposes of this paper, the entire area of study will be referred to as the Diocese of Kontum. The diocese is home to thousands of indigenous peoples (IP), the most numerous of whom are the Jiaray and Banar, and with whom I had a wonderful immersion opportunity.

It is with these IP that the Redemptorists have been engaged in mission since 1969. Thus, this study also examines the Redemptorist mission methodology among them, both to learn from best practices and understand the limits of missionary engagement. Faced with similar situations and challenges in the Asia-Oceania region, we then hope to be able to adapt and respond in a more effective way.

This paper takes an anthropological approach in studying human relationships and meanings that make up human culture in which God is present. As Stephen Bevans puts it, the anthropological model “focuses on the validity of the human as the place of divine revelation and as a source for theology that is equal to the other two sources of scripture and tradition.”⁵

⁴Peter Bellwood, *Prehistory of the Indo-Malaysian Archipelago*. Australia: Academic Press, 1985; Wilhelm Solheim II, *Archeology and Culture in Southeast Asia: Unraveling the Nusantara*. Quezon City: UP Press, 2006.

⁵Stephen B. Bevans, *Models of Contextual Theology* (Manila: Logos Publication, 2003), 54-61.

This theological reflection follows the “See-Discern-Act” formula situated as it is within an Asian landscape, which requires an attitude of openness to dialogue and respect.

REDEMPTORIST MISSIONARY ENGAGEMENT IN THE DIOCESE OF KONTUM

As early as 1953, the Bishop of Kontum, Most Rev. Paul Sietz Kim, DD, MEP, had already sent letters of invitation to the Redemptorist Provincial of St. Anne, Rev. Louis Roy. In a letter dated 29 February 1956, Bishop Sietz expressed his concern that the lifestyle of the Kinh might swamp the culture and the language of the indigenous communities:

*It is now the 20th century but the people are still living in the iron age. Now there is an influx of the Kinh people so it affects their traditional way of life. One is ancient and another modern, hence the need for the presence of your congregation.*⁶

The bishop was worried that the ethnic communities might be pushed in a way that their culture could no longer grow or reach out to civil society. He feared, too, that it might otherwise remain frozen.

Initially, the Redemptorists only came to the diocese for retreats and preaching. But on 10 October 1969, a pioneering group of young missionaries, Fr. Anthony Vuong Dinh Tai CSsR, Deacon Joseph Tran Si Tin CSsR, Deacon Peter Nguyen Dinh Mau CSsR, and Brother Leonard Peter Ho Van Quan CSsR began a successful mission among the Jiarays.

The young pioneers were not deterred by the political crisis in their divided land. They were rather inspired by the spirit of Vatican II, eventually finding themselves with the ethnic people of Kontum, eating and living with them, and dressing like them. Their motivation is described in the words of Fr. Tai: “If the Canadian Redemptorists came from afar to do mission here, then there is no reason why we won’t also go to the tribes.”⁷

⁶Tu Do Nguyen, CSsR, *Lich Su DCCT Vietnam* (Ha Noi: Nha Xuat Ban Ton Giao, 2008), 300.

⁷Ibid., 304.

In spending time with the IP, the pioneers invested themselves in learning their language, thereby developing deep and lasting friendships with them. In their strong desire to proclaim the gospel (*kerygma*), they paved the way for the translation of the Bible into the Jiaray language. A Jiaray version of the New Testament was printed in 1973.⁸ They did not only translate its sacred texts into their languages: the pioneering missionaries also adapted the New Testament's message to fit Kontum culture.

The Redemptorist mission methodology in Kontum was ahead of its time. Its very character already applied the fourfold presence promoted by the Federation of Asian Bishops Conference (FABC), namely: (1) the dialogue of life, (2) dialogue of action, (3) dialogue of theological exchange, and (4) dialogue of religious experience. These dialogues encouraged the missionaries to share mission work with lay people.

From the very beginning, the pioneering band realized that the area of the diocese was just too vast for them to cover. As such, they decided to invite the laity to be part of the missionary group, giving them the responsibility of being itinerant catechists. They trained the catechists well, particularly in Christian education, so that the mission was not just the work of priests and brothers but of lay people as well. They also provided for the lay people and their families materially, supporting their children. The lay people considered themselves missionaries, helping organize little mission stations, which rose from 25 to 89 villages.

As of 2015, 26 Redemptorist priests and 4 brothers are engaged in Kontum. They are responsible for 5 parishes and 50 mission stations/chapels. Since Catholic schools are still forbidden, boarding houses provide alternative Christian formation to Catholic youths from different mission stations. Located near the town centers and nearby government schools that provide basic education, these facilities house 130 boys and 70 girls.

⁸Ibid., 312.

However, fidelity in mission is not easy as the confreres live with communist regime restrictions on religious and missionary activity. From time to time, the indigenous communities, as well as the Redemptorist missionaries, experience harassment at the hands of the police and intelligence agents. Construction of chapels has been forbidden. Those who take part in building them have been subjected to months of hard labor in order to break their spirit. At times, existing chapels have been ransacked.

Still, our missionaries challenge themselves to continue working to uplift the dignity of the people— they help better their living conditions in the face of widespread poverty, illiteracy, ignorance, and disease. In the midst of a strong state policy for the tribes to assimilate with the majority, the confreres are challenged to work towards the preservation of the people's culture and languages, as well as their right to ancestral domain. In their dedication to witness to the love of Jesus, they know, too, that they are being sent “as sheep among the wolves.”⁹

VIETNAM'S INDIGENOUS PEOPLE'S LANGUAGES IN CONNECTION WITH THE REST OF SOUTHEAST ASIA

The Bahnar community is also called Bonam, Roh, Kon Kde, Ala Kong, Kpang Kong. They live mainly in the provinces of Gia Lay, Kontum, and the west of Binh Dinh and Phu Yen. It is believed that they originally inhabited the Truong Son mountain ranges. Their language belongs to the Mon-Khmer language group of the Austro-Asiatic language family. They do not have a writing system.

The Jiaray people are estimated to have a population of more than 600,000. Also called Choray, they populate the entire province of Gia Lay in the western part of Kontum and Daklak provinces. They are the most numerous among the 20 ethnic groups living along the Truong Son mountain range in the central highlands.

They are but two of 54 ethnic groups in Vietnam, each with their own distinct customs, traditions, and languages. This dispels the misconception that Vietnam is equivalent to the majority Viet or Kinh culture, as is often projected in media and tourism campaigns.

⁹cf. Luke 10:3.

Five of the ethnic tribes (Cham, Churu, Ede, Jiaray and Raglai) speak the Austronesian language, emphasizing their link to those of the same language group in Southeast Asia. The subsequent conquest and influx of Kinh Vietnamese into the southern regions of Indochina drove most of these Austronesians into the mountains of central Vietnam. Eventually, the Cham and the other Austronesian ethnic groups had become minorities vis-à-vis the Kinh Vietnamese.¹⁰

The interplay of cultures in Vietnam requires missionaries to learn the languages of the many ethnic groups in the area as much as they have to learn the national language of the majority Kinh population. In my attempts at learning the many languages of the country, I was drawn towards the possible relationship between Vietnam's ethnic people's language to the rest of Southeast Asia. In my encounters with the Kinh, Bahnar and Jiaray communities, I found points of convergence and divergence among the languages. A comparative lexicon, which remains a work in progress, provides a practical demonstration of the multi-ethnic and multilingual reality of the Diocese of Kontum, mirroring the multicultural context of present-day Vietnam.

MISSION THEOLOGY AND THE ROLE OF LANGUAGE

Much of the theological basis of mission today centers on the expansion of the Church and the preaching of salvation through Jesus Christ. However, the imperative on Church's preaching of the Good News as regards her mission has met major difficulties. Cultures today have various interpretations of the world (reality) and have varied communal meanings of their experiences. These cultural nuances, of course, demand and deserve recognition and respect. With this, a major challenge is posed to the Church as to what framework of mission theology would best address the reality of postmodernity and pluralism.

¹⁰Ibid., 83.

The context of Vietnam, with its multilingual and multicultural reality, best represents the challenge that mission work is facing. This challenge is best depicted by the question, “How will the Church incarnate the Good News in the diversified ethnolinguistic context of Vietnam?”

Here we find a primordial problem in missionary enterprise *ad gentes*: the divergences of Judeo-Christian tradition with the language and culture of a particular group of people, as well as the methodology of doing mission. Affirming the example of Jesus and the role of the Spirit, reconciling and addressing these impasses serves as the purpose of inculturation in the context of Vietnam and that language is its catalyst.

Vatican II had opened the doors of the Church for more vigorous attempts to dialogue with the changes in the world and its pluralistic realities. Several efforts were made in fashioning a mission theology that would address the dilemma of modernity and pluralism (e.g., Christian Mission Theology, Humanism Mission Theology, Trinitarian Mission Theology, Pneumatological Mission Theology).

Trinitarian Mission Theology seems to suit a more holistic kind of approach to mission in connection to the reality of postmodernity and pluralism. Trinitarian mission theology affirms God’s continuous presence in the creation and recognizes God (Trinity) as the reason that guides and develops it, that is, the Church’s mission is God’s mission. Such an approach to mission is sensitive to cultural practices and expressions because it affirms uniqueness and the values that cultures hold. To put it simply, it says that God is present in every culture and all peoples in the world, and through the stirrings of the Holy Spirit human beings were able to comprehend how such presence affects human beings and the world.

This idea does not solicit an ecclesiocentric mission theology. It rather puts emphasis on the participation of the Church in the *missio Dei*. Consequently, it leads us to a rich understanding and challenge that the Church needs to anchor herself and reflect through her deeds God’s mission itself.

PNEUMATOLOGY AND LANGUAGE: FOR AUTHENTIC INCULTURATION

Trinitarian mission theology has provided the Church with a more inclusive and profound approach to mission. In summary, it states that God's mission embraces the whole of creation. In other words, the whole creation is subjected to God's presence and grace. Such approach to mission is centered and discerned through the life and example of Jesus Christ through the inspiration and direction of the Holy Spirit.

Various religions and cultures have different interpretations of the divine presence in the world, which prompted the Church's mission thrust to dialogue with different religions and cultures in view of furthering human development and human consciousness. But, as the Church engages in dialogue and inculturation, she encounters a major problematic on the semantics of interpretation and communication and is particularly challenged by the mediation of language. The following discussions attempt to address this predicament.

The Holy Spirit and Language

The Holy Spirit enables human beings to grasp and understand the presence of God in the world. Hans Kung even deliberately and assertively claims that "the Holy Spirit is God himself, in his especially personal and self-giving aspect: as a power which creates life. The Spirit, he continues, is God himself, a merciful power establishing his reign over man's heart, over the whole of man, inwardly present to man and apparent in his workings to man's human spirit."¹¹ Language is the Church's passageway to the culture of the people, a catalyst of understanding the values and meanings that a particular culture holds. *Redemptoris Missio* emphatically articulates that

Missionaries, who come from other churches and countries, must immerse themselves in the cultural milieu of those to whom they are sent, moving beyond their own cultural limitations. Hence they must learn the language of the place in which

¹¹Ibid., 173.

*they work, become familiar with the most important expressions of the local culture, and discover its values through direct experience. Only if they have this kind of awareness will they be able to bring to people the knowledge of the hidden mystery (cf. Rom. 16:25-27; Eph. 3:5) in a credible and fruitful way.*¹²

Reality, Experience, Meaning, and Language

The question of meanings and values would lead us to grapple with, understand, and interpret human experience and reality. Jose de Mesa ardently claims that “a statement has meaning only if, in one way or another, it expresses lived experience; leading us to an analysis of human experience, in which we try to describe its horizon.”¹³

The use of language is anchored on the meanings attached to it. This understanding presents a need for the missionary Church to learn the language of the people to whom she is sent to mission because it is the conduit of understanding the culture, the meaning it holds, and ultimately the worldview and way of life of the people. Here lies the question, “Is the Church communicating with cultures in her missionary enterprises? If she does, what kind of language does the Church employ in order to communicate with cultures?”

CHRISTOLOGICAL PARADIGM: A RADICAL RENEWAL

The best method of mission as inculturation in the context of a cultural, linguistic, and religious pluralism needs to be heuristic in nature, an experienced-based methodology. Following the example of Jesus Christ, in John’s Prologue, total self-emptying and indwelling within a culture serves as the best paradigm of mission. In other words, Jesus’s kenosis, as a paradigm, is ultimately the most apt and foundational model of any missionary enterprise. Karl Rahner calls this a mystery in theological language, that is, “the mystery of God becoming man.”¹⁴

¹²John Paul II, *Redemptoris Missio: On the Permanent Validity of the Church’s Missionary Mandate*. 1990. http://w2.vatican.va/content/john-paul-ii/en/encyclicals/documents/hf_jp-ii_enc_07121990_redemptoris-missio.html.

¹³Jose de Mesa, *Doing Theology* (Quezon City: Claretian Publications, 1990), 71.

¹⁴Karl Rahner, *Foundations of Christian Faith* (New York: Crossroads, 1982), 213.

The *kenosis*, incarnation, ministry, and the paschal mystery of Jesus Christ show us vital information, which we can develop as a paradigm of inculturation as seen in the roots of Christian faith. It speaks of: Jesus stripping off his divinity and becoming human to be in solidarity with humanity; Jesus entering the history of human beings, becoming subjected to it, and experiencing the reality of the situations he is engaged with, and coming from the context and situations, Jesus reveals God through his words and actions, and that humanity may become children of God.

Going back to the person of Jesus Christ, the person on whom the Church was founded, on whom her identity and missionary zeal is anchored and finds fulfillment, becomes the new and radical thrust of a missionary Church today in relation to postmodernity and its pluralistic realities. It is in this spirit that the Church needs to approach her missionary enterprises.

Christological Paradigm of Inculturation

Let us consider the *kenosis* and incarnation of Jesus Christ as the paradigm of mission in the context of Vietnam, where diverse cultural and religious expressions are a reality.

Kenosis and Incarnation as Reaching Out. Jesus Christ emptied himself and became human in humility and obedience to the will of the Father that he may be God's immanent revelation in human history. The act of God to reach out to the whole creation and humanity is constantly mentioned and reflected in the Judeo-Christian tradition since the Old Testament times through the stories of Abraham, Moses, David, and the prophets. His human presence is embodied in the person and life of Jesus Christ in the New Testament. God makes human history and story His own through Jesus Christ. God reconciles the world to himself in Christ (cf. 2 Cor. 5:19).

Hence, like Jesus Christ who is one in Spirit with the Father, a missionary must make the culture his own in such a way that it becomes his reality. Following the example of God who always reaches out and who finally became human in Jesus Christ so that he would be in full solidarity with the whole humanity, missionaries and the

Church in general, in participating in God's mission, are called to empty themselves, to reach out, to immerse into, and be in solidarity with the people in a particular culture and its situations.

Kenosis and Incarnation as Solidarity. Vatican II recognizes the importance of inculturation as “the seed which is the word of God, watered by divine dew, sprouts from the good ground and draws from thence its moisture, which it transforms and assimilates into itself, and finally bears much fruit.”¹⁵ Inculturation, therefore, is a process that necessitates an investment of time and effort. Missionaries, as directed by the Church, need to immerse themselves first in a particular culture and accept all its realities and address the observed problematic conditions. Jesus's example is definitely necessary in inculturation. Jesus knew the reason of His ministry, that is, participating in the *missio Dei* or the mission of his Father, and was always rooted in it.

The question is, “Are missionaries aware of the essential reasons of their missions, that is, to participate in the *missio Dei* or are they just aware of the mandate handed to them by the Church and their superiors?” If inculturation is participation in the *missio Dei*, we then acknowledge that the Church and the missionaries are participants of that mission. It recognizes as well the validity of our claims that God is present, through the Spirit, in various cultures and states.

Kenosis and Incarnation in Connection to Witnessing. Jesus' incarnation is directed towards and is interconnected with his ministry. John, in the Book of Revelation, testified to Jesus's witnessing of God's love and justice even to the point of sacrificing himself on the cross: “Jesus Christ, who is the faithful witness, the firstborn from the dead, and the ruler of the kings of the earth. To him who loves us and has freed us from our sins by his blood (cf. Rev. 1:5).”

The challenge of witnessing in today's world requires a certain kind of spirituality modeled and anchored in Jesus Christ. Witnessing is much needed in the Church missionary engagements in Asia because of the plurality of cultural and religious expressions.

¹⁵Vatican Council II, *Ad Gentes*. http://www.vatican.va/archive/hist_councils/ii_vatican_council/documents/vat-ii_decree_19651207_ad-gentes_en.html

Kenosis and Incarnation envision Transformation. Edward Schillebeeckx claims that “those who encountered Jesus of Nazareth, those who were fascinated and stayed with him, their lives were given new meaning and significance. They felt that they were reborn, understood and cared for. This change in the direction of their lives was the result of the real encounter with Jesus, since without him they would have remained as they were.”¹⁶ God’s salvific will is universal and it dawned since the beginning of time and the genesis of the creation, which eventually, in Christian faith, manifest in the person and works of Jesus Christ. “God wills that humanity be saved,” (cf. 1 Timothy 2:4) and Jesus Christ is its mediator.

Following this path, in the Church’s inculturation thrust, liberation is always an imperative, especially in the situation of Asian countries wherein sociopolitical corruption, massive poverty, and moral degradation are seriously depressing.

Inculturation through the Holy Spirit. Against the background of the Christological paradigm on inculturation, Redemptorists need to live out the example of Jesus Christ’s kenosis and ministry in view of God’s promised salvation—that many will live a life to the fullest, a life worthy of human dignity. Missionaries are asked to be actively present, reaching out and being in solidarity with the people to witness to God’s presence within and amongst their context and situations.

Pope Francis remarkably accentuates that “seeing reality with the eyes of faith, we cannot fail to acknowledge what the Holy Spirit is sowing. It is imperative to evangelize cultures in order to inculturate the Gospel. In countries with a Catholic tradition, this means encouraging, fostering and reinforcing a richness that already exists. In countries with other religious traditions or profoundly secularized countries, it will mean sparking new processes for evangelizing culture, even though these will demand long-term planning. We must keep in mind, however, that we are constantly being called to grow. Each culture and social group needs purification and growth.”¹⁷

¹⁶Edward Schillebeeckx, *Interim Report on the Books Jesus and Christ* (NY: Crossroads, 1981), 10.

¹⁷Francis I, *Evangelii Gaudium*. nos. 68-69. http://w2.vatican.va/content/francesco/en/apost_exhortations/documents/papa-francesco_esortazione-ap_20131124_evangelii-gaudium.html

It is then our duty, as missionaries who are engaged with the people in the mission fields, to unearth, unravel, discover, and bring to light the values and practices of a particular people and culture that promote human welfare and reflect God's operational presence in order to cherish and foster them.

SUMMARY AND RECOMMENDATIONS

This study presents a multilingual and multicultural reality that confronts the Church. In particular, this paper presents the Redemptorists' mission as it evolves to embrace the Vietnamese culture. It includes a brief study of Vietnam's history as well as its languages and customs, the ethnic tribes encountered, and the history of Church's missionary engagements among them.

The study engages the understanding of language, its role and its importance in cultures, affirming its important role in the process of mission work. Thus, in the process of inculturation, it is important to study language as it is the very soul of a culture that leads to its very heart and mind. Language communicates one's experience of the reality and his interpretation of it.

Noting the role of language in the inculturation enterprise, the biblical, magisterial and theological reflections of several theologians on the mission of the Church were investigated as well.

In the Asian context, inculturation as a mission refers to reaching out in solidarity and participating in the life of the people. It means respecting the values in the culture and the practices that externalize those. Language catalyzes these processes, in turn allowing us to explore the unknown world, and witness the revelation of the truth as it happens in many diverse realities. Diversity and plurality, therefore, are positive elements because these facilitate a deeper understanding of reality, ourselves, and of God. They are not threats to Christian values and traditions, but instead, they even enhance these values and traditions.

Methods of inculturation may vary in different circumstances and contexts. Recognizing the role of the Holy Spirit as the prime agent of inculturation, the Church not only transmits her truths and values and renews cultures from within. She also takes from the various cultures the positive elements already found in them.¹⁸

Biblical assertions traced the role of language and its importance in missionary engagements. These assertions highlight Jesus's way of life and means of communication in the New Testament. Here, Jesus stirred the hearts of many and led them to transformation. This happened because he was incarnated and humbly immersed, in participation with the *missio Dei* through the Holy Spirit, in the lives of the people with whom he was engaged.

The Trinitarian mission theology, *missio Dei*, carried by Jesus Christ through the Holy Spirit has become for us a model. Our missiological paradigm follows the example of Christ's incarnation and kenosis, a humble reaching out to humanity to be in solidarity with them (speak the human language), and to witness (testify to the language of God) the love and justice of God in view of transforming the lives of many, if not all, as children of God.

This we find important in the context of Vietnam wherein diverse cultural and religious expressions are a reality, missionaries must engage themselves in a kenotic and incarnate method of mission. It is through this that one can reach out in solidarity with the people, helping them witness God's justice and love. In doing so, missionaries can better facilitate the transformation of individuals.

The Church, ever faithful to Jesus Christ, imitates him with zeal and dedication in carrying out the mission he commenced. As such, mission theology continues its work to understand the spirit of Christ that eventually will foster its further development. This, too, is the task and the challenge of the Redemptorist Province of Vietnam.

¹⁸John Paul II, *Ecclesia in Asia*, no. 20. http://w2.vatican.va/content/john-paul-ii/en/apost_exhortations/documents/hf_jp-ii_exh_06111999_ecclesia-in-asia.html.

RECOMMENDATIONS

1. It is important to continue to seek a deeper understanding of how the culture itself negotiates with developments in the present.
2. In the preservation of rich cultural traditions and expressions, the study and promotion of these through museums, cultural centers, school of music, dance, handicrafts, literature, etc., are to be considered.
3. In liturgy, missionaries are cautioned when bringing in “Kinh” culture. Kinh culture can be seen as superior and domineering, and there lies an urgent need to study carefully what facets of such culture can be integrated and/or inculturated.
4. Other units of the Redemptorists in the Asia-Oceania Conference are encouraged to explore ways to help the mission among IP, especially by contributing ideas or fashioning strategies that may be beneficial to both the Church and the people.
5. Redemptorists need to be careful about the attitude of superiority, i.e., looking at the IP as objects of pity. They need to look at them as human beings equal in dignity like them who rightly deserve their share in God’s earthly paradise.
6. A challenge in educating the IP remains a task. However, it must be a kind of an education that does not take away their culture, language nor diminish their appreciation and valuing of their precious culture.
7. As a call to solidarity with the Vietnamese church, Asian churches are challenged to foster greater awareness and participation among the lay in their Christian missionary vocation in the church. Taking into account their varied gifts and expertise, lay Catholics in the Philippines, for

example, could get their act together to respond to the needs of their sister Churches in Vietnam. The 2015 ASEAN Integration provides an opening: This can well be concretized via direct twinning, cooperation programs and initiatives in which lay people can take the lead. This is a call as well for those whose task is that of shepherding, that they may be dynamically inspired to promote, hasten, and bring this about.

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