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Anniversaries are usually an auspicious time to be grateful for the past, recall the blessings, and discern new invitations of the Spirit, and thus, respond better to the challenges of the future. As EAPI celebrates its 60th anniversary, I offer some points for reflection. These points are really gifts that EAPI has offered to the Church over the last sixty years. I also propose some challenges that EAPI may consider as it navigates itself in the foreseeable future.

The late Fr. Adolfo Nicolás used to say that if he had his way, he would have wanted to establish more pastoral institutes and centers like EAPI. He was obviously speaking from his own personal experience as a former EAPI Director and Superior General of the Jesuits. He saw the dividends of running programs for Church ministers and leaders—lay, religious, diocesan clergy, and bishops who need *aggiornamento*—a term popularized by Saint Pope John XXIII in Vatican II—to bring their life and mission up to date. The transition period in the wake of Vatican II brought about a sea change in our life and mission. It was then a paradigm

shift for the Church that needed reform to embrace its own fragilities and to face the opportunities and challenges in the contemporary world. When EAPI was established after Vatican II ended in 1965, it was designed to respond to the pressing need for *aggiornamento*. This had to start from Church ministers and leaders. The *aggiornamento* is not yet ended inasmuch as the world is rapidly changing, and the Church is always discerning the hand of God. The *residential* programs of EAPI are a modest contribution to the updating of the Church. It was not enough to provide programs. The participants were expected to form a community, walk and pray together, build confidence, share received wisdom, discern both personally and communally, and pursue the invitations of the Spirit. Considering the increasing demand for such programs, there are not many centers around the world for this purpose. These residential programs then are the first important gift of EAPI. Thus, it continues to be relevant for our Church and world today. For as long as the Church is always reforming (*ecclesia semper reformanda est*), the urgent need for pastoral institutes and centers like EAPI will also be there.

The second gift of EAPI is its capacity to provide space for its participants who are many a time tired from ministries, needing discernment for future ministries, or simply just taking a break from their work. Often, Church ministers and leaders have no space and time to do this in the busyness of their ministries. They need to backpedal, be energized, and animated. They need to pause and take stock of their life and mission before they return to the battlefield or get a new assignment from their bishops or superiors. They also yearn to deepen their leadership and management skills, refresh their theological studies and pastoral orientations, and gain more contacts beyond their respected places of work. Many Church ministers and leaders especially those who come from the global south with very limited resources look and long for programs for this purpose. I've been the Chair of the Board of Trustees of EAPI for six years in my capacity as then President of the Jesuit Conference of Asia Pacific. I see joy in the faces of the participants as they go through the programs offered by EAPI together. I see some participants who remain

connected and maintain friendships that started in EAPI. I see some of them start to heal past wounds. Some of them continue their pastoral and theological formation by getting graduate degrees after their EAPI experience. Some of its alumni gain bigger responsibilities and new appointments, like becoming cardinals, bishops, superiors, and leaders entrusted with very challenging and complex tasks. Because of the international character of the participants of EAPI, many experience interculturality, thus enriching each other's cultural experience. Not a few of them have limited experience living in a multicultural community. For many of them, coming out of EAPI refreshed, joyous, and hopeful is enough cause for celebration. Thanks to the space, time, programs and community experience that EAPI provided, many things happen during their stay in EAPI under the guidance of its competent staff and, ultimately, of the Spirit. They encounter the Spirit in being together, walking as one body, learning from each other, and discerning the invitations of God.

The third gift of EAPI is the experience of enriching and deepening of the participants' spirituality. Many lay, religious, diocesan clergy, and participants bringing in the charisms of their religious orders, congregations, or institutes appreciate another opportunity to enrich their respective spiritualities further. Although EAPI is inspired by Ignatian charism, it does not undermine or compete with other charisms. Rather, it enriches other charisms. It offers another optic of living which is respectful of other spiritualities. EAPI is home to diverse spiritualities. It celebrates diversity, not only in terms of culture, but also in spiritualities and charisms.

As regards the challenges in the future, I present three points. The first concerns EAPI's role in promoting a synodal church by preparing discerning Church leaders and ministers. EAPI has done this role over six decades, but it can continue to promote vigorously a culture of synodality in an increasingly fragmented world. There is so much division in our world today, more than ever. This polarization with the rise of populist leaders and intensification of post-truth narratives has divided our world, the Church included. This is very

evident whenever there are elections or contentious issues that trigger polarization.

The second concerns EAPI's role in enabling its participants to reflect on and engage artificial intelligence (AI). Pope Leo has already alerted us about the need to take seriously the impact of AI on our lives. Pope Leo insists that "new generations must be helped, not hindered on their path to maturity and responsibility" in regard to their relationship with new technologies and AI.¹ AI is here to stay, but many users of it are either uncritical when they employ it or they are thoroughly dismissive of its possible benefits. EAPI can help its participants on this issue, conduct forums that bring people together and undertake research on this topical field to help church people gain better insights on dealing with this concern. EAPI's *Asia Pacific Mission Studies* can play a crucial role in this regard.

The third challenge is to collaborate increasingly with other pastoral institutes and theological and formative spirituality centers and to define a common agenda that can help capacitate each other. This has been done in the past, but more needs to be done to work together. This is a good test to see how far synodality can be stretched among these pastoral institutes and centers given the fact that we have common concerns, such as diminishing overseas support and limited resources. The issues confronting the Church and our world are immensely complex. We need to come together, not ignore, or worse, compete with each other, and labor together in the Lord's vineyard.

I warmly congratulate the EAPI community on its 60th year! I have only presented three gifts and challenges, but obviously more can be said. For now, the road ahead is not certain or linear. It has twists and turns. It is plagued with uncertainties, but even with an imperfect compass and complex challenges that lie ahead, the Spirit will lead EAPI to its final destination. With discernment and determination, the Spirit will accompany EAPI to fulfill its mission.

1 Isabella H de Carvalho, "Pope Leo XIV on AI: New Generations Must be Helped, Not Hindered," accessed March 4, 2026, <https://www.vaticannews.va/en/pope/news/2025-12/pope-leo-xiv-artificial-intelligence-young-society-technology.html>.

ABOUT THE AUTHOR

FATHER ANTONIO F. MORENO, SJ, was President of Jesuit Conference for Asia Pacific from 2014 to 2017. He was previously appointed as the Provincial Superior of the Philippine Jesuits in 2013 and President of the Ateneo de Zamboanga University in 2007. He served as Dean of the College of Arts and Sciences in 2003, before he became Vice President of Social Development at Xavier University in 2005. He is author of *Imperfect Leadership: A Jesuit Reflects on his Journey* (Xavier University–Ateneo de Cagayan Press, 2026).