

Asia Pacific Mission Studies

Manuscript 1120

Remembering the First Ten Years

José M. Calle, SJ

Follow this and additional works at: <https://archium.ateneo.edu/apms>

REMEMBERING THE FIRST TEN YEARS

*(Delivered on October 15, 2008, on the occasion
of the 42nd anniversary celebration of EAPI)*

José M. Calle, SJ

People come to the EAPI to EXPLORE the FUTURE; I am here today to REMEMBER the PAST.

And I say this for two reasons. First, remembering is what old people do best. And then, remembering is also a very biblical thing to do. How often the Lord is telling His people: “Remember the days when . . .” “Don't you remember. . . ?” “Do not forget. . .”

As I stand here with you today, as the last survivor of the EAPI Founding Team, I feel somehow obliged to do some remembering of the Past. In this way I may be able to give credit and call to presence those of my colleagues who have the first dreams of the EAPI and in many hidden ways helped the dream come true. Like the grand classical symphonies, the EAPI history, has a prelude.

A Little Booklet and the Catholic Catechetical Academy

From 1941 to 1949, Fr. Hofinger was a missionary in North China, as professor in the Regional Seminary of Kinghsien, province of Hebei. The

prelude begun with the publication of a little booklet published by Hofinger in Latin and Chinese in 1946. Its title was *Nunctius Noster*.

The small booklet was actually a popular version of the famous work of Joseph Andreas Jungmann, “The Good News and its Proclamation” where he established the foundations for a more kerygmatic theology and catechesis. Amazingly that small booklet made a great impact, especially in North China. As a result, in 1948 the then Apostolic Internuncio, Antonio Riberi, encouraged the Superior of the Mission of Kinghsien to establish in Peiping, with Hofinger as moderator, “The Catholic Catechetical Academy.”

Alas! The beautiful dream of creating a “Catechetical Academy” somewhere in Peking (Beijing) evaporated the following year with the communist takeover in 1949. The Internuncio was expelled, the missionaries were dispersed, and Fr. Hofinger, with his seminarians, went into exile.

In Exile. 1949

Fr. Hofinger with the staff and students of the San Jose Jing Hsien seminary arrived as refugees in the Philippines at the end of 1949. As soon as they could, they reorganized their life in exile in the quonset huts of an abandoned army camp in a deserted area of Mandaluyong.

The Institute of Mission Apologetics: 1953

There, in 1953, in the Spartan setting provided by three of those Quonset huts, Fr. Hofinger, with the help of a small team dared to open, with unashamed determination, a catechetical and liturgical center. It was called the Institute of Mission Apologetics.

It was, in that spartan setting of Chabanel Hall, a reincarnation in the Philippines of the “*Academia Catechetica*” which the Jesuit refugees from China dreamed to have in Beijing. And some of us could even glimpse there the first profile of the now famous East Asian Pastoral Institute.

The EAPI Team

In 1957, Fr. Hofinger had four collaborators, who remained with him until 1966, namely Frs. Paul Brunner, Martin Ramsauer, John Seffer and myself. One evening in September 1961 Fr. Brunner and myself were taking a walk with Fr. Hofinger around the quarters of Chabanel Hall. He had just arrived from giving several courses in South Africa. At one point he stopped and said: “You know, quite a good number of people who attend my lectures, find rather strange the name of our institute. They don’t know what do we mean by “Mission Apologetics.” “Neither do I”—I said. That evening of September 1961, among the Quonset huts of Mandaluyong, through a very informal sharing, the name East Asian Pastoral Institute was heard for the first time. And as a result, the EAPI Team was born.

Work of the EAPI Team

Going through the records of those days, it is amazing to see the amount of work done by that small team, newly baptized EAPI, in the fields of liturgical renewal; catechetical training, publications and International Study Weeks.

The Liturgical Renewal

It was initiated by Paul Brunner. Two years before the 2nd Vatican Council, he obtained permission from the Archbishop of Manila to introduce, “*ad experimentum*,” the so far totally unknown “Community Mass,” in the chapel of Chabanel Hall, for the people living in the squatters around our place. The group of his “Alleluia Singers” became well known in many parishes. Little by little, that poor chapel of Chabanel Hall, filled with the poor neighboring families, became literally the first center of liturgical experimentation in this part of the world.

Catechetical Renewal

Within the EAPI team, I was responsible for the catechetical renewal. Early in 1960, the Secretary General of the Bishops conference, Msgr. Gaviola, had made clear to me that the main pastoral problem of the Church in the Philippines was the lack of religious instruction in the public high schools, where the great majority of the Filipino youth were educated. Less than 20% could attend the private Catholic high schools.

I was then involved in a very ambitious project: to bring into the 29 public high schools of Metro Manila sufficient number of professional religion teachers. Cardinal Santos, the Archbishop of Manila, was so impressed by the way the project had been implemented, that he asked me to establish and to act as director of Manila Catechetical Institute. The newly created Catechetical Institute, in the Pius XII Catholic Center, at United Nations Avenue, became the ideal venue for the weekly in-service training of the 58 newly chosen public high schools religion teachers. Thirty-eight of them were young sisters from 18 different Congregations. This was the first time sisters from different congregations were working together in a common apostolic project. The other 22 were young leaders of SCA trained by Ms. Tessie Nitorreda. These “well trained, well chosen, well paid, full time public high schools teachers” were assigned to 29 public high schools, where, in those days, there were approximately 45,000 students.

Publications

Fr. Ramsauer with the help of the other members of the team, took care of the three Reviews of the EAPI, namely *Good Tidings, Amen*, and *Teaching All Nations*, as well as the Book Service, which in those days before and after the Council, expanded far beyond anybody’s expectations.

International Study Weeks

The International Study Weeks were without any doubt one of Fr. Hofinger's unique contributions to the preparation and follow-up of Vatican II. He organized six of them in the years immediately preceding and following the Council: Nijmegen in Holland (1959), Eichstadt in Germany (1960), Bangkok in Thailand (1962); Katigondo in Uganda (1964), Manila in the Philippines (1967), Medellín in Colombia (1968).

From the EAPI Team to the EAPI Training Center

Obviously, the work of the EAPI team in Chabanel Hall included the renewal of the parish liturgy; the new wave of teachers of religion in the 29 public high schools; the popularity of the three Reviews; the expansion of the Book Service and the wide resonance given to the International Study weeks of Fr. Hofinger, had attracted the attention of a number of persons in position of authority.

Both Cardinal Santos, the Archbishop of Manila, and the Apostolic Nuncio were appreciative of the work done by the EAPI team of Chabanel Hall.

Soon the president and academic vice-president of the Ateneo de Manila University began to explore the possibility of a closer collaboration between the EAPI and the Ateneo University.

Meanwhile, a number of Bishops and major Superiors of East Asia were asking Fr. Hofinger to facilitate the creation of a Training Pastoral Center, as desired by the 2nd Vatican Council.

Besides, the Jesuit Roman authorities began to consider more seriously the option of making the EAPI an inter-provincial work, not only of the Far East Province and of the Province of the Philippines, but of all the Provinces of the East Asian Region. But before reaching any decision, they asked the Provincials of the East Asian Assistency to send delegates to meet in Manila with the EAPI team.

Manila Meeting, Sept. 64

In the last session of the two days meeting, out of 10 delegates, 8 voted to make a strong recommendation to the Provincials to consider Fr. Alfonso Nebreda as the first Director of the new EAPI Training Center, with Fr. Johannes Hofinger as Assistant Director for publications.

A large majority felt that Fr. Nebreda was well qualified for the new work envisioned by the Center, because of his research on pre-evangelization, his teaching experience in the Gregorian University, his ability to organize pastoral programs as the one he did in Loyola University of Chicago, and his talents as communicator.

Role of Fr. Horacio de la Costa

It was at this moment that Fr. Horacio de la Costa, SJ, newly appointed Jesuit Provincial of the Philippine Province, played a decisive role in the foundation of the EAPI.

First of all, under the newly established inter-provincial work, Fr. De la Costa became the Major Superior of the EAPI Team, who were all Jesuits. As such, he was the one who officially informed Fr. Alfonso Nebreda, that on the 15th of August 1965, Fr. General Arrupe, SJ had appointed him first Director of the East Asian Pastoral Institute. Moreover, thanks mainly to him, Cardinal Santos (who at that time, for various reasons, was not very well disposed towards the Jesuits of the Ateneo), granted the permission for the new Pastoral Institute as part of the Ateneo University. Also, in order to complete the building of the EAPI, Fr. De la Costa made some financial arrangements with the Maryland province of the Society of Jesus, and finally he negotiated with the President of the Ateneo, to lend to us this piece of land within the Ateneo University campus, where we are now.

The First Director

Fr. Nebreda arrived in early August 1965. He was just 40 years old, a tall, youthful man, very approachable and mentally very alert. Alfonso Nebreda and I were old time friends. As we were walking those days through the campus of the Ateneo, we both realized that the plan to transform the small center of research and publications of Fr. Hofinger into an international, intercultural, and coeducational pastoral training center for the local churches of East Asia, was a very big thing and also an unheard-of novelty.

Never before had there been any attempt in this part of the world to bring priests and sisters, lay men and lay women, to be trained together in one place for 7 months. The Archbishop of Manila may have had some objections. Under those circumstances, it was helpful that some of us, in the EAPI team, were well accepted by Cardinal Santos.

Regarding the program and other problems concerning faculty and students, it was also very helpful that both of us have gone a few years earlier, 57- 58 through the common experience of Lumen Vitae, in Belgium, the pioneering international pastoral institute, founded by Fr. George Delcuve in response to the pastoral needs of Europe, Africa and Latin America.

This common experience of Lumen Vitae, plus the program of studies prepared for the Summer Pastoral Institute in Loyola University in Chicago, influenced in many ways the early design of the EAPI.

Daring & Urgent Enterprise

In those days of 1965, people in the Church were still enjoying the “fresh air” brought into the world by John XXIII. Nonetheless some signs of approaching turbulence began to be felt and soon, the youth was in revolt and priests and religious in crisis. To attempt such a project in those days after the Council, was quite a daring enterprise but, on the other hand, extremely urgent and timely.

Alfonso Nebreda irradiated calm and confidence. And soon, people in the campus felt that for this kind of enterprise Nebreda was the right man, at the right time, in the right place. Moreover, from the very beginning, he felt the full support and encouragement of Fr. De la Costa, Provincial of the Philippines, of Fr. Donelan, President of the Ateneo University and of Fr. Hofinger himself.

The First Year

In his skimpy personal diary, Nebreda wrote this: “We began the first year of the EAPI in the campus of the Ateneo University on September 15th, 1966, with a group of 37 students from 12 different Asian countries. Average age, late thirties. Most of them bring along some years of missionary experience. To lecture to them is indeed quite challenging. In the final evaluation they were very appreciative for the program offered to them and did enjoy the rich polyphony of more than 25 different lecturers. They were aware that this was our first experiment and accepted with patience and understanding our lack of proper accommodations.”

They had the lectures in a classroom of Bellarmine Hall, boarding and lodging in different places inside and outside of the Ateneo campus. But the men’s dormitory with 45 rooms, would be ready for the next year together with the Faculty House and the rest of the building.

First Year’s Grand Finale

The first year of the EAPI ended with a really grand finale, namely, the International Study Week on Mission Catechetics and Liturgy held in Manila, the last week of April.

It followed those seminars, previously organized by Fr. Hofinger in Assisi, Nijmegen, Eichstätt, Bangkok and Katigondo. This one, in Manila, was held in the grand auditorium of Loyola House of Studies and gathered more than 150 experts, including 20 bishops, and delegates the Major Pastoral

Centers as well as some Protestant observers. Of course, this was a unique opportunity for our small group of first-year's graduates to be exposed, before going back home, to this array of specialists in the pastoral field, including the venerable Fr. Joseph Jungmann, the mentor and life-long friend of Fr. Hofinger.

Miss Teresita Nitorreda Joins the Staff

When in September of 1966, 37 participants gathered in one of the class-rooms of Bellarmine Hall to listen to Fr. Nebreda in the first EAPI course, Miss Tessie Nitorreda was one of them. In those days the Student Catholic Action was very much alive and Tessie was very well known, loved and respected by the young SCA's leaders in the various colleges and universities of Manila. At the end of the first EAPI course, Nebreda convinced her to remain in the staff as his personal assistant. She accepted reluctantly and became a very important figure in the EAPI since its foundation until the year 1990. She made a distinctive contribution to the development and supervision of many of the activities of the Institute, as well as to the elaboration of the program and the search for competent professors, inside and outside of the Philippines. Her presence and position as a lay woman in the permanent staff, was emblematic of a new era. Aside from being an excellent communicator and administrator, she had special expertise in group dynamics, applied to training people and was recognized in South East Asia as the pioneer of Experiential Methodology, applied to Religious Education.

In the Brand-New Building

The second year of the EAPI begun on the 15th of September 1967. In some ways one can say that the previous course was somehow experimental. Some would say that the real EAPI thing began rather in this September of 1967, when the new group of 67 participants took possession of their brand-new building. These 67 participants came from 14 different nations and

belonged to 25 different religious congregations, 27 women and 40 men. The men had their individual living rooms in the right wing of the new building. The women continued living in nearby convents until their hostels were ready within the campus. But it made a big difference, over the previous year, now that the auditorium, the library, the dining room, the recreation room and the chapel were all found in the same building.

What About the Early EAPI Program

Obviously, the program of the Institute intended, first of all, to carry forward the vision of the Second Vatican Council, which had just been concluded on December 8, 1965.

Therefore from the early days of the EAPI, we had courses, workshops and seminars with experts on a variety of pertinent post-Vatican II questions: scripture, liturgy, religions in Asia, cultural anthropology, pastoral sociology, pastoral psychology, linguistics, catechetics, theology of mission, spirituality, visual aids, film, social development, modern philosophy, group dynamics, etc. One of the participants of the early days wrote to one of his friends: "It is indeed a great experience, to discover with our lecturers here the hidden treasures of these brand-new Conciliar documents." Tessie described the program of those years as "Pastoral Liberal Arts."

Among the many things worth remembering during this second year of the EAPI, we may just mention two: the blessing of the new EAPI's buildings and the International Study Week of Medellín (Colombia).

The Blessing

On April 1st, 1968, a few days before the departure of the 67 participants, arrangements were made for the blessing of the brand-new EAPI buildings. At 12:00 midday, most of the major superiors of the East Asian Assistency of the Society of Jesus concelebrated in the opening Eucharist. Early in the afternoon, I was sent to Malacañang to fetch the First Lady, Mrs. Imelda

Romuáldez Marcos. As soon as she arrived, she was greeted by the Apostolic Nuncio and the Provincial, Fr. De la Costa. The program began with the Philippine National Anthem, followed by the Invocation given by Fr. James Donelan, President of the Ateneo de Manila University, and some words of welcome by Fr. Alfonso Nebreda, Director of EAPI. Fr. Horacio de la Costa, Provincial of the Philippine Jesuit Province delighted everybody with some very well-crafted closing remarks. By then the First Lady, Mrs. Imelda Romuáldez Marcos, escorted now by the Apostolic Nuncio, Carmine Rocco performed the ribbon cutting and the blessing began. A light supper followed to close the day.

EAPI in Medellín

The other important event in 1968, was the sixth International Study Week, in which Fr. Hofinger and the EAPI staff were very much involved.

It began on the 11th of August with a solemn Eucharist in the chapel of the Major Seminary of Medellín and closed on the evening of the 17th with an exciting open forum with the then Secretary of State, Cardinal Veillot. Some of the main points we stressed during our position papers and general groups discussions, were approved by the general assembly and incorporated into the final conclusions published in a book entitled “*Medellín Papers.*”

Exciting Years. The Right Blending of Talents

The third and fourth Regular Courses, '68-'69 and '69-'70, began as scheduled on September 15, with 89 participants in '68-'69 and 92 in '69-'70. These two years will be remembered by some of the original members of the staff as extremely exciting.

First of all, we were overwhelmed by the sheer number of participants, who for the first time fully occupied the brand-new facilities of the EAPI. This in itself was very encouraging, and assured us that what we were trying to do through the different courses, the experimental liturgies, the prayer sessions, the

cultural activities, the dynamics for community building, etc., responded somehow to the felt needs of the people sent to us by the various local churches of East Asia. In that period of the EAPI history, there was, it seemed, the right blending of talents among the members of the resident staff. For somehow, they were able to create a warm ambiance of mutual trust and graceful acceptance of one another in such a multinational and multicultural group of people. Fr. Tony Leetai, of very happy memory, contributed a lot to this spirit.

In '68 and '69, the participants represented 21 different nations: Korea, Japan, Taiwan, Macao, Hong Kong, Philippines, Indonesia, Borneo, Vietnam, Malaysia, Singapore, Thailand, Ceylon, Pakistan, India, Iraq, New Guinea, Guam, Caroline and Marshall Islands.

The missionaries from abroad were from England, Scotland, Ireland, Belgium, Holland, France, Germany, Austria, Italy, Spain, Portugal, Canada, United States, Mexico and Australia. Altogether they belonged to over 15 different religious congregations. The sisters offered an even wider variety of cultures and congregations.

Fr. Hofinger Departs for Latin America

The relationships between Fr. Hofinger and Fr. Nebreda were always excellent. But after the Study Week in Medellín, and while working with Fr. Terence Sheridan on the editing of the *Medellín Papers*, serious conflicts emerged in the publications department under Fr. Hofinger. These internal conflicts eventually led to his departure from the EAPI and from the Philippines in 1969. On the other hand, within the new program design of the EAPI, more directly concerned with the evangelization of non-Christian cultures, it was not easy to find the proper place for the program offered by Fr. Hofinger. Moreover, after the experience of the Study Week in Medellín (Colombia) he felt the call to put his knowledge and expertise in Catechetics to the service of the Latin-American people. He learned Spanish and began to

work in various places of Latin America, coming back to the EAPI only once a year.

Timely Arrival of Fr. Francis X. Clark

In those early beginnings of the EAPI, there were two very important areas, which so far had not been handled as well as they should: The library and the finances of the Institute. Fortunately, Fr. Francis Clark, former Provincial of the Philippine Jesuit Province, joined the staff in 1968. Right away, he took charge of these two areas. Thanks mainly to him, the EAPI had soon a well-organized library, while taking care of our finances and of paying in time the debt we had with the Manhattan Chase Bank.

The so called “Aggiornamento Course” begins

Sometime in February 1969, the Regional Superior of Maryknoll Missionaries, Fr. Jim Gavin, shared with Fr. Nebreda and myself his concern for the spiritual and pastoral renewal in the light of Vatican II of all his men working in Taiwan and the Philippines. But since it was impossible for most of them to attend the long seven month course, he suggested to reserve the facilities of the EAPI for one month (April 10th to May 10th) for the next two years and asked us to prepare a program of one month for his men. The EAPI academic staff, whose chairman was Ms. T. Nitorreda, prepared the program with three inter-twinning objectives: 1) Spiritual renewal, 2) Theological reflection and 3) Pastoral effectiveness. The very positive feedback given to this program by the Maryknollers, encouraged the staff to continue it for the sake of the many other missionaries who were unable to participate in the long course. And this is how, thanks to the suggestion of Jim Gavin, MM, the famous EAPI *Aggiornamento* courses began. In the decade 1968 to 1978, 623 missionaries from 32 East Asian and South Pacific Region participated in it.

A Unique Meeting Place of the Local Cultures & Churches

While the program of studies was unfolding fairly well, we were made aware that the EAPI was not only a Training Pastoral Center. It has also the potential to become a unique meeting place for the local cultures & churches of East Asia and the Pacific. In fact, nowhere in Asia there were in those days so many representatives from so many different local churches who were following as a community of men and women of the Church such an intensive seven-month training program. Such awareness triggered a rich variety of group's interaction, intercultural activities, pastoral exchanges, oriental prayer exercises, inculturated Eucharistic celebrations, and missionary pastoral research.

The '70s, a Period of Consolidation

The early '70s was a period of consolidation. The original resident staff, in spite of the uncertainties and tensions of the first 4 years, was still in very good health and eager to respond to the many requests addressed to them from inside and outside the country.

The vision and the mission of the EAPI was by now more clearly defined, thanks to the personality of the director and his assistants, the team spirit of the men and women of the resident staff and the impressive array of more than 15 visiting professors.

As an intercultural, coeducational, academic community, the EAPI was certainly unique. The exposure to and immersion in such a group was in itself a process of authentic conscientization. It sharpened the sensitivity and widened the understanding of social, cultural and political situations, as experienced those days by the participants from Asia and the Pacific. It offered numerous points of reference to evaluate local situations and to discern specific plans of action. It challenged in many subtle ways the quality of our Christian vision and, of course, the degree of one's personal, psychological maturity. It is useful to remember that the beginnings of the EAPI coincided with the

turbulence of the post-conciliar era, with the youth revolt of Paris in '68 and with the Cultural Revolution in the China of Mao Tze Tong. Those were exciting but also turbulent days.

No wonder that even within the Church, some important people could not fully appreciate what was going on in the EAPI. In fact, some of those in charge of convening and programming for the November 1970 Pan-Asian Bishops Conference in Manila, had the plan of inserting in the agenda the proposal to establish in Manila a new Pastoral Institute for Asia.

Nebreda handled this first serious crisis very well. He immediately sent a Memorandum to Cardinal Kim of Korea and Cardinal Darmojuvono of Indonesia. And they also felt that there was indeed a need for Pastoral Institutes in many places, but not for two Asian Pastoral Institutes in one place.

One Important Highlight of '71: the Hostels

In September, the course began with 84 students, 47 men and 37 women. Some of the highlights of that year (1971-1972) were, first of all, the inauguration of the two beautiful hostels for women, built behind the book service, which now is the community room, a short distance away from the main building. For the first time, everyone was on campus and this meant a great difference for the daily routine of lectures, meals, and group activities.

Under the Martial Law

The course '72-'73 began when the Philippines was in a very critical political situation. On September 22, 1972, President Ferdinand Marcos placed the whole nation under Martial Law. Some of our close friends, like Chino Roces, the publisher of Manila Times, Ninoy Aquino and several prominent Ateneo Alumni were jailed or placed under house arrest. There was much tension among the students and faculty in the Ateneo campus where we live. The Jesuit scholastics with their superiors spent hours in discernment sessions, to find out the proper ways of protesting against such a violation of

human rights. Jesuit scholastics were quite often seen with their soutanes in the streets of Manila, leading antigovernment demonstrations. Paradoxically, this was the year when the EAPI attracted the largest group of 92 participants, 54 men and 38 women, from 22 different countries.

As you can easily imagine, the declaration of Martial Law brought some panic to the EAPI. The new regulations for the enrollment of foreign students into the universities of the Philippines were very strict. Were they to be applied to our foreign students, we will be forced to cancel the whole operation of the EAPI. The process to obtain the permit for a foreign student to study in the Philippines was a very time-consuming process and very difficult to obtain.

Fortunately, some of the members of the staff had some friends who were close to the Malacañang Palace. Their advice was to write a letter to President Marcos, explaining our problem and requesting a special permit for the foreign students applying to the EAPI.

With the help of Mrs. Marcos (who fondly remembered the EAPI from cutting the ribbon in the opening ceremony), the permission was granted on the 28th of March 1973.

This was an epoch-making permission. Since then, our participants got the visa to enter in the Philippines by simply presenting the letter of acceptance into the EAPI. Obviously, such a special permit from the Office of the President of the Philippines, which facilitated the entrance into the country of all our foreign applicants, was vital to the EAPI in order to have every year sufficient number of foreign students attending the program. But it was granted one year after the Declaration of Martial Law and consequently the people of the EAPI had to be particularly careful in any demonstrations against the government. Anyhow, the long course (1972-1973) ran very smoothly and it was closed with a most solemn Easter Vigil celebration moderated by Fr. Juan Mateos, SJ, , of Rome's Oriental Institute.

Bishops' Aggiornamento & the Christian Communities Program

In June 1973, we had our first “*aggiornamento*” for 23 bishops. Soon after that, the Apostolic Nuncio and the President of the CBCP requested from the EAPI to take charge of giving a series of “the Retreat-Renewal Seminars” to the Clergy and Bishops of all the dioceses of the Philippines. Frs. Nebreda and Parisi, Ms. Nitorreda and myself were in charge of this project. In one year and a half, this EAPI Team addressed 650 priests and close to 30 bishops. Meanwhile, based on the catechetical insights I presented in the International Study Week of Medellín (Colombia), and the Experiential Methodology developed by Ms. Nitorreda, and in collaboration with Srs. Angie Villanueva, RC; Teresita Fiel, RGS, Julma Neo, DC, Andy Collantes, OSB, and Toni Cruzada, the EAPI produced the Christian Communities Program. This program became very popular and was soon introduced in several dioceses of Luzon, Visayas, and Mindanao. In those days the theology and methodology of what we called Environmental, Experiential and Communitarian Catechesis was an important unit of the EAPI program.

The Central Board

It was around this time, '73 to '74 that the resident Staff began to evolve into a mini “ecclesial community,” with some representatives of the diocesan clergy, some members of the laity and members of different religious Congregations. Special mention should be made here of Fr. John O'Regan, OMI, Bob McKee, H.C., Desmond Crowe, FMM, Joseph Castellino, and Srs. Idmara SSpS, Sr. Victorina de la Paz, SCMM, Sr Diosdada, RVM, and Victoria Faicol, to mention just a few. Eventually the experience of this multicultural, inter-congregational ecclesial community, suggested the creation of the EAPI Central Board. Several factors were at work in the genesis of this rather novel administrative structure. The insistence of the Vatican Council on co-responsibility in apostolic leadership was one. Also, some of the members of the resident staff, who already had several years of experience with

such an international and inter-congregational group, felt the need of having within the resident staff, a policy-making body with decision-making power to be called the Central Board. The members of the Central Board were to be elected by the resident staff. And they must include, not only Jesuits but also men and women from other congregations and from the laity. In the mind of experienced administrators, the attempt to give to such a mixed group the responsibility for the proper functioning of such a complex project as the EAPI, was a dream. On the other hand, to prepare the way to the future it was felt in those days after the Council the urgent need to foster subsidiarity, co-responsibility and collaboration within the Church. And the EAPI seemed to be a right place to expose the participants to a model of administrative structure, where men and women of the laity and of different religious congregations are made responsible of a common apostolic work.

Some of the bishops and major superiors in their visit to the EAPI were appreciative of such a model of administration, because they could see that, with the shortage of vocations, more inter-congregational groups will have to work together among themselves and with the clergy and the laity, in response to the new challenges of the Church. In hindsight there was something “prophetic” in that peculiar administrative structure of EAPI Central Board. It worked quite well for about four years.

Towards the First Ten Years Anniversary

We were now approaching the first ten years anniversary of the EAPI. We have the records of participants, faithfully kept by Ms. Faicol, the famous head of the EAPI secretariat for the first 32 years. During the first ten years, a total of 759 participants have attended the regular 7-month course, 575 the one-month *aggiornamento* and 929 the special courses given in Malaysia, Bangladesh, Japan, Australia and New Zealand.

Looking back to the past 9 years we felt grateful that the original mission of the EAPI, namely the renewal of the local churches of East Asia and the Pacific in the spirit of the II Vatican Council, was, by the Grace of God,

quite successful and far beyond our early expectations. For example, in spite of some negative incidents, we felt widely accepted by most of the bishops and religious major superiors, inside and outside of the Philippines. In fact, it was around this time that Fr. Nebreda and myself were invited to give, in the Major Seminary of Sydney, a one-week course to the joint Bishops Conferences of Australia, New Zealand and the South Pacific.

Also, a good number of our alumni and alumnae were in positions to share with others what they have learned and experienced in the EAPI. In 1975, 48 of them were masters or mistresses of novices and juniors; 39 were local superiors; 38 were diocesan directors of religious education; 35 staff members in pastoral institutes or formation programs; 35 heads of schools; 30 provincials or regional superiors; 12 rectors of seminaries; 12 chancellors or vicar generals; 11 generals and assistant generals. The above figures were taken from the Annual Report sent by Fr. Nebreda to the Jesuit major superiors of East Asia.

I wish I could finish my story right here, in May '75. But in July 10th 1975, due to a decision made by the Central Board regarding a Jesuit of the staff, the chairman of the Conference of Major Superiors, Fr. Bernard Chu, wrote to Fr. Nebreda, saying that the Conference of Major Superiors wanted to be more directly involved with the EAPI. Their involvement was not so much focused on evaluating the past, but on finding ways on how to replace and renew the present staff, and how to respond to the needs of the future. Actually, this decision of the Major Superiors as we were approaching the first ten year's anniversary, was very timely and providential. Those of us who have been involved in the origins of the Institute for ten consecutive years without a break, were exhausted and needed urgently to be given a rest and an opportunity for personal and professional renewal.

The New Beginnings

The first good news was that the Viêtcông had expelled two talented men from Vietnam, and were now ready to join in 1976 the ranks of the EAPI

resident staff: Felipe Gómez and Roger Champoux. Excellent acquisitions as you know. Then the search for the new director had begun and after one year of searching in different directions, finally in his letter for Christmas of 1977, Nebreda could write: “The long search has ended to the satisfaction of everyone. The new director is a much-appreciated theologian in Japan and is well known in other parts of Asia. Here in the EAPI we have made it clear to the superiors that he was our favorite candidate, and are therefore delighted with the choice.” His name you know: Adolfo Nicolás, the pioneer of new beginnings. . .

Also accessible at *The First Ten Years of EAPI*, last accessed April 9, 2026, <https://jcapsj.org/2008/11/first-ten-years-eapi-0/>.

ABOUT THE AUTHOR

REV. FR. JOSE “PEPE” CALLE, SJ, was a member of the EAPI founding team. Born in 1922 in Santander, Spain, he entered the Society of Jesus in 1940, and was sent to join the Jesuit mission to China in 1947. He was among those missionaries expelled in 1952, when the Communist party gained power, and along with others, was subsequently sent to the Philippines to continue his studies for the Jesuit priesthood, where he was ordained in 1953. After Catechetical Studies at Lumen Vitae in Belgium and at the Institut Catholique in Paris, he returned to Manila and helped in the establishment of a pastoral institute, which came to be known as the EAPI. After serving many years in the administration and faculty of EAPI, he was assigned to Taiwan in 1994, and since 2003, had been serving in spiritual and pastoral ministry at Bellarmine College in Taipei, until he passed in 2025.