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Arthur Leger, SJ

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Background

The East Asian Pastoral Institute (EAPI) traces its beginning to 1949 when the Jesuit missionaries were expelled from main land China and had to find a new home for themselves and the seminarians.

They found refuge in Manila, Philippines, in the Quonset huts of an abandoned army camp in a deserted area of Mandaluyong. There they continued to learn the Chinese language, hoping that they would soon return to the China mission. This, however, did not happen. In 1953, Fr. Johannes B. Hofinger, SJ, an Austrian missiologist, founded the Institute for Missionary Apologetics. He set up the institute to provide comprehensive liturgical renewal for missionaries and make them more aware of the changes in the Church's catechetical and religious education programs. In September 1961, when the institute's name was changed to East Asian Pastoral Institute, the resident team of Jesuits was already

already training missionaries from all over the world in the areas of liturgical and catechetical renewal and conducting workshops on the missionary aspects of the Church.

In September 2011, the EAPI celebrated its 50th anniversary. The institute has been considered a gift to the universal Church by providing resources and programs for renewal and the *aggiornamento* in the spirit of Vatican II. It is certainly considered as the Asian hub for theological renewal, updating, experimentation, and exploration.

One of the “diamonds” of the EAPI is its multicultural residential environment. This has always been a unique feature of the EAPI. It still may be the only place in the world where priests and sisters, lay men and lay women are formed together for mission by living together in dorms and hostels for months to a year. For many participants, this is one way of crossing the borders of gender, culture, race, and even spirituality.

Since its establishment, the occupancy of the institute has fluctuated mainly because of the relevance of the programs. Consequently, the EAPI has had to adapt the content, duration, and pedagogy of its programs while remaining faithful to the reforms instituted by Vatican II.

The original EAPI programs began with a catechetical and liturgical focus. More recently, however, the institute has updated its theology and pastoral renewal courses. Today participants seek out sabbatical and pastoral leadership programs. As a result, this year (2013), the Pastoral Leadership for Mission (PLM) began with a full house and a waiting list of interested participants. A total of 85 (which is the maximum occupancy) lay, religious, and clergy coming from 16 nations signed up for the leadership course. This was mainly due to the great percentage of participants coming from the priority countries of China, Vietnam, Myanmar, and East Timor. However, there was also an increase noted in terms of representation from Oceania, South Asia, and even places like Zimbabwe and Namibia in Africa. The participants of the PLM feel that there is a dire need for effective pastoral leadership in the Church. There is a clear realization that the knowledge, skills,

and attitudes that informed pastoral leaders in the past are no longer relevant and in some cases ineffective. In addition, the changes in society and the Church have forced Church leaders to take a different look at the existing frameworks that inform our thinking about pastoral renewal and leadership.

The Organizational Structure

The East Asian Pastoral Institute, Inc. is a non-profit, non-stock corporation founded under the laws of the Republic of the Philippines. It is one of the two apostolic works of the Jesuit Conference of Asia and the Pacific (JCAP). This means that the institute is still guided by the missionary work of the Society of Jesus. The institute is also informed by the call of the Jesuits to renew the work so that participants might consider going to new frontiers.

The EAPI Board of Trustees consists of eleven members; six of them need to be Jesuits. The majority of them must be residents of the Philippines. The other members come from Indonesia, Cambodia, and China. The primary functions of the board are: a) to manage the academic and spiritual life of the institute as well as its finances, staffing, legal, and property concerns; 2) to prepare financial statements of the institute and to conduct the periodic reviews of the same; and 3) to review and approve the annual budget of the institute.

The director of the institute is appointed by the president of the board and approved by the members of the board. The director is appointed for three years and his primary functions are: 1) to implement the aims and goals of the institute; 2) to take responsibility for the everyday activities of the institute; 3) to take responsibility for all staff; and 4) together with the staff, to creatively seek new initiatives that will adapt the EAPI to the changing needs of the Church in Asia and the Pacific.

Staff

The EAPI consists of a small number of resident professors who specialize in ecclesiology, missiology, pastoral theology, and spirituality. The institute also depends on visiting professors who are invited from different parts of world to teach their own area of interest. Over the years many have come from South Asia to teach subjects like inculturation, interreligious dialogue, contextual theology, and Asian spiritualities. Others have come from Europe to take up topics like Vatican II, The Kingdom of God, Christology, and Sacramental Theology. The institute depends on the local Filipino professors and those from the Pacific to teach psychology, leadership, management, moral theology, narrative theology, scripture, and laity in the Church. In order to maintain gender balance, the institute always seeks out female lecturers to offer a different perspective to the theological discussion and research.

Each year the coordinators of the four programs (Pastoral Renewal, Sabbatical, Pastoral Leadership, and Pastoral Management), with the assistance of the staff, develop the modules to address con temporary pastoral issues while continuing to run those which participants have evaluated as most beneficial to their ongoing formation. For example, in the school year 2012-2013, there was a deliberate effort to offer courses that were aligned with the 50th anniversary of Vatican II, the *Catechism of the Catholic Church*, and the Year of Faith.

Vision, Mission, and Conceptual Framework

Vision: The East Asian Pastoral Institute – EAPI – is a multi-cultural community of disciples striving to witness to a new way of being Church. We commit ourselves to the churches of Asia and the Pacific in their mission to serve as leaven (Lk 13:21) in a vast region characterized by ancient cultures, diverse religious traditions, wide spread poverty, and complex social changes.

Mission: The EAPI, following the way of Jesus Christ, places itself at the service of the transformation of societies and cultures in Asia and the Pacific towards the values of God's reign by providing programs of integral formation for the laity, religious, and ordained ministers.

Conceptual Framework: The EAPI's conceptual framework is based on three premises: 1) the EAPI programs seek to inform, form, and transform pastoral agents to be wholly human and Christian for effective ministry; 2) the content and approach of the various modules are geared towards a deeper understanding of the Church teachings by creatively embodying that spirit in the context of Asia and the Pacific; 3) the primary outcome of the programs for each local church is service to its own people through dialoguing with the poor, with people of other cultures, and with adherents of other religious traditions.

Important Contributions

The fact that people still speak fondly of the EAPI experience and how it has helped the local churches is evidence of its invaluable service to many dioceses and congregations. At present, the impact of the integrated formation on thousands of EAPI participants can be extracted from the anecdotal evidence communicated to us by their stories.

In the last three years, more effort has been exerted to document the impact of the EAPI experience. The following narratives collected from participants highlight several areas which had a significant impact on those who attended the courses.

The EAPI offers participants a hub for the development and formation of pastoral leaders. A good number of EAPI participants have become bishops or superiors in their respective religious congregations. It appears that the EAPI experience has become a requirement, among others, before one can assume an important task in the local church context. The records show that more than 20 alumni have become bishops after attending the EAPI programs. Bishop Anton Bal, of Kundiawa Diocese in Papua New Guinea,

deliberately attended the pastoral courses here at the EAPI in 2008 before he took over as bishop of his diocese.

The EAPI offers a model of living in the global Church although it is located within a university campus. It is a Church in miniature. The modules offered and the experience of community living help the participants deepen their sense of belonging to the global Church, one that is shifting demographically from the North to the South and engaged with other Asian religions. The courses also offer updated information on Asian theologies imbibing in them the missionary spirit of Vatican II. They return to their home countries as more effective leaders and agents of transformation especially where Christianity is the religion of the minority.

A case in point is Sister Rosemary from Ireland and provincial superior of her congregation who returned to her home with a “feeling of being in unity with other nations and their culture.” She described how she was able to communicate the richness of the Catholic Church, while making her sisters more aware of the challenges that the changing global Church is facing. She added that the people in Europe and the US need to recognize the importance of understanding the influence of different Asian cultures and contexts.

The EAPI offers a sanctuary where participants can experience and integrate the rich spiritualities from all over the globe. Through the programs, the different Asian spiritualities and prayer traditions have spread to different parts of the world. In effect, participants are spiritually formed and transformed for their future ministries. Sister Losa (from Samoa) is active in giving retreats and recollections to the different sectors of the diocese where she is serving. She says that the different modules at the EAPI, as well as the liturgical celebrations, recollections, and spiritual activities renewed her spirit and vigor to undertake her pastoral ministry. Helen (from Bangladesh) found strength in knowing how much she is loved by God based on her retreat experience, spiritual accompaniment, and recollections. This renewed her spiritual grounding and enabled her to joyfully continue her ministry of running a center that caters to the needs of orphaned children in a poor area.

The EAPI offers a location for a community of learners to reflect on their experiences using different frameworks extracted from different theologies. The programs have helped to update the participants' knowledge in the areas of ecclesiology, missiology, and liturgy while at the same time renewing their vocation through psycho spiritual integration and community living. While attending the EAPI programs, many participants from China, Vietnam, and India indicated their desire to pursue further studies in the Philippines. They felt that they would be able to create a positive change in the local churches through more in-depth studies in theology. Khoa (from Vietnam) has found the confidence to pursue higher studies in theology and is now in Thailand. He hopes to go back to Vietnam equipped with the necessary attitudes, skills, and knowledge to serve the local church.

The EAPI offers a safe haven for lay persons to be directly involved in the Church. There is an environment of equality of leadership and discipleship among the staff and participants which allows honest discourse on theology and pastoral experiences. From the very beginning, the laity, and in particular women like Miss Tessie Nitoreda, has been an important part of the EAPI team. Fr. Jose Calle described Tessie in this way: "Her presence and position as a lay woman in the permanent staff was emblematic of a new era." Yet, the EAPI is still exploring ways to attract more lay people so that the clergy and religious can deepen their belief that we are "all" called to build up the kingdom of God. Nevertheless, the programs have given lay people the opportunity to study theology and reflect on the development of lay spirituality. In an atmosphere of trust, the lay challenge the normal mindsets and habits of the religious and clergy and make them better aware of the universal call to holiness.

Miss Lui Wan Sze Wendy from Hong Kong was able to develop a habit of asking the clergy and religious critical questions. On returning home she was asked to take on the lay ministry office in the Archdiocese of Hong Kong. Her work has resulted in more lay people from her local church benefiting from new programs that help deepen their lay mission spirituality. This is

particularly true for busy young professionals in Hong Kong to whom Wendy reaches out so that they are able to come closer to God. Her studies in the EAPI have provided her with an update on Church issues and teachings. But most importantly, she has acquired the skills to develop and implement her ideas of the Church in more effective ways.

Challenges

The East Asian Pastoral Institute has faced several challenges over the 50 years of service and mission to the universal Church. The typical problems have been: 1) the sustainability of the institute in the light of currency fluctuations and low number of applicants, 2) the relevance and uniqueness of the programs; 3) the tension between pastoral theology and psycho-spirituality; 4) the upgrading and maintenance of institutional facilities; and 5) the struggle to network and partner with other institutions and groups to realize its vision and mission.

These five challenges have become more problematic with the decision of the EAPI Board of Trustees to make China a priority country. In 2008, the Society of Jesus singled out China as an apostolic area requiring “special or privileged attention.” All Jesuits were invited to discuss how they could assist in the mission in China. The EAPI followed this lead and made China one of the four countries that the EAPI would give preference to in terms of scholarships. The English for Formation course was also established to help Chinese applicants develop reasonable facility with the language and ensure that they can fully benefit from the courses.

Since this development six years ago, the number of Chinese participants has tripled. In 2009 there were 10 participants but in 2012 the number went up to 31 participants. While positive in one respect, this rapid increase also raised concern among the academic staff. It appears that this large Chinese representation negatively affected the morale of other participants. The reasons given were: 1) their level of English competency was very low; 2)

their knowledge of basic theology was at a catechetical level; and 3) they lacked a mature psycho-spiritual integration.

In order to tackle these challenges, the EAPI initiated networking and partnerships with other institutes working with ecclesiastical students in Manila. The outcome of these meetings confirmed the need for a concerted effort. However, the “Chinese” issues are more complex. Meetings with different groups in Taiwan and Hong Kong working with the religious in mainland China have resulted in strong recommendations that initial religious and theological formation be conducted in Mandarin, even in Manila. This, however, raises the issue of professional and trained persons who can teach in Mandarin. It seems that the pool is currently very limited and efforts for different congregations to work together are being pursued

The EAPI Today

The EAPI can be singled out, perhaps more than other institutions, as being a place where ongoing adult faith formation and renewal is given great importance.

A common thrust of the EAPI programs has been ongoing formation for adults in the Catholic faith. The founding father of the EAPI, Fr. Johannes B. Hofinger recommended that this be done by awakening, deepening, and perfecting a willing faith in those who participate in the institute’s activities. Today these three actions still guide the development and implementation of the five current programs.

From its inception, the EAPI has been inspired by critical reflection, transmission, and renewal of the Christian faith. Similarly today, the EAPI continues to explore avenues on how it can provide faith formation in the English language. Therefore, in this Year of Faith the modules focus on the reading, reflection, and rediscovery of the faith as presented in the *Catechism of the Catholic Church (CCC)*.

The EAPI programs represent Vatican II’s perspective that faith is always Christ-centered, but lived out in a particular context, culture, and

community. The challenge of communicating the Christian faith in ever-changing societies and cultures is an integral thread that connects the modules. Thus, the EAPI gives the participants a unique opportunity to live their faith in a multicultural community over a period of time. Some participants come for three months, while others stay on for a year. They are encouraged to share their faith lives with others during informal gatherings and during class sharing. They are given opportunities to tell their faith stories as they live it out in their respective nations. During their stay on campus in an international context, they experience the global faith community with all its joys and struggles. Many quickly recognize that their understanding of the belief in Jesus Christ can be very different from others. Furthermore, the multicultural context of the EAPI encourages exercise in the synthesis between culture and faith. This happens especially in the liturgies and cultural nights. Here, the different symbols, pictures, songs, dances, and colors come together in the celebration of the sacred mystery of human salvation. The spirit of inculturation is embedded in the entire community. Today such awareness triggers a rich group interaction, intercultural activities, oriental prayer exercises, and inculturated eucharistic celebrations.

The EAPI programs encourage the participants to view faith from a perspective that is thoroughly personal and existential. The programs have tried to help people to commit themselves to the call to gradually convert their lives to be “witnesses following the way of another Christ” in the world. The EAPI life is grounded in a spirituality of personal transformation. In recent years, the EAPI has introduced spiritual accompaniment to allow the participants to experience a deeper encounter with the Lord. The stress on faith as a relationship is part of the spiritual journey at the EAPI. In the evaluation of the programs, many participants have indicated that spiritual accompaniment was the best experience of their stay as it allowed them to move to the heart level so that faith becomes real and personal. This is particularly true for the sabbatical program which has attracted many people from all over the world.

The EAPI programs challenge people to move beyond just knowledge of doctrines. The participants are invited to move away from viewing the faith as solely a system of “rules, restrictions, or limiting behaviors.” However, this latter attitude continues to characterize participants who feel that all they need is intellectual answers to their religious questions which they can then communicate to people they minister to in their respective nations. It is interesting that the obstacles cited by Fr. Hofinger 40 years ago still challenge the EAPI community: traditionalism, a blind acceptance of certain forms of Christian belief and practice, intellectualism, pessimism, ritualism, a tendency to substitute interior commitment with exterior action, legalism, and an over-dependence on devotionalism.

The EAPI continues to contribute to the faith life of people by its many publications over the years. Original publications such as *Good Tidings* and *Teaching All Nations* were attempts by the founding Jesuits to provide catechetical and pastoral material so that the teachings of the faith would address some of the changes happening in the churches of Asia. Today the *East Asian Pastoral Review (EAPR)* continues to “provide the widest possible dissemination of knowledge based on inquiries, whether scholarly or pastoral.” Topical areas of interest in the journal include theological, biblical, pastoral, and missionary topics. In recent years there have been several issues devoted to faith and culture: “Crucial Crossroads: Dialogue between Faith and Culture in the Federation of Asian Bishops' Conferences.” The EAPI programs attempt to communicate to its participants that today a reflection on faith should include concepts from other social disciplines, namely, psychology, anthropology, leadership, and management. It has been clear from the beginning that the programs at the EAPI are to be presented in an interdisciplinary manner. One way of ensuring this was the shift from an over-emphasis on the intellectual elements of faith to a deeper affective understanding of it. Faith stresses both the affective and the intellect. However, it has also become clear that many participants are more attracted to an affective faith since the modules on psychology get the highest rating. This can

also lead to an emotional faith lacking in depth. Therefore, the challenge is to maintain a balance between faith and reason, theology and psychology, so that the participants can integrate new ideas within their faith lives.

The EAPI has retained its focus on missionary action as the most important behavioral outcome of the programs. As stated in the vision statement of EAPI, participants reflect and renew their faith in order that they can become effective witnesses. They are given tools to use when they return to their mission posts. They are further challenged to extend their own individual faith lives to reach out to the communities they serve. They are especially invited to build up the faith of those people who live in fear, doubt, and poverty.

The leaders of the EAPI believe that apostolic planning is vital to guarantee sustainability and relevance. The EAPI Strategic Plans for 2012-2016 are based on the notion that after 50 years the institute can still be in a strategic position to initiate and influence transformation in the pastoral arena. With clear plans, the EAPI can still be an effective change agent by providing relevant programs directed towards Christian renewal and updating.

The EAPI continues to stress the importance of effective mission in the world by establishing the Center for Effective Ministry (CEM). There are now numerous requests for assistance with pastoral leadership and management, apostolic and pastoral planning, and even skills in administration. In responding to these requests, the CEM provides consultancy, organize locally based workshops, and conduct research on pastoral orientations.

The CEM hopes to also provide accompaniment in areas such as pastoral renewal, apostolic planning, leadership, networking and collaboration, governance, and psycho-spirituality. Projects will include working with dioceses in their pastoral planning processes and assisting religious congregations in apostolic discernment or restructuring. The center also aims to offer customized on-site training programs by partnering with organizations in the local churches. This will particularly benefit those who are not able to attend the longer term residential programs which the EAPI offers in Manila.

Networking

The EAPI leadership believes that collaboration and networking is one approach to a new way of being Church even in the midst of the resistance by many to become partners in the mission because it involves intensive work and time.

The Action Plan Number One 2012-2016 focuses on strengthening collaborative research, networking, and partnership, in order to ensure the relevance of the EAPI programs. This will attract more eligible participants and ensure sustainability.

The rationale emerges from the Society of Jesus and the Church's call for apostolic collaboration and cooperation with others in common projects so as to better serve the people in meeting their pastoral challenges. Likewise, the major funding agencies have also strongly suggested networking and partnership to utilize the limited resources for pastoral projects in the service of the Church. In addition to this, it is very clear that the pressing pastoral needs of our complex and fragile world require many hands and firsthand knowledge of the local and international situation. Networking will also help research and studies conducted by other institutes and groups to inform and improve the content and pedagogy for the EAPI programs.

The EAPI, because of its history and mission, is in a strategic position to assist in global ecclesiastical networking. In the early years, collaboration was actively pursued by the founding fathers: Fr. Hofinger, Fr. Nebreda, and Fr. Nicolas. They formed partnerships with bishops and congregations to conduct study weeks and staff members were sent to various countries where seminars were given to local people. This model of inter-continental partnerships is being reviewed since the circumstances have changed and there is a move from personal networking to one that involves more people, especially lay people.

Several factors have influenced the EAPI community's vision of partnership, namely, the alignment of the institute's mission with that of the partners; the acceptance of a shared understanding of what pastoral means today, 50 years after Vatican II; the mutual acceptance of common approaches

to missiology and ecclesiology; and the desire for the partners to share resources especially in places where the Christian faith is being challenged.

The Center for Effective Ministry plans to engage in research as well as animate greater networking in the Church. Expertise for its services will come from the EAPI's long-established network of resource persons around Asia and beyond. It hopes to work closely with the Jesuit network in Asia-Pacific.

In the next five years, the CEM will work on sustaining the existing networks. As noted, it will continue to work with different groups to respond to the needs of the ecclesiastical students in Manila. The Inter-Institutional Collaboration (IIC) will pursue ways of working with the Archdiocese of Manila since the latter has been asked to actively assist in the formation of the Chinese students.

At present there are several CEM planned workshops with the following dioceses.

1. Conference of Bishops of Myanmar. This is a partnership between the Conference, the Jesuit Conference of Asia Pacific, and the EAPI. A one-week workshop called "Growing in Our Relational Life" will be conducted where 23-25 diocesan priests are expected to attend. A group will also be selected to continue this work.
2. Diocese of Rabaul Papua New Guinea. This is a partnership between the diocese and the EAPI. A workshop will be conducted to assist the bishop and priests to undertake a pastoral review and evaluation of their pastoral plans.
3. Archdiocese of Suva, Fiji. This is a partnership among the archdiocese, CEPAC bishops, the EAPI, and lay management persons from the islands. This workshop will conduct training on pastoral management for priests (creating parish vision, mission, and pastoral plan).
4. Aizawl Diocese, Assam in the northeastern part of India. This is a partnership between the Laity Commission for the North East Region and the EAPI. This will be a leadership training program for the lay leaders of the four dioceses in the region.

Conclusion

Pastoral networking is not limited only to pastoral institutes and funding agencies, but extends to everything in the Church that helps to link the faith experiences of the people of God with Christian tradition and theology in order to develop a strategy of action that will enable the Church to achieve the mission entrusted to it. In other words, the pastoral enterprise is a mutual interaction between the experiential situation and theological reflection. The networking begins with real faith experiences and ends with collaboration amongst people and groups who share and implement a common mission: proclamation of the faith and calling people to gospel values.

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ABOUT THE AUTHOR

FR. ARTHUR LEGER, SJ, born in 1955, is from the Pacific Islands, a citizen of Fiji, and joined the Jesuits in Micronesia in 1994. He has a long career as an educator, both before joining the Society and afterwards. He has completed Master's degrees in Educational Administration, Christianity and Culture, and in Divinity. At Gonzaga University, Spokane, he completed a doctorate in Leadership Studies, with his thesis on the pastoral approach of Church leaders in the Pacific. Fr. Leger is especially alert to questions of culture, cultural differences, and the way these realities affect spirituality and religious practices. His interests and engagements are focused on pastoral adaptation and renewal, themes that are central to the programs of the EAPI. He is currently assigned to Vietnam, to assist in the formation of the Jesuit educational curriculum in that country.