



**DECREE OF THE PLENARY COUNCIL
OF THE CATHOLIC CHURCH IN THAILAND
A.D. 2015**

“Christ’s Disciples living the New Evangelization”

Catholic Bishops’ Conference of Thailand

Promulgation of the Decree of the First Plenary Council of the Catholic Church in Thailand, A.D. 2015

The Catholic Bishops' Conference of Thailand on March 16, 2011 unanimously agreed to hold the First Plenary Council of Thailand in the year 2015 with the theme: "Christ's Disciples Living the New Evangelization", and the main rationale to set the Church's pastoral and evangelical mission in response to local social developments so as to effectively meet the needs both of the faithful and of our brethren of other faith. This was done on discerning the recent urgent concern for a 'New Evangelization in Asia'. The request to hold this Plenary Council, dated November 3, 2011 was sent to the Congregation for the Evangelization of Peoples for approval. Permission was granted on November 3, 2014 thus:

...“After having carefully studied the text of the *lineamenta* and seriously evaluated the whole matter of the proposed Plenary Council, this Congregation has duly presented the above matter to the Consideration of the Holy Father Pope Francis, who has graciously deigned to approve both the proposed Plenary Council as well as the election of its President.

“Therefore, this Congregation for the Evangelization of Peoples, by virtue of the Special Faculties granted to it by the same Pope Francis, hereby grants the formal approval for the proposed celebration of the “First Plenary Council of the Catholic Church in Thailand” in 2015 (can.439 § 1), and the election of the Most Rev.Francis Xavier Kriengsak Kovithavanij, Archbishop of Bangkok, as the President of the same Plenary Council (can.441, n.3)”...

The first part of the Plenary Council was held on 10-15 November 2014 in the Metropolitan of Tharae-Nongsaeng, and then on 24-29 November 2014 in the Metropolitan of Bangkok. The General Assembly of the Plenary Council was then held at the Pastoral Center of the Archdiocese of Bangkok on April 20-24, 2015. The drafted Decree of the Plenary Council was sent to the Congregation for the Evangelization of Peoples for approval, which was later granted on February 2, 2017. (See the recognitio of the Decree on page 4)

With the consent of the Catholic Bishops' Conference of Thailand held on March 21-23, 2017, I hereby promulgate the Decree of the Plenary Council of the Catholic Church in Thailand for the renewal of the local church at all levels. The bishops, priests, religious and pastoral councils at all levels will be leaders in this renewal effort which will enable every Catholic to be united into local small communities permeated by the civilization of love. Their lives will thus be renewed and transformed into the “Good News”. They will dare to proclaim this Good News to the people around them and to the Thai society as a whole.

Let us pray to the Holy Spirit, to enlighten and strengthen all Christ's disciples that they be inspired in the renewal of their faith as profoundly as Mary our Mother, as the apostles and the early Christians. They will dare to go out and proclaim the Good News to the people around them that they might come to know and appreciate it.

You are invited to give time to read, reread and to reflect on the Decree and be moved by the Holy Spirit to respond to His call in order to be “The Community of Christ's disciples living the New Evangelization.”



Francis X. Card. Kriengsak Kovithavanij

+ Francis Xavier Cardinal Kriengsak Kovithavanij
President of the Catholic Bishops' Conference of Thailand

Joseph Chusak Sirisut

Bishop Joseph Chusak Sirisut
Secretary General of CBCT

Given on 16th April 2017

The Solemnity of the Risen Lord



CONGREGATIO
PRO GENTIUM EVANGELIZATIONE

0695/16
Prot. _____

02 February 2017

Your Eminence,

I am writing with reference to your letter N°. CBCT 007/2016, of 25th January 2016, with which you have forwarded to this Congregation the documentation concerning the “First Plenary Council of the Catholic Church in Thailand”, celebrated from 20 to 24 April 2015, and requested the *recognitio* of the Decree of the same Council, entitled “Christ’s Disciples Living the New Evangelization”, unanimously approved by the Bishops of Thailand.

Having carefully studied the above Decree and obtained a favourable evaluation from those concerned, the Congregation for the Evangelization of Peoples gladly grants the requested *recognitio*, under condition that the modifications contained in the enclosed “Observations” be duly integrated into the text of the said Decree.

This Dicastery also requests you to send here at least three copies of the modified text, after it has been duly promulgated by the President of the of the Plenary Council. I am sure that all the bishops of the Country will earnestly take every necessary and useful step to make this document known to all the Clergy, Religious and lay Faithful in the Country, and to implement it faithfully, in order to give a renewed missionary thrust to the Church in Thailand.

May Almighty God bless you and may our Divine Mother accompany you with maternal solicitude!

I take this opportunity to send you and all the bishops of Thailand cordial regards and best wishes.

Yours devotedly in Christ

A. Card. Kriengsak Kovithavanij
+ *Sawatchai*
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His Eminence
Francis Xavier Card. Kriengsak Kovithavanij
Archbishop of Bangkok and President of the CBCT

THAILAND

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**Vision – Mission Statement
of the Catholic Church in Thailand
A.D. 2017**

Vision: The Community of Christ's Disciples
Living the New Evangelization.

Mission: The Catholic faithful in Thailand commit themselves to be
Christ's Disciples and Missionary – Disciples for
the New Evangelization by:

1. Knowing, loving and living a holy life in communion with
Christ through the word of God, prayer, the Sacraments,
as well as through our neighbor and God's given nature;
being ready to give life witness to Christ and to proclaim
the Good News of God's loving kindness.
2. Being a community that respects values and human dignity
in loving service to all, especially the poor.
3. Protecting God's creation; being satisfied with what is
necessary; renouncing all forms of excessiveness, opening
a new horizon of Gospel values.
4. Promoting a valuable lifestyle and good cultural values,
and having fraternal dialogue with people of other faiths
towards the building of God's Kingdom of justice, peace
and joy.

**DECREE OF THE PLENARY COUNCIL
OF THE CATHOLIC CHURCH IN THAILAND
A.D. 2015**

“Christ's Disciples living the New Evangelization”



INTRODUCTION

Rationale

1. The members of the Catholic Plenary Council of Thailand A.D. 2015 are grateful to the foreign missionaries who arrived in the Kingdom of Siam in 1516 and began to announce the Good News of salvation. An important event that took place 350 years ago was the “Synod of Ayudhaya”. That meeting in 1664 enabled the Church to take root and develop. A significant sign of its development was the establishment of its own hierarchy 50 years ago in 1965. This year 2015 is, therefore, an opportune time to give thanks to God for the gift of salvation and to look forward with hope as *“Christ's Disciples living the New Evangelization”*ⁱ who now face many challenges caused by social and contemporary cultural changes.

The Plenary Council holds fast to the teaching of the Second Vatican Council, the papal documents, and the social teaching of the Church as the foundation for the New Evangelization, thus expressing its fidelity to the Universal Church during this time of rapid and constant change.

Realities of the present Thai society

2. The spread of materialism and technological development have had a negative impact on the life of every individual. People have to work harder to make ends meet because of the higher cost

of living. Their struggle for survival affects their sense of morality to such an extent that seeking power and riches, rather than a sense of righteousness, has become the norm of decision-making. Corruption and cheating are becoming more and more acceptable throughout our society. Secularismⁱⁱ, materialism and ethical relativismⁱⁱⁱ lead many people to do anything for financial gain. Some parents neglect their children in order to earn more money. Some have recourse to abortion so that a newborn child will not burden their lives. Progress in communication technology leads young people to spend more and more time in the virtual world of cyber space instead of interacting with real people and of using technology to benefit themselves and others. They waste their time playing cyber games, engaging in meaningless conversation, posting imprudent pictures or texts, and becoming victims of gambling without being aware of what is happening.

The rapid progress of material development has had a negative effect on the way of life, morality and ethics of the people. People no longer pay attention to religion and culture. The standard of morality is “adjusted” to coincide with the material gain of those who have power. At the same time, the use of violence to solve problems is becoming more widespread. In short, the present social situation can be described as one in which “The economy progresses, but values and the common good are regressing”.

The Church in the context of various faiths and cultures in Thailand

3. All the Constitutions of the Kingdom of Thailand affirm religious freedom for all Thai citizen. They also clearly state that the King is primarily the Royal Patron of all religions. The Catholic Church in Thailand, which comprises less than 1% of the total population, lives and carries out her mission in a context of multiple cultures and religious traditions. Buddhism is the religion of the majority, but it is also influenced by the beliefs and religious traditions of indigenous tribal groups. The Thai people in general express their religious life

through routine practices that they believe will protect them from harm, gain merit, and satisfy the wants in the various dimensions of their life.

Challenges to the Catholic Church and main objective of the Plenary Council

4. In the multi-religious context of contemporary Thai society, Catholics are a tiny minority. They live in small communities scattered in both urban and rural areas throughout the country, and all of them have to face similar challenges. Ongoing catechetical instruction is very limited, and therefore the faith that Thai Catholics received in baptism is often not very deep and is characterized by traditional religious practices rather than by a personal encounter with Jesus Christ and a concrete faith experience in the Church community. By and large, Thai Catholics do not understand their call and duty to be true disciples of Christ.

Furthermore, the currents of the prevailing culture of the modern world are vehemently and quickly drawing Thai Catholics into a secularized society that is marked by consumerism, materialism, individualism, and relativism. The Catholic Church in Thailand must, therefore, focus more seriously than ever on what it means to live as a disciple of Christ who is willing to go against current trends, denounce the prevailing secularism, and commit themselves to the New Evangelization. The Church must be a clear witness of a communion of disciples centered on Christ, so that all Christians can be the salt of the earth, filled with the true light of Christ (cf. Mt 5:13-14), the light from God who is Love given to the world (cf. Jn 1:1ff).

CHAPTER 1 : “CHRIST’S DISCIPLES...”

Each Christian is a disciple of Christ

5. Every Christian, through baptism, participates in the life of the Trinity, becoming a child of God the Father, a member in the mystical body of Christ (cf. 1 Cor 12) who shares the life of Christ as a branch shares the life of the vine (cf. Jn 15), and a temple of the Holy Spirit. In virtue of their baptism, all Christians are called to be disciples of Christ by acting on the word of God, conscious of their important role in proclaiming the Good News according to Jesus Christ’s command (cf. Mt 28:19-20). The witness they give by an active love of their neighbor in imitation of their Master deepens their own encounter with the God who is Love.

“Communitarian Life”—Each and every Christian together forms the community of the Church, a community of love living in communion

6. Jesus Christ also calls all Christians to be witnesses by their community life: *“Love one another as I have loved you”* (Jn 13:34), and *“May they all be one... so that the world may believe that you have sent me”* (Jn 17:21). These words are a great gift to the various forms of community life that are present in the Church: Christian families, Basic Ecclesial Communities^{iv} (BECs or SCCs – Small Christian Communities), Catholic organizations and movements born from charisms, associations of various professions, parochial communities, religious communities, the *presbyterium*, and the diocese. All these various forms of communitarian living must be characterized by mutual love, honest communion, and reciprocal help. Such concrete acts of love marked the first Christian community (cf. Acts 2:42-47) and brought about a great number of conversions (cf. Acts 4:34). An important goal of the Catholic Church in Thailand is to bring together all these efforts in order that the God of love be clearly visible to a society overwhelmed by secularism, which is transforming it into a spiritual desert void of love and relationship.

The various ways of bringing Christ’s disciples into community, organizations and institutions

7. The various institutions and forms of community life in the Church—the local community, specific organizations, movements born from Charisms, associations, etc.—are gifts of the Holy Spirit for the good of the Church herself and for the full participation of all the baptized in her mission of evangelizing every sector of society. Since the Church is the people of God, whose very nature is to be a community of faith, Basic Ecclesial Communities or BECs are a central expression of her nature. However, there are other forms of community that can contribute to the development of the life and the mission of the faithful, for example:

1. RCIA¹ communities for those preparing for baptism and those wishing to deepen their Christian faith
2. Christian families
3. Neighborhood communities
4. Catholic organizations and institutions
5. Movements with specific charisms
6. Associations of professional people for the purpose of bringing Gospel values to various sectors of society, e.g., The Catholic Teachers Association, The Catholic Health Care Provider Association, The Catholic Business Executives Group (CBEG)...
7. Parish communities or Christian communities of faith
8. Religious communities and religious institutes
9. *Presbyterium*
10. Diocese, or the local church

In order to assist members of the various Christian forms of communitarian life to grow in faith and be able to contribute effectively to the new evangelization, the Church needs to help them experience the Spirituality of Communion (*Novo Millennio Ineunte*, n. 43-45). Being

¹ The Rite of Christian Initiation of Adults

part of a BEC lived in the context of a “Civilization of Love” is an especially important way for them to renew their enthusiasm so that, ardent in their life of faith, they may look for new ways to enter into dialogue with the world and so become effective contributors to the mission of New Evangelization.

Although these various communities, institutions and organizations in the Church may differ in structure, spirit and procedure, they all have the same purpose: to contribute to the mission of New Evangelization.

CHAPTER 2 : “...LIVING...”

Jesus, who died on the cross and is risen:
Model of the Christian life

God, who is Love, reveals Himself most clearly in Jesus who died on the cross and rose again.

8. Jesus Christ, who is Love from God the Father “*emptied himself, taking the form of a slave, being born in human likeness*” (Phil 2:7). He lived a poor life and took the side of the lowest in his contemporary society. He stated that God is more pleased with mercy than sacrifice (cf. Mt 12:7) and fulfilled the Old Testament with the new commandment of love: “*Love one another as I have loved you*” (Jn 15:12).

He taught clearly by his words and actions. He established the Kingdom of God in the world among his disciples gathered in love and communion. Finally, he proved how much he loved us by offering his life on the cross in accordance with what he taught: “*No one has greater love than this, to lay down one’s life for one’s friends.*” (Jn 15:13). He rose from death and ascended into heaven. He sent the Holy Spirit to the Church to bring the fruit of his redemption to humankind through the Church.

Jesus Christ is, therefore, the perfect model and source of a life of love and self-dedication according to the will of God the Father. He has left us an example for all Christians to follow.

Moreover as divine Son of the Father, He manifests God’s love and still remains in the Church now and forever: “*For where two or three are gathered in my name, I am there among them*” (Mt 18:20). He can be experienced in the love and communion of a Christian community, through life witnessing and communal sharing of personal experience of God’s love. This experience with Jesus Christ who manifests God’s love motivates the faithful to grow, to persevere and to go out to bring Him to their neighbors.

9. Today's disciples of Christ make present again the life of the early Christians by living the spirituality of communion. When two or more Christians come together to put into practice the word of God, especially Christ's new commandment to love one another as he has loved us (cf. Jn 15:12), those Christian communities build up a civilization of love.

Our determination and our joint efforts to practice the new commandment of reciprocal love in a stable and continuous way, renewing it whenever needed, will enable those entering the community to experience the presence of God's love among them.

The risen Christ remains within the Church forever: "For where two or three are gathered together *in love and communion* in my name, I am there in the midst of them" (cf. Mt 18:20).

Personal Encounter with Christ

10. Individual personal encounter with Christ is a condition *sine qua non* for the Christian life of faith. It is necessary to promote and support this encounter in the three target groups of the New Evangelization: the practicing faithful, those baptized Christians who do not live their baptismal commitment, and those who do not yet know Christ. They all should be given the opportunity to experience this personal encounter with Christ by being invited to join a BEC, in which they may come to know the civilization of love. In this way they will be helped to experience and to encounter the love of Christ who is present among Christians gathered together in love and communion.

The initial proclamation (*kerygma*) is the most necessary and important first step of evangelization. It is most effectively carried out within the BECs that live the civilization of love. The essence of this initial proclamation is the experience of the love of God present in the life of one's elder brothers and sisters in the faith, a love that they share with their younger brothers and sisters in the faith or with those who desire to hear the Good News of God's love.

Conversion (*metanoia*)

11. Practicing and non-practicing Christians, as well as those who desire to become Christians, will also experience conversion (*metanoia*). This conversion comes about after they have immersed their lives in God's love by participating in the life of a BEC, and after they themselves begin to live Christ's commandment of love and to experience an encounter with Christ. In this conversion they will open their hearts and examine their lives. Doing so, they will come to a deeper awareness of their hollowness, emptiness, past failures, mistakes and despairs, and they will make the vital decision to allow the God of love to be the first and most important objective of their lives. They will open their hearts to renew their life of faith or to desire to receive the Christian faith, and they will be eager to continue participating in the BECs, the "living cells of the civilization of love", in order to grow in the RCIA process or in the various forms of ongoing catechesis for adults.

Those who are baptized will be nourished so that they may become ever more mature in their faith as a new horizon^v, and eventually take the further step of bringing the Good News of the divine love to all through their witness of life. At the appropriate time they will invite those people who desire to receive the Christian faith to encounter the love of God in a BEC, in which this new civilization of love is present. Furthermore, they will cooperate in practical acts of charity, helping, according to their capability, their poor neighbors and the people living at the margins of society.

Building and nourishing the life of faith in the Christian community with the word of God, the liturgy, the Eucharist and all the other sacraments, and communion

12. We can really meet Jesus Christ, the Love of God, whom God the Father gave to humankind in the Incarnation and in the Pascal mystery of his death on the cross and his resurrection.

The Church responds to divine love by living the spirituality of communion in love, with the risen Christ present among the faithful.

He is the mighty power gathering the Christian community, the living Church (*ekklesia*), that comes together regularly in the BEC and is bonded in a civilization of love. Together, the BECs form the parish church community, which is a communion of communities. The continuous growth of the parish community is nourished by the word, the liturgy, the Eucharist and all the other sacraments, and a life of communion, especially as it celebrates the Day of the Lord, the source and summit of Christian life in both its personal and communitarian dimensions. The parish community also becomes the starting point for the mission of New Evangelization to society.

“Missionary Disciples” – New Life for the New Evangelization

13. Through baptism every Christian becomes a missionary disciple regardless of his or her status in the Church or the intellectual level of their faith. All the baptized, therefore, need to be offered pastoral care so that each can experience the civilization of love through the BEC, which is the principal means the Catholic Church in Thailand has chosen as the new way of life for Thai Catholics. The BEC will be the primary path of renewal and formation for the Christian life of faith. It will also be the way to equip all Christians, who are Christ’s missionary disciples, to go out and make the initial and on-going proclamation (*kerygma*) of the Good News to all peoples (*ad Gentes*), especially the majority of the Thai people, who have not yet had the Good News preached to them. This is how the Catholics of Thailand will cooperate in building the Kingdom of God in this world – a Kingdom of truth, justice, love, mercy and peace.

Necessary conditions for the New Evangelization

14. Jesus prays to God the Father for his disciples: “that they may all be one.so that the world may believe...” (cf. Jn 17: 21), “*I give you a new commandment, that you love one another. Just as I have loved you, you also should love one another. By this everyone will know that you are my disciples, if you have love for one another*” (Jn 13:34-35).

There are important conditions for making the Good News credible:

- a) Each disciple of Christ lives according to the faith.
- b) The love and the communion of Christians are conditions *sine qua non*, beautiful garments that are the uniform of Christians who belong to the community of faith (cf. Colossians 3:14). The Church’s New Evangelization must therefore be holistic, beginning with the life witness of love and communion, nourished by popular piety and the Sacrament of Reconciliation,^{vi} followed by the proclamation of the Good News by words, through which believers share their experience of faith so that salvation can be brought to all.

To renew the Christian spirit in the Thai Church, both at the personal and community levels, we must

- 1) be aware that the Church in Thailand is dominated and influenced by the secularism that is so pervasive in contemporary Thai society and that causes loss of faith and failure in evangelization;
- 2) be resolutely determined that each Christian be brought to an experience of God, who is Love, in a New Way of being Church^{vii} ;
- 3) accept the BEC with its civilization of love as this New Way and the primary means to renew the life of faith;
- 4) build up the BEC with its civilization of love as a living cell, a model of the mystical body of Christ, in the parish church;
- 5) believe that initiation into the mystery of the cross of Jesus Christ and our understanding of that mystery as an answer to human suffering is of the utmost importance in helping Christians become true disciples of Christ and witnesses of the Kingdom.

Entering into the Pascal Mystery, i.e., dying to oneself, to the old Adam, and being reborn in Christ, makes one a disciple of Christ, whose life is nourished by the BEC and its civilization of love.

Thus nourished and renewed, the Christian community, i.e., the laity, the religious and the priests in cooperation and communion with the bishop, the principal pastor and missionary of the local Church, will concretely become the arena and the basis of the New Evangelization, proclaiming the Kingdom of God in the form of a new civilization and a new society in which God, who is Love, is present. All will become brothers and sisters, accepting one another as the one body of Christ, which has several parts for different functions (cf. 1 Cor 12).

CHAPTER 3 : “THE NEW EVANGELIZATION”

WITH A NEW ARDOR, NEW METHODS, AND NEW EXPRESSIONS

The “*kerygma*”, heart of the New Evangelization

15. In the New Evangelization it is necessary that preaching be more dynamic and that it be characterized by speaking of the actual ways God is experienced in human life. Preaching must always aim at proclaiming the teaching of the apostles about Jesus (the *kerygma*), which has its center in the Paschal Mystery, i.e., the passion, death and resurrection of Jesus Christ. At the same time, the Church must constantly seek new ways and new methods of doing this that are suitable for the present time and place, and that make it possible for all listeners to know, experience, and believe in God’s love for all people through the lives of Christians.

Main targeted groups of the New Evangelization

16. “All those who do not know, do not accept and reject Jesus Christ in every sector of the Church and society (*ad Gentes*)”. These people, both children and adults, have a deep thirst for meaning. Consciously or unconsciously, and in various ways, they are seeking the supreme truth. All of them have the right to receive the Good News and to know the true God. Therefore the Church needs to seek new ways to bring the Good News to them, directly or indirectly, so that they may rejoice in the experience of the love of God and come to the point of desiring to learn more about Christ and of joining God’s family in the Kingdom of God.

“Christians who regularly gather together and those who come together on the Day of the Lord”. The Church needs to provide pastoral care to these people, so that, continuously and effectively, they may be nourished by word and sacrament, and by the assembly of those who are one in the faith and regularly come together for community prayer. Thus they will truly grow in their faith till they are better able to respond to the love of God, to give good example,

to be light, and to become a fearless missionary – disciples, eager to participate in the New Evangelization with joy.

“Those who were baptized but do not live according to their baptismal commitment and did not receive the real consolation of faith for whatever reasons”. The Church as a caring Mother has an urgent mission to help those Christians encounter God’s love and mercy, receive the joy of the gospel, and commit themselves to Christ in communion with the other members of the Church, so that they will be ready to live as salt of the earth and light of the world.

The roles of those who participate in the New Evangelization

- The Bishop

17. The bishop is the successor of the Apostles. He is Christ’s representative and his main mission is to proclaim the Good News and to lead the people of God, formed in the image of Christ, to give thanks and praise to God in the Eucharist. He is the father and leader of the local Church, and to him has been given the authority to teach and preserve the truth of faith. He is the center of love and unity for all the faithful.

In the New Evangelization of the Catholic Church in Thailand, the bishop must be pastor and missionary, the head and center of communion, the promoter, director and coordinator of the New Evangelization within the diocese, in Asian regions, and in the Universal Church. The bishop must be a good example, a witness to poverty and simplicity for the sake of the New Evangelization. He must be the promoter of love, unity and collaboration among his priests and see to it that all those who collaborate with him in the mission of New Evangelization are provided with just and appropriate material resources for their life and ministry.

- Priests and Deacons

18. Priests and permanent as well as transitional deacons are collaborators of the bishop and participate in proclaiming the Good News by virtue of the Sacrament of Orders. All priests and deacons

must regard themselves as heralds of the Good News, ready to commit themselves with sacrifice and generosity to proclaiming the Good News to all people in close collaboration with the bishop. In their ministry of preaching, they have to listen to the people of God so that they can link the biblical text to the real situations faced by the faithful in today’s world. They must also show enthusiasm in their pastoral care of visiting families, elderly people, and sick persons, in their proclaiming the Good News in educational institutions, and in their involvement in social ministry, helping the poor, the migrants, etc. They have to care for their sheep and also show their care and concern for those who are far away, including our brothers and sisters of other denominations and faiths.

- Consecrated persons

19. Consecrated persons, who make profession of chastity, poverty, and obedience according to the charism of each institute, completely offering themselves to God, are fully ready to serve humankind and the society with their mission of evangelization in the footsteps of Christ. Faithful to the spirit of their congregation, they participate in the New Evangelization in unity with the local Church.

The Church regards consecrated life as a precious instrument for the effective proclamation of the Good News. The witness of religious life is an inspiration to the Church, which invites everyone to seek the supreme God. By their credible witness, consecrated persons invite everyone to progress toward holiness. The contemplative religious institutes are most valuable in the Asian context, particularly in Thailand, whose people have a high regard for contemplative prayer, meditation, and *samadhi*. The Church recognizes that offering the laity an experience of religious life and of other forms of consecrated life through retreats and similar programs can be a way for them to come to a deeper encounter with Christ.

- Laity, family, children and youth

20. The important duty of the laity, both men and women, is to proclaim Christ with their lives, offering their witness in the world, telling the story of Jesus Christ in the family, in society and in their work places with the purpose of bringing the love and mercy of God to society.

Pope Francis stresses the role of the laity. Their mission field is the large world of politics, economics, culture, science, arts, etc., at the local, national and international levels.

- The Youth: Pilgrims of faith

21. The Catholic Church in Thailand believes that young people will have an especially important role to play in the New Evangelization. Therefore the Church must stress the proclamation of the Good News to children and young people, and form them to become leaders and be more discerning in the midst of fast social changes that affect religion. We must allow them to participate fully in the life of the Church. We must promote enthusiasm in those groups that provide various services, and especially allow young people to experience and take initiative in the missionary activities within the diocese or in other places. How beautiful it is to help them reach maturity in the faith and to commission them to be “pilgrims of faith”, full of joy in bringing Jesus to the streets, to the crossroads and to every corner of the world. Children and young people challenge the Church to be watchful and filled with hope, because they are the present and future of humankind. It is of the utmost importance that continuous holistic formation be provided for children and young people. This formation should involve the close cooperation of home, parish, and school, emphasize listening and understanding, and offer them opportunities and good example.

Arena and bases for the New Evangelization:

- Parish and parochial community

22. Pastoral care of the faithful in their parishes enables them to live in fraternal love and brings them to a deeper understanding of their communion with the whole Church. In its co-responsible for the New Evangelization, the parochial community has the direct mission of providing on-going formation to all the faithful, forming them to listen to and live according to the word of God, to have a close relationship with God in the liturgy and in personal and communal prayers, and to serve every person, especially the most abandoned.

- Basic Ecclesial Community (BEC): a New Way of being Church

23. The Catholic Church in Thailand believes that developing the Basic Ecclesial Community is “the key and the most important principle” of its stress on community as a New Way of being Church in Thailand and within the Asian context in general. The BEC reflects the image of the community of the early Church, which lived the word of God in a spirit of love, had Christ as its center, gathered for prayer, read the Scriptures, celebrated the liturgy, learned the faith, shared its experience of faith in various situations, was united, shared its goods, and served one another to such a degree that it was regarded highly by all the people (cf. Acts 4:34f).

The BEC must be a living sign of the Church and an instrument for the renewal of the life and mission of the New Evangelization by dedicating itself to the service of society, taking care of the poor and of those who desire to know Christ and seek the supreme truth. A strong community life will make it possible for the disciple of Christ to overcome social divisions. (cf. *Redemptoris Missio*, n. 51)

- Christian family: A domestic Church

24. “The domestic Church” is the most important starting point for the New Evangelization. The family is not just a small unit to which the Church must provide pastoral care; rather it must be the place in which Christians first learn to live the faith together in diversity. It is there that parents and the elderly pass on the faith and the culture, give good example, and provide vocational formation to their children. The Church must give great importance to preparation for family life, especially in these times when there is an increase of marriages with disparity of cult. For families in which there are sacramental impediments and improper legal form, the Church must quickly follow the process the Church has established in order to bring them back to the parochial community where they may become actively involved in the New Evangelization.

- Catholic Education

25. Catholic educational institutions must be an effective instrument of the New Evangelization. Since they play such an important role in instilling the values of the gospel, the uniqueness^{viii} and identity of Catholic education^{ix} must always be emphasized. It is especially important that personnel at all levels of the Church’s educational institutions have a clear understanding of this unique identity. Teaching and administration must be carried out by persons who adhere strongly to the gospel values and are committed to on-going formation in these values. Administrators, teachers and staff at all levels should live an exemplary life. Catholic educational institutions must also help the students’ families to learn ways to present the faith to their children. They must steadfastly work towards the primary objective: that all the students might know God and experience His love and mercy in all that is good, true, and beautiful.

CHAPTER 4 : HORIZONS FOR THE NEW EVANGELIZATION

A poor Church for the poor

26. The Church must give preference to the poor. This must be her “theology of life” rather than just an ideology or a social service. Pope Francis is very serious about the need for the Church to live and work side by side with the poor, that it be a poor Church for the poor. Christ gave us the most precious example by humbling Himself. He was born poor. He left the greatest richness and came down to take upon himself the status of a slave like us. He loved humankind so much that he accepted death on the Cross for their salvation (cf. Phil 2:7-8).

The Church must not accumulate riches and Church institutions must bear witness to this. The Church must change herself to make room for the poor. Bishops, priests, religious and all the laity must choose to live a simple life of sufficiency, charity, love, and service. She must be close to the poor, stressing social justice and daring to reject comfort and personal stability in order to be effective witnesses of the New Evangelization.

Respect for human dignity

27. “*God created humankind in his image, in the image of God he created them; male and female he created them*” (Gen 1: 27). All human beings, therefore, have value and dignity as children of God. The Church must acknowledge that the mission of love and the witness of service can only happen when human life and dignity are respected from conception till natural death. The Church must protect, promote and develop human life and dignity in a holistic manner with the aim of promoting true unity in the world.

Every sector of the Church must join hands in defending human rights and respecting the human dignity of all, supporting and developing the quality of life, the dignity and the rights of the family, children, young people, women and men, along with all those who

today are affected by new forms of poverty and weakness: migrants and refugees, ethnic and indigenous people, the homeless, drug addicts, people living with HIV, prisoners, disabled people, elderly people who are neglected and live alone, children and women who have been abandoned, those who have been tortured, victims of violence, victims of sexual exploitation and all forms of abuse, victims of human trafficking, and people without nationality.

Furthermore, every sector of the Church must cooperate to help and protect the rights of those who are encountering economic difficulties, such as small-scale farmers, laborers in both the rural and urban areas, etc. The Catholic Church in Thailand must provide pastoral care by creating opportunities for them, developing their potential, and participating in programs that help them return to a normal life and feel proud of their human value and dignity as children of God. Because Jesus has come that all “may have life, and have it abundantly” (Jn 10:10), the human person and the biblical “new man” must be the center of the life and mission of the Church.

Care for Creation

28. God assigns human beings to care for the world and for creation, which is the common home of humankind (cf. Gen 1; *Laudato Si'*). We must, therefore, cooperate with the Creator to continue creation by protecting it and perfecting it. We have the duty of respecting and being grateful to the Creator by not trespassing or destroying the ecological system and the beauty of the world. We have to take part in the management of natural resources by caring for the natural environment and learning how to achieve a sustainable natural balance and harmony in our local setting. It is an important duty of the Church to encourage every Christian and every sector of society to use natural resources wisely, conscious of their value for the common good both at present and in the future, and to become actively involved in the mission of protecting our natural environment.

Inculturation and Dialogue

29. In proclaiming the Good News to different cultures and in our dialogue with these cultures, we have to respect differences. In our proclamation of the Good News, we offer Christ as a blessing for all human persons in every culture. In doing this, the Church must not only offer the truth and the values we profess, but must also be ready to acknowledge the good points of those cultures. In the New Evangelization about God’s love for all people, we must not overlook or neglect the way of life of the Thai people. At the same time we must understand the impact of globalization on society in order to create more effective ways of proclaiming the Good News of God’s love and mercy so that the message of God’s justice and peace may be heard and understood by the people of Thailand.

Ecumenism

30. We acknowledge that all Christians regardless of their denomination are not only our brothers and sisters in virtue of the fact that they too are children of God, our common Father, but that they are also our brothers and sisters through faith and baptism. Hence, Catholics must not hesitate to take interest in our brethren of other denominations. We should pray for them, talk to them about the Church, and be the first to approach them. We should also pray together for unity and cooperate in doing various works for the common good.

Interreligious Dialogue

31. All Catholics in Thailand have neighbors of other faiths. Interreligious dialogue is, therefore, of utmost importance. We must be the sign and instrument of the New Evangelization through our life witness to the love and mercy of Jesus and engage in dialogue with sincere respect according to each one’s social context and culture. Doing so will lead to unity, love, truth and peaceful co-existence. It will be a way to the Kingdom of God.

CHAPTER 5: INSTRUMENTS FOR AND MEASURES OF THE NEW EVANGELIZATION

Awareness, understanding, agreement and commitment to the Decree^x

32. In order to promote awareness, create understanding, induce agreement and sustain commitment to the Decree of the Plenary Council for the Catholics of Thailand to dedicate themselves bravely and resolutely to the New Evangelization, changes in attitude and behavior will have to take place. The Catholic Church in Thailand will have to bring this Decree to concrete realization by creating a “Strategic Pastoral Plan for the New Evangelization”. The plan should be followed by monitoring and an evaluation to determine what progress is being made.

Adjusting Church structure for the New Evangelization

33. In order to bring about a more efficient and effective mission of evangelization, it will be necessary to adjust every sector of the structure of the Church in Thailand, with an emphasis on decentralization. Everyone in the Church must be enabled to proclaim the ever new message of the Good News with greater boldness (*parrhesia*).

Team Work and Networking

34. The Catholic Church in Thailand acknowledges that team work and networking are very important. The Church must create networking in the parochial communities through the various Church organizations to learn about and exchange mutual experiences, and to build unity in the common mission of the Church at the parochial, diocesan and bishops’ conference levels. If the Church’s proclamation of the Good News is to be credible and effective, there must be coordination, cooperation, and mutual support.

Resource Management

35. The Church must manage human and material resources including the intellectual gifts of local people, by creating a data bank of personnel, financial resources, and other information that can be shared at the diocesan, inter-diocesan and bishops’ conference levels. The purpose of such a data bank is to be able to respond to the demands of a concrete and effective New Evangelization. It must be always remembered that the sharing of material resources is important if the Church is to witness to the spirituality of communion in love and justice.

Those in charge of this data bank are to receive appropriate and necessary formation. They have to be committed to the principle of sound and transparent asset management. The appointment of duties must be done appropriately. Policy, planning, follow-up, and evaluation must also be clearly stipulated.

Resource sharing on the values, on local knowledge and culture for the common good is done through dialogue, seeking the source of life through meditation, talking about what is most valuable in life, building friendship, facing together major problems, sharing personal talents or offering them to each other, etc. The Church has accumulated these resources over a long period of time. She must now share them with society in order to witness to the Church’s culture of love.

Development of the potential of Christ’s Disciples

- On-going formation for the laity^{xi}

36. The Catholic Church in Thailand must provide on-going faith formation for the laity regarding the theory and practice of the New Evangelization. Pastors, collaborators and the faithful do not yet have sufficient theoretical and practical knowledge of the Bible, the catechism, and matters related to the life and mission of the Church. On-going formation in these areas is therefore an important and urgent matter.

Formation in the practice of prayer and meditation, in proclaiming the Good News to our brothers and sisters of different

faiths, in understanding and participating actively in liturgical celebrations, including the RCIA, should be considered essential parts of both initial and on-going formation in order that those who are being formed may personally encounter Jesus Christ and thus be prepared for the New Evangelization.

- Institute / Movement for the Development of the Laity^{xii}

37. The majority of the Church are the laity. As members of the mystical body of Christ, they are called to play an important role in the New Evangelization for the transmission of the faith. They should be actively involved the mission of the Church in all other areas as well. Therefore, the Catholic Church in Thailand should more systematically and constantly build up, support, promote, and strengthen the laity. In order that the faithful live as witnesses in every dimension of life, there is an urgent need to establish an “**Institute / Movement for the Development of the Laity**” with various curricula for all Christians, regardless of gender, age, or occupation. Programs of formation should be set up in such a way that everyone can have easy access to them.

The Vocation to pastoral ministry as pastors and collaborators

38. Guiding children and young people to love God is the guarantee of the Church’s future in forming pastors and collaborators. Contemporary society is less and less supportive of priestly and religious vocations. Therefore it is necessary for the community of disciples of Christ to pray fervently for vocations to pastoral ministry. Their life of witnessing should shine more clearly. They should not be afraid to propose new ways to respond to the vocation of consecrating oneself to the service of God.

The work of fostering vocations must be the duty of all: bishops, priests, religious and the laity, especially the family, parochial communities, and Catholic educational institutions.

Parents must be aware of their role in the initial formation of the vocation of their children, being ready to support and joyfully allow their children to respond to the call to ministry as pastors and collaborators.

Parish pastoral councils should have someone in charge of promoting and supporting priestly and religious vocations in the parish.

School and campus ministers have an important role in promoting vocations. They should regularly speak to the students about vocations and regularly organize prayer for vocations.

Seminaries and formation houses must receive full care and support. Formation programs must be updated so that they may be more suitable to the present situation of the society and better prepare the *formandi* to be pastors and heralds of the New Evangelization.

The use of technology and mass media for pastoral care and the New Evangelization

39. Technology and mass communications are gifts from God and instruments that can be put at the service of the New Evangelization. Hence, every sector of the Church must take an interest in them and understand how to use them, especially the New Media, for pastoral care and for the New Evangelization. Social media create huge and broad networking communities. The Church must learn, understand and take advantage of these means of communication in the areas of pastoral care, the New Evangelization, the transmission of the faith, and spiritual development.

The Catholic Church in Thailand must prepare personnel who will be ready to create, manage and use media that are capable of reaching each targeted group efficiently and effectively. The Church must walk side by side with the people, helping to form their conscience, leading them and teaching them, so that they, especially children and young people, may use these new media with understanding and prudence.

Media Education is a matter of importance and necessity, which must be promoted, so that all Christians are able to accept or reject the contents passed through them and use them for the New Evangelization. It must be noted, however, that the most effective means of communication is always a life of witness to the Gospel.

Central Committee to facilitate the mandate of the Decree

40. A central committee should be established to facilitate the mandates of this Decree of the Plenary Council, so that everyone at all levels will acknowledge, understand, accept, and implement its recommendations for ways to bring about the necessary changes in the attitude and behavior. The recommendation contained in this Decree call for a true conversion of the Catholic people of Thailand in order that they may be united and bravely and resolutely commit themselves to be **“Christ’s disciples living the New Evangelization”**.

CONCLUSION

Presence of the Holy Spirit: Strength of the New Evangelization

41. *“And suddenly from heaven there came a sound like the rush of a violent wind, and it filled the entire house where they were sitting. Divided tongues, as of fire, appeared among them, and a tongue rested on each of them.”* (Acts 2:2-3). The first evangelization occurred on Pentecost, when the apostles gathered together for prayer with the Mother of Christ, Mary, who joined the proclamation of the Good News undertaken by the Apostles. She continues this mission wherever the Good News is proclaimed. She was part of the first community of the disciples of Christ in the upper room (cf. Acts 2). Proclaiming the Good News means spreading the fire of the Holy Spirit, the fire of the proclamation of the Good News of Christ’s love that has filled the hearts of the members of the Church and compels them to participate in the New Evangelization: *“Woe betide me if I do not proclaim the gospel!”* (1 Cor 9: 16).

“Jesus Christ – the face of the mercy of God the Father”: Wide horizon for the New Evangelization

42. The Catholic Church in Thailand sees itself as the sign and the instrument of the Kingdom of God – a Kingdom of love, mercy, justice and peace. She is the mystical body of Christ, who is the head of the body, and the face of the mercy of God who is Love (*Misericordiae Vultus* – Pope Francis). We are aware of the challenges of a secularized society, which dries up spiritual life in our time and leads to the death of hope. The Church must engage in the New Evangelization of salvation, inviting everyone to Christ, the fountain of life. The Church extends her invitation through love, service, charity, solidarity with the poor, and defense of the human dignity and rights of those who suffer injustice in various forms. She contributes to the improvement of the quality of life, both physical and spiritual, of all our brothers and sisters.

The New Evangelization is the duty of every Christian, bishop, priest, religious or lay person. Through faith and baptism everyone has been called to be a disciple of Jesus. Everyone has received the love of God, whose Son came down to save us. One cannot keep this love for him/her self alone. It is the gift that the Church must share with everyone through a New Evangelization offered to our society, especially to our brothers and sisters who still do not know Christ (*ad Gentes*).

Mary – Model of Joy in the New Evangelization

43. *“My soul magnifies the Lord, for the Mighty One has done great things for me, and holy is his name”* (Lk 1: 46, 49). Mary is the woman who lives by faith. She allows the Holy Spirit to lead her on the path of faith towards the goal of service and fruitfulness. We ask the Mother of the Church and the Star of the Evangelization to pray to God that the Catholic Church in Thailand will resolutely dare to walk with her in the New Evangelization.



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Promulgated on 16th April 2017
The Solemnity of the Risen Lord

Endnotes

ⁱ “Christ’s Disciples living the New Evangelization”

Generally speaking the Evangelization is the mission of the whole Church, the people of God. It includes the pastoral work, the evangelization of those who do not know Christ (*ad Gentes*) and the re-evangelization of those who have already been evangelized but still need a new proclamation to improve their knowledge of Christ and their life as disciples.

As Christians, people chosen to be Christ’s disciples, all have the duty of the New Evangelization. Christians rejoice in the love of God, who loved us first, up to the point of sending his Son as our Master, to offer us an example of life and to lead us with his teaching to the Kingdom of God. Christ also sent his disciples: “Go, and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, teaching them to observe all things that I commanded you” (Mt 28:19–20). This command will be accomplished through words and deeds, through the proclamation of God’s salvation and through a witness of life.

The “Good News” of Christ proclaimed by the Church is always new. Therefore the New Evangelization is not the proclamation of something new, but it is a commitment to a renewal of the proclamation with new ardor, new methods and new expressions. For various reasons often Christ’s disciples are not aware of this mission. Hence in the last few decades the Church has been speaking of a New Evangelization, to help all Christians to have a more important share in the proclamation of the Good News of our salvation. This mission will be accomplished through a witness of life to Christ’s teaching, through love and mercy towards our neighbors and through a deeper communion in the Church communities and organizations.

ⁱⁱ Secularism

It is born out of a current thought stating that religion is an obstacle to human development because it stresses simplistic faith. It develops a philosophy of life that gives importance to the “worldly” and the passions more than any values.

ⁱⁱⁱ **Ethical relativism** is the theory that holds that morality is relative to the norms of one’s culture. That is, whether an action is right or wrong depends on the moral norms of the society in which it is practiced. The same action may be morally right in one society but be morally wrong in another. For the ethical relativist, there are no universal moral standards -- standards that can be universally applied to all peoples at all times. The only moral standards against which a society’s practices can be judged are its own. If ethical relativism is correct, there can be no common

framework for resolving moral disputes or for reaching agreement on ethical matters among members of different societies.

^{iv} **Basic Ecclesial Communities or BECs** are the gatherings of Christians living in the same neighborhood in the context of the civilization of love with the aim of a stronger concrete community life. Their members witness to a new kind of relationship born from the Gospel. They meet for sharing on the word of God, for prayer, for celebrating the important moments in the life of the members, for helping each other or their brothers and sisters in the neighborhood belonging to other faiths. In this way they witness to Christ and to the Love of God. Therefore the BEC is the important base on which to build the relationship at the level of the parish community, which can be considered as a communion of communities. It differs from the other groups that gather for common activities without stressing the community aspect. Hence the nature of the BEC is more than just being a group; actually it is a community.

^v **New Horizon**

It is a comparison expressing a new situation after a change, as the new dawn appearing on the horizon after the night. After conversion, after experiencing the love of God and having renewed their faith, all Christians will see a new dimension, a new horizon. They will feel the ardor of sharing with all this love of God, which is Good News, so that all might experience it too.

In this context therefore a New Horizon means the daring of proclaiming the Good News of salvation to our brothers and sisters and to the wider society with new ardor, new methods and new expressions.

^{vi} **cf. Evangelii Gaudium**, nn. 122–126 on “The Evangelizing Power of Popular Piety”; and n. 44 on the Sacrament of Reconciliation.

^{vii} **A New Way of being Church**

It stresses the community dimension of the faithful following the indications given by the Federation of Asian Bishops’ Conferences (cf. FABC V, 1990, n.8). In their statement the Bishops present a model of the People of God based on community at all levels, be it the BEC, the Parish Church Community, the Diocese or the whole Church. This New Way has a specific spirituality: the Spirituality of Communion. It is a community in which all its members, no matter if they are priests, religious or laity, aware of being brothers and sisters, live as such. All share responsibility in the mission of the community, each one according to his/her role.

Therefore the way of life of the faithful who try to live as brothers and sisters in a community united in reciprocal love must reflect the image of the first Christian community of Christ’s disciples (Acts 2:42–47; 4:32–35) and live according to the indications given by St. Paul to the Colossians (Col 3:12–17).

^{viii} **The uniqueness of Catholic Education.**

It refers to the Catholic educational institutions that organize their learning process according to the principles of Catholic education, stressing the development of the student as a good person with a clear prominent moral character according to his/her own identity.

^{ix} **The identity of Catholic Education.**

It refers to the organization of the learning process and curriculum integrating them with the following 21 Gospel values:

1. **Faith** as the base of all values;
- 2 – 10. Values that are duties in the relationship with God and with oneself, that is, truth, reflection/prayer, conscience/discernment/moral courage, freedom, joy, respect/dignity, humility, honesty and simplicity/sufficiency;
11. **Love or Charity**, as the apex of all values;
- 12 – 20. Values that are duties in the relationship with others and with creation, that is, compassion, gratitude, work/duty, service, justice, peace/reconciliation, forgiveness, unity/community, wonder/conservation;
21. **Hope** that gives solidity to all values.

^x **Awareness, understanding, agreement and commitment to the Decree**

These qualifications form like an important strategy that can be described in the following steps: Promote Awareness, presenting the aims of this Decree. Create Understanding, with those concerned at all levels in order to induce Agreement. Sustain Belief, Faith and Commitment to become true Christ’s disciples.

In the application of this strategy it is suggested that:

- Use a “New Way of Being Church” as an important instrument (Cf. # 6, 9, 12, 22, 23).
- Organize ongoing formation for developing the potential of Christ’s disciples (Cf. # 36, 37).
- Adjust Church structures and working procedures at all levels (Cf. # 33, 34, 35, 40).

^{xi} **Ongoing formation for the Laity**

This ongoing formation must be organized as a process involving all dimensions of the basic faith of the laity. An example of a commonly used manual is the book “Our Journey Together” by Oswald Hirmer. Besides presenting the Rite of Christian Initiation of Adults (RCIA), it is also useful for the general ongoing formation of the laity, because it contains also a Guide for the Christian Community to accompany adult catechumens on their journey of faith.

^{xii} **Institute / Movement for the Development of the Laity**

The development of the pastors (priests and religious) is an important work. The Church has constantly organized institutions (seminaries, formations houses of

various religious congregations) at this aim since the Synod of Siam in 1664. However, for the laity that form the 99 per cent of the Christians there has not been a concrete organized system of formation yet.

Lay people are the great majority of the Church, a part of the Mystical Body of Christ. They need to become more aware of their being disciples, of their baptismal vocation and mission. They must proclaim Christ through their witness of life in the midst of the world, bringing the love and mercy of God to their neighbors in the family, in society and in their working places. Hence it is extremely necessary to build, support and develop the laity towards a greater maturity, both at the levels of the knowledge of the Master's teaching and of the experience of a personal encounter with Him. A team of experts in various fields should be tasked of preparing various complete curricula of easy access to all, well organized and continuous, for an integral development of the lay person. They should include the dimensions of living in our contemporary society and helpful knowledge for the profession of every one. At the same time they should develop a deeper understanding of the word of God, a greater ardor in living one's vocation, more participation in the activities of the Church, proclaiming the Good News together in unity and dedication. The result will be the building of quality Christ's disciples that are salt and light of the world. These curricula could use various media in offering their knowledge and formation in an effective way to the various targeted groups of Christians.