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Editorial

After 50 Years: Catholic Eastern Churches

The Catholic Church is the communion of Churches united in the same faith and Divine Mysteries. Though we can see this model of the Church in the early Christian centuries, due to various reasons the Western Church dominated the whole scenario and the importance and function of the Eastern Churches diminished in the course of time. Western colonization of eastern regions of the world further weakened the existence of the Churches in the East. Later, Catholic Church was often understood in terms of the Western/Roman Church. Vatican Council II's attempts to regain the original ecclesiology, that is, a theology of the communion of Individual Churches, is best expressed in the decree, *Orientalium Ecclesiarum*, promulgated on 21 November 1964. Although there were views that no separate document on the Catholic Eastern Churches was necessary, many Council Fathers felt that a separate document to deal with the particular issues of those Churches would be more helpful. The ecclesiology of Vatican II becomes complete only with this document.

Through this document Vatican Council II declared that the Catholic Church is much more than the Roman Church and what is essential is communion than uniformity. The Church is a communion, not only of individuals, but also of Churches, which are equal in dignity. In this document the Church reaffirms the value and stand of the Eastern Catholic Churches who have their own ecclesiastical disciplines, theological visions, spiritual traditions and liturgies.

Even critics would perhaps agree that *Orientalium Ecclesiarum* is a ground breaking document of the Council. However, like many other documents of the Council, *Orientalium Ecclesiarum* also has led to debates and heated arguments, both within the individual Churches and between the Churches. Eastern Churches, especially those that came under the influence of the Roman Church, have been facing internal conflicts in their attempt to respond to the call of the Council to rediscover their original liturgical, administrative and spiritual traditions. Whether to restore the tradition or reform it is the ongoing debate in many of these Churches. Similarly, even after five decades, the equal dignity of the Churches is recognised only in theory, many point out. Moreover, disputes over jurisdiction continue in territories where individual Churches coexist. To resolve such issues more sincere efforts coming from Christian charity and commitment to justice may be required.

The March 2014 issue of *Asian Horizons* reflects on the Catholic Eastern Churches based on *Orientalium Ecclesiarum*. Francis Thonippara outlines the historical background of the Decree and shows that it is a landmark in the history of the Eastern Churches. According to him, the Decree is very important for the interrelationship among the individual Churches in the Catholic communion and for the Catholic Church's relationship with other Eastern Churches. Rafiq Khoury focuses on the importance and the richness of the oriental patrimony, especially in the context of the oriental Churches of the Middle East and their societies. He argues that any fixist ways of understanding the patrimony would prevent these Churches from participating in the process of developing their societies.

In her article, "Of Equal Dignity," Jaisy Joseph applies the threefold conciliar hermeneutic proposed by Ormond Rush, namely, diachronic reading, synchronic reading and hermeneutic of reception, to *Orientalium Ecclesiarum*. Analysing in detail section three of the Decree she explains the relationship of this passage to other conciliar texts. Brian A. Butcher examines the liturgical legacy of John Paul II to the Eastern Churches. Based on an analysis of the relevant texts and initiatives, Butcher delineates the influence of OE on John Paul II and his ministry. Joseph Varghese Kureethara delineates the establishment of the Catholic dioceses in India in the wake of the universal jurisdiction of the oriental churches. In his challenging paper, after having depicted the effects of the Lusitanization efforts on the St Thomas Christians, he argues, with the support of statistical

data, that in the establishment of the dioceses there seems to be a well laid out strategy of the Roman Church. He is courageous enough to address the burning issue of the dispute over jurisdiction, an issue often evaded and conveniently ignored, but painfully experienced by many.

Jean-Marie Hyacinthe Quenum reflects on the dynamic of the Eastern pre-Constantine Church heritage of Alexandria in the daily life of postmodern Church. He considers it as a paradigm for postmodern intercultural witness to the Gospel of Christ. Roselin presents the evolution of the Patriarchate of Seleucia-Ctesiphon as an indigenous autonomous development. Based on this extensive study, she argues that OE, 12 gives the possibility of erecting new patriarchates and hopes that Syro-Malabar Church deserves to be raised to the status of a patriarchate.

There are three articles dealing with other relevant topics. Delfo Cortina Canceran says that theology is not exempt from the transformation brought about by the internet, and discusses how theologians can make use of the internet for theologising. According to Raphael Karekkat, the election of Francis as the Pope and the subsequent events have profoundly transformed the church, generating a new atmosphere of openness, courage, hope and trust and hopes this new atmosphere will impact the reform in general and the quest to grow in the 'communion' that marks the 'Church Catholic'. Maria Lucia C. Natividad analyses the concepts of "grace" and "reward" and explores how the term "reward" is used in Matthew's gospel, in the official teaching of the Church and its practical understanding in the faith-life experiences of the Filipino Catholics.

I would also like to thank Evangeline Anderson Rajkumar, Maja Milčinski, John Chathanatt, SJ and Carmen Márquez who served in the editorial board of *Asians Horizons* for four years. Cordial welcome to Peter Huenermann, Lisa Sowle Cahill and Jose de Mesa to the Advisory Board of *Asian Horizons* and to Francis X. Clooney, SJ, John Mansford Prior, SVD, Agbonkhanmeghe E. Orobator, SJ, Gemma Tulud Cruz, Davis Varayilan, CMI, Francis Gonsalves, SJ, Francis Appiah-Kubi and Joseph Xavier, SJ to the Editorial Board. I am sure that their expertise and experience will enrich *Asian Horizons* further.

Shaji George Kochuthara, CMI
Editor-in-Chief

Asian Horizons, Vol. 8, No. 3, September 2014**Call for Papers****After 50 Years: Dialogue with Other Churches;
Dialogue with Religions**

“Dialogue” is one of the keywords for understanding the spirit of the Second Vatican Council — dialogue with other Churches, dialogue with other religions, dialogue with cultures, dialogue with the world. September 2014 issue of *Asian Horizons* invites to reflect on two important areas of dialogue that the Council calls for, namely, dialogue with other Churches and dialogue with religions.

The restoration of unity among all Christians was one of the principal concerns of the Second Vatican Council. Besides “the enlightenment, edification and joy of the entire Christian people,” the aims of the Council included “a renewed cordial invitation to the faithful of the separated Churches to participate with us in this feast of grace and brotherhood, for which so many souls long in all parts of the world.” *Unitatis Redintegratio*, the Decree on Ecumenism is the fruit of this ardent desire of the Council from its inception.

Nostra Aetate, the Declaration on the Relations of the Church to Non-Christian Religions, was one of the surprises of the Council, as it had not been foreseen in the preparatory agenda. The Declaration shows the growing awareness in the Council of plurality of religions and the need of striving towards the unity of humanity. Both these documents have been followed up with subsequent documents.

In the September 2014 issue of *Asian Horizons* we hope to include 4-6 articles each on Ecumenism and Interreligious Dialogue. The articles can be on: A critical appraisal of *Nostra Aetate* or *Unitatis Redintegratio*; their relevance today; a critical appraisal of post-Vatican II official teaching on ecumenism and interreligious dialogue; new initiatives and challenges ahead in ecumenism/interreligious dialogue.

As usual, we welcome other articles on any area of theological interest and research. Please send your articles (4500-5000 words, including the footnotes) latest by 25 September 2014. Kindly include the abstract of the article in 100-150 words and a short resumé of the author.

Other regular items: “New Scholars”: Abstract of doctoral theses (recently defended and not yet published); book reviews.

2014, December: Migration & Poverty

2015, March: After 50 Years: Ongoing Renewal of Moral Theology

2015, June: Asia’s Women Theologians

2015, September: After 50 Years: Apostolate of Lay People; Towards Future

2015, December: Ethics, Theology and Technology