

Encountering Christ in Harmony

*A Pastoral Response to
Our Asian and Pacific Island Brothers and Sisters*

United States Conference of Catholic Bishops

Washington, DC

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Foreword

Background to Pastoral Response

The USCCB's pastoral statement *Asian and Pacific Presence: Harmony in Faith* (2001) encouraged the creation of a national pastoral plan. There were several programs and processes initiated immediately after the publication of that statement: regional gatherings, national pastoral institutes, learning seminars, listening sessions, a national summit in 2006, and the formation of national organizations. Many of these initiatives were not connected to one another or were started by different groups. Thus, some of these programs existed for a period of time and then were discontinued, surfacing a need for a more consistent and viable process of bringing together the Asian and Pacific Island communities.

In 2008, the creation of the Committee and Secretariat of Cultural Diversity in the Church and the Subcommittee on Asian and Pacific Island Affairs at the United States Conference of Catholic Bishops (USCCB) presented a new opportunity to reconsider pastoral ministry to and among Asian and Pacific Island Catholics in the United States. In 2013, the subcommittee began a three-year process to create a national pastoral plan for Asian and Pacific Island Catholics. The scope of this proposed plan admittedly did not include Eastern Catholic communities from the Middle East; their issues and needs were deemed to carry a certain urgency and distinction that would be difficult to encompass in the daunting task of establishing a common thread for those communities coming from this territory.

A committee consisting of leaders from the Asian and Pacific Island communities and experts on ministry with Asian and Pacific Island Catholics was formed to organize the effort

and to lay out the next steps. The committee was then divided into a steering committee and an advisory board with priests, religious, and lay people representing different constituent groups. The steering committee and advisory board created a proposal for developing a national pastoral plan. The Subcommittee on Asian and Pacific Island Affairs, through the Committee on Cultural Diversity in the Church, submitted the proposal to the USCCB Committee on Priorities and Plans for approval.

In 2014, the proposal was granted approval to proceed. The subcommittee then created a three-year process to implement the plan in three phases. Phase I included preparation, consultation, and drafting of a national pastoral plan. In order to provide reliable data on the current status of Asian and Pacific Island Catholics, as well as to collect their concerns and wishes, a team of social scientists was hired to conduct a year-long study of the Asian and Pacific Island Catholic communities (see Appendix 1). This study gathered data via an online survey that was published in thirteen languages to get maximum response. In addition, the authors convened several small focus groups to go further in depth on issues and themes that had emerged in the survey, and conducted multiple in-person interviews with leaders and members of the various Asian and Pacific Islander communities throughout the United States. This study resulted in a comprehensive report, *Asian and Pacific Island Catholics in the United States*. It was the first such study to focus on the experience and aspirations of these Catholic communities in the United States. The report provides the information and testimonies needed to develop and draft a national pastoral plan for Asian and Pacific Island Catholics.

It was during the writing of the national pastoral plan that the Subcommittee on Asian and Pacific Island Affairs and the Committee on Cultural Diversity in the Church agreed upon

calling the plan a national pastoral response. The title *Encountering Christ in Harmony: A Pastoral Response to Our Asian and Pacific Island Brothers and Sisters* was accepted.

Phase II was the approval process. In addition to the Subcommittee on Asian and Pacific Island Affairs, and the Committee on Cultural Diversity in the Church, several USCCB committees were consulted on the draft of the pastoral response. It was then forwarded to the USCCB Administrative Committee to be put formally on the agenda of the General Assembly for discussion and vote by the full body of bishops. The general assembly voted to accept the pastoral response on June 14, 2018.

Phase III is the publication and implementation of *Encountering Christ in Harmony*. This pastoral response is to be distributed widely throughout all the Catholic dioceses of the United States.

Encountering Christ in Harmony
A Pastoral Response to
Our Asian and Pacific Island Brothers and Sisters

Introduction

The United States Conference of Catholic Bishops (USCCB) published *Asian and Pacific Presence: Harmony in Faith* in 2001. That pastoral statement was the fruit of several decades of working to identify and address the needs of Asian and Pacific Island Catholics living in the United States. *Harmony in Faith* outlined the cultural, social, and ethnic diversity found in many Asian and Pacific Island communities while recognizing and celebrating the range of gifts and values common to most of these communities. Among these shared gifts and values, several are worth emphasizing: (1) the value of harmony amid diversity; (2) the centrality of family, with its stress on solidarity, filial piety, and respect for the elderly and for ancestors; (3) the importance of education; (4) the traditions of deep spirituality and popular piety; (5) the contributions of clergy and religious; and (6) a long tradition of lay leadership. At the same time, the bishops' statement noted some of the challenges US society poses to Asian and Pacific Island cultures, including racial discrimination, stereotyping, and the clash of values between a more *communitarian* Asian and Pacific cultural ethos and the more *individualist* focus of mainstream US culture. As the term implies, a more *communitarian* culture tends to stress the needs of the family and community over those of the individual.¹

¹ Sociologists and others also use the term *collectivist* to refer to cultures that stress the needs and goals of the group over those of the individual (Geert Hofstede, *Culture's Consequences*, 2001). Relationships with other members of the group and the interconnectedness of people play a central role in each person's identity. Putting community needs ahead of individuals, working as a group and supporting others, doing what is best for society, and maintaining the central role of families and communities are a few common traits. For further information, see the Committee on Cultural Diversity in the Church's resource, *Building Intercultural Competence for Ministers* (Washington, DC: United States Conference of Catholic Bishops [USCCB], 2010).

The conclusion of *Harmony in Faith* called for the development of a national pastoral plan for Asian and Pacific Island Catholics in the United States. Ten years after the pastoral statement was released, the Subcommittee on Asian and Pacific Island Affairs started an assessment of what has happened since, and various Asian and Pacific Island representatives, gathering under the auspices of this subcommittee, identified the need to take the next step. The result was the creation of this pastoral response.²

We, the Catholic bishops of the United States, offer this pastoral response to assist diocesan and parish leaders and all the faithful in welcoming and integrating our Asian and Pacific Island brothers and sisters as they strive to live a faith-filled life in the Catholic Church. The diverse ethnic communities that make up the Asian and Pacific Island population have already been identified in *Harmony in Faith*, which emphasizes the need to acknowledge their presence. Today, the Asian and Pacific Island population in the United States is the fastest-growing minority population. Nevertheless, it tends to go unrecognized in the wider US society, and there remains a need to bring more attention and support to the Asian and Pacific Island communities. [\[Sidebar 1: US Catholic Population: Race, Ethnicity, and Birthplace Group, 2013 Estimates\]](#); [\[Sidebar 2: Fifteen US \(Arch\)Dioceses with the Most Asian and Pacific Island Catholics Have 63 Percent of the Total Asian and Pacific Island Catholic \(APIC\) Population\]](#); [\[Sidebar 3: Asian American, Native Hawaiian, and Pacific Island Catholics, Population Estimates in USCCB Regions\]](#). Asian and Pacific Island Catholics in the United States embody a

² The Subcommittee on Asian and Pacific Island Affairs moved away from developing a national pastoral plan as originally envisioned. Such a plan would involve identifying goals, objectives, actions, and metrics that should actually be developed at the local level. Instead, the subcommittee worked toward crafting a statement that would offer a pastoral framework that dioceses and parishes can use as guidelines or to create or integrate into their own pastoral plans. As such, this pastoral response is intended to provide encouragement and guidance to bishops, dioceses, and pastors for the pastoral care of Asian and Pacific Island Catholics.

rich and deep history of Catholicism, a synthesis of traditional Catholic practices infused with the unique cultural characteristics particular to each of the various ethnic groups that make up those identified as Asian and Pacific Islander. Asian and Pacific Island Catholics are eager to share their experiences and gifts as well as to receive support from the wider Catholic Church in the United States.

Pastoral Response:

THE CALL TO ENCOUNTER CHRIST IN HARMONY

In his Apostolic Exhortation *Evangelii Gaudium*, Pope Francis urges the faithful to “a renewed personal encounter with Jesus Christ, or at least an openness to letting him encounter them.”³

Jesus Christ is constantly reaching out to all persons, but there needs to be a response from us.

We need not fear that the invitation is meant for someone else and not us. We can respond with a sure hope. “The Lord does not disappoint those who take this risk; whenever we take a step toward Jesus, we come to realize that he is already there, waiting for us with open arms. Now is the time to say to Jesus: ‘Lord, I have let myself be deceived. . . . I need you. . . .’ God never tires of forgiving us. . . . [and no] one can strip us of the dignity bestowed upon us by this boundless and unfailing love.”⁴

Pope Francis also acknowledges the fact that our response to the encounter with Christ is partially shaped by our backgrounds and personal experiences, especially our cultural, social, and ethnic diversities. “God attracts us by taking into account the complex interweaving of

³ Pope Francis, *Evangelii Gaudium* (Washington, DC: USCCB, 2013), no.3.

⁴ Ibid.

personal relationships entailed in the life of a human community.”⁵ The cultural diversity of a community, therefore, is necessarily an integral factor in the encounter with the Gospel. “Grace supposes culture, and God’s gift becomes flesh in the culture of those who receive it.”⁶

This is to say that, on the one hand, through the encounter with Christ, culture is transformed by the power of the Gospel. And on the other hand, culture is integrated into the life of the Church and enriches the Church as a whole. Pope Francis writes, “In the diversity of peoples who experience the gift of God, each in accordance with its own culture, the Church expresses her genuine catholicity.”⁷ “In this way,” he continues, “the Church takes up the [positive] values of different cultures and becomes the *sponsa ornata monilibus suis*, ‘the bride bedecked with her jewels’ (cf. Is 61:10).”⁸ One of those jewels offered to the Church from Asian and Pacific Island cultures, although not solely unique to them, is the concept of harmony. Harmony is a very common theme in Asian and Pacific Island cultures, and therefore it makes sense that in the encounter with the Gospel, the Holy Spirit would transform this jewel of Asian and Pacific Island cultures and make it a blessing to the Church.

Through the concept of harmony, the various Asian and Pacific Island cultures are open to encountering the Lord precisely through their cultural understanding of unity in diversity. In the Asian and Pacific worldview, harmony does not mean leveling off differences in order to arrive at consensus at any cost. Rather, harmony includes diversity as a richness to be embraced and nurtured. At the same time, attaining harmony requires never losing sight of our unity in Christ, which is the goal. In this view, a crucial aspect of personhood is the placing of others—

⁵ Ibid., no. 113.

⁶ Ibid., no. 115.

⁷ Ibid., no. 116.

⁸ Ibid.

the family, the community—before oneself. Of course, as in every culture, the concepts of self and family need to be purified by the Gospel, but the importance of harmony in Asian and Pacific Island communities offers a fruitful cultural analog to help us deepen our insight into the revealed mystery of the communion of the Church.

This pastoral response seeks to weave together the rich tapestry of Asian and Pacific Island histories, cultures, and faith, in order to celebrate and support Asian and Pacific Catholic communities in the United States. It recognizes, however, the difficult task of bringing together the disparate communities from Asia and the Pacific Islands into a single unifying voice. Yet, while there are many distinctions between these communities, there is a common thread of Catholic identity.⁹ [Sidebar 4: Eastern Catholic Churches from India in the United States, 2017] In *Evangelii Gaudium*, Pope Francis exhorts all faithful believers, no matter their ethnic background, to embrace their baptismal call to go out and proclaim the Good News to all peoples.

To engage the Asian and Pacific Island communities in the United States, a year-long study was commissioned, which included an online survey, available in thirteen languages, as well as in-pew questionnaires, small group discussions, and in-person interviews. From this study, four major components surfaced as central concerns for the Asian and Pacific Catholic communities:

- I. Identity
- II. Generations

⁹ This pastoral response is written from the perspective of the Latin Catholic Church, although Eastern Catholic Churches such as the Syro-Malabar and Syro-Malankara are also included. Nevertheless, it may be of assistance to all Catholic Churches *sui iuris* in the United States, with the necessary adaptations to reflect particular traditions, customs, and law. Though they are not the main focus of this statement, some information about the Eastern Catholic Churches has been included in a side bar.

- III. Leadership
- IV. Culture of Encounter and Dialogue

Each of these four components will be examined through two lenses: *our faith expressed* and *our faith engaged*. The first lens, *our faith expressed*, views the stories of Asian and Pacific Island Catholics as part of the larger Catholic tradition, and at the same time, emphasizes the uniqueness of particular communities. The second lens, *our faith engaged*, provides suggestions for a pastoral response to specific Asian and Pacific Island Catholic needs and challenges. These suggestions are not limited to Asian and Pacific Island Catholics and communities but are offered to all pastoral leaders within the wider landscape of cultural and generational diversity in the United States. To that end, we group these pastoral suggestions into three levels:

- National level
- Diocesan level¹⁰
- Parish level¹¹

Both of these lenses—*our faith expressed* and *our faith engaged*—underscore the contributions made by Asian and Pacific Island communities, while acknowledging the challenges that still confront many today.

¹⁰ Many of the suggestions found at the diocesan and parish levels could be adapted to pastoral settings in Catholic schools and universities.

¹¹ The parish level includes suggestions for domestic settings and small ecclesial communities. Small ecclesial communities are widely known as “basic ecclesial communities” in many Asian countries that adopted the terminology used by St. John Paul II in *Redemptoris Missio* (Washington, DC: USCCB, 1990).

I. Identity

OUR FAITH EXPRESSED

While Christianity has been in India since the time of the Apostle Thomas, the majority of Asian countries encountered Christianity in the Middle Ages and later.¹² This was the time when European and Asian missionaries entered China, Japan, Vietnam, and the Pacific Islands. The missionaries encountered people spiritually engaged with their own distinctive traditions and culture. They met people who took great pride in their festivals, rituals, and communal observances.

Historically, the majority of Asian and Pacific countries have at some point been colonized by another entity, be it from Europe, America, or Asia.¹³ The colonial and missionary history influenced the way these countries related to external forces and also how they adapted to change.

European missionaries brought Christianity to many of these countries; some Asian and Pacific Islanders embraced the new religion, and others did not. Colonialism is a highly complicated and charged topic in Asian and Pacific history, and the attitudes attendant on colonial history are not easily changed and need to be acknowledged. Colonialism is part of the complexity of Asian and Pacific Islander identity that needs further discussion beyond the scope of this pastoral response.

¹² The evangelization of greater China by the Chaldean (“Persian”) Church occurred prior to the Middle Ages.

¹³ The exceptions are Japan, Thailand, and Tonga, which were able to maintain their individual sovereignty.

In the majority of Asian countries or territories, Christianity is a minority religion, with Catholics making up an even smaller part of the Christian population. While the Pacific Islands population is mostly Christian, Catholics are still the minority.

[\[Sidebar 5: Estimated Percent Catholic in Asian Nations\]](#)

[\[Sidebar 6: Estimated Percent Catholic in Pacific Island Nations\]](#)

Exceptions to this norm are Catholics from the Philippines, Timor-Leste, Wallis and Futuna, and Guam, where Catholics form the largest religious group. The Philippines and Timor-Leste both have a high percentage of Catholics, 93 percent and 96 percent, respectively. They have proportionally more Catholics than any other Asian country or Pacific island. In fact, these percentages are higher than any other country in the world. Furthermore, in the United States, Filipino Americans who self-identify as Roman Catholic represent three quarters of all Asian and Pacific Island Catholics in this country.¹⁴

As Asian and Pacific Islanders migrate to the United States [\[Sidebar 7: Earliest Recorded Date of Filipinos in the United States\]](#), their identity as Catholics continues to be shaped by their colonial and missionary history, as well as by their encounter with the diversity present in US culture.¹⁵ For many Asian and Pacific Island Catholics, whether they were born in the United States or are immigrants, their religious identity is intricately woven into their cultural upbringing. For them, being Catholic is part of being Asian and Pacific Islander. It is important,

¹⁴ For more demographic statistics of Asian and Pacific Island Catholics, see the 2010 Center for the Applied Research in the Apostolate report, *Cultural Diversity in the Catholic Church in the United States*.

¹⁵ The history of Asian American presence in the United States must begin from a broader hemispheric perspective. As Jason Oliver Chang reminds us, “Asians in Latin America predate the existence of the United States by several centuries” due to the galleon trade between Acapulco, Lima, and Manila. Because of this transpacific trade, “hundreds of thousands of ethnically different Asians” would eventually migrate “to the European colonies and indigenous lands of the Americas.” See his “Toward a Hemispheric Asian American History” in *The Oxford Handbook of Asian American History* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2016), 30; 35

then, when discussing the identity of Asian and Pacific Island Catholics, to recognize how religion and culture are so intimately intertwined. Even though this may be more apparent for first-generation immigrants, the second and subsequent generations have also inherited part of this identity construction.

In US society, Asian and Pacific Islanders are sometimes assumed to be practitioners of Eastern or South Asian religions, or perhaps new converts from an indigenous or animist tradition. Because of such stereotyping, some Asian and Pacific Islanders may find that society lumps them together as being religiously “other” and thus not truly Catholic Christians. This may contribute to a feeling of being invisible, hidden, rejected, and marginalized in US society and even in the Church. Consequently, some Asian and Pacific Island Catholics may feel that they have to constantly defend and legitimize their long history of Catholicism.

It is crucial to underscore that Asian and Pacific Island Catholics are made up of ethnically, racially, culturally, nationally, and socially diverse groups of people that share a single faith, one that is universal in confession and particular in expression. These particular expressions are apparent in their worship practices and liturgical celebrations. From Advent novena Masses of *Simbang Gabi* (“night Masses”) celebrated by Filipinos, to the liturgical and devotional activities that occur during the Asian Lunar New Year, celebrated by Chinese (*Xin* or *Chun Jie*), Korean (*Seollal*), Laotian (*Pi Mai*), and Vietnamese (*Tet*) communities, many have incorporated cultural elements into their Catholic worship. The bright colors and intricate designs found in Asia and the Pacific Islands are wrapped around church walls and pews as well as worn by the people. These colors and cultural motifs are a reminder of the inclusive nature of Catholic worship.

Other practices that communities incorporate are the inclusion of Asian and Pacific Island saints during the chanting of the Litany of Saints as well as the display of a statue or image of the Blessed Virgin Mary adorned with local native dress. By doing this, many Asian and Pacific Island communities are able to incorporate Mary into their particular ethnic identity. In art, she has taken on Asian characteristics and Pacific Island features. Through prayers, she is called upon to intercede on behalf of the people. She is the nurturing caretaker of a people whose identity is grounded deeply in their faith and culture. A myriad of liturgical and devotional practices can stress the deep encounter of faith in a loving God who is glorified in diversity.

For many Asian and Pacific Island Catholics, their religious identity is best expressed through their native tongue. Home country language is a vital part of who they are. It is not only a way to communicate, but it also gives expression to the depth of their being. Just as religion is essential to their lives, language is an identity marker that accentuates the character and personality of Asian and Pacific Islanders. It is distinctive, especially when cultural expressions are not translatable into English and must remain expressed in their original language. Some examples include:

- *Chit sa go shay zay, mone sa go toe zay*, a Burmese adage “to not dwell on hatred but on harmony”
- *Kin kao len bo?*, a Laotian expression of hospitality that asks whether the person has eaten rice already
- *Aia ke ola i ka waha; aia ka make i ka waha*, a Hawaiian saying that means, “Spoken words can enliven; spoken words can destroy.”

Just as language is a distinctive social marker for Asian and Pacific Islanders, physical appearance may further contribute to distinctions, and these distinctions can sometimes be negative due to racism. Combatting racism requires not only changes in attitude and overcoming prejudices but also challenging social structures that subtly embody and reinforce racism.

[\[Sidebar 8: Definition of Racism\]](#) While the experience of racism is not unique to any one ethnic group, two important examples in Asian American history include the Chinese Exclusionary Act in 1882 and the internment of Japanese Americans during the Second World War. For many Asian and Pacific Catholics, the reality of being linguistically or physically different from the larger US population is a constant reminder of their marginalized status. No matter the degree to which they integrate into mainstream culture, racial presumptions may continue to affect them. It should be noted that Asian and Pacific Island communities also add to the United States racial discourse when they discriminate against each other (e.g., due to class distinctions, socio-cultural groups, or ethnicity).

To further understand through the lens of identity the racial barriers that Asian and Pacific Islanders face, it is important to highlight how they are sometimes portrayed as being “unobtrusive,” “submissive,” and “hard-working,” i.e., as ‘model minorities.’ These stereotypes, in addition to being inaccurate, contribute to a perception of being “invisible.” As a result, many Asian and Pacific Islanders feel left out of US racial discourses that, more often than not, include whites, blacks, Native Americans, and Hispanics/Latinos. Asian and Pacific Island communities need to be included in these discourses.

Just as racism exists in the larger society, such dynamics can also be found within the Church. Even though the Church has taken steps to address the issue of racism, some Asian and Pacific Island Catholics feel they are not being recognized or included within their own parish

and/or diocese based on negative stereotypes, thus perpetuating the perception of hiddenness or invisibility. Decisions are made for them on the presumption that they will follow obediently what is asked, without causing any problems or neglecting their responsibilities, and that they will do their utmost to uphold harmony. Asian and Pacific Island Catholics need to remind the larger ecclesial communities that all are invited to the table. As St. Paul advocates, “There is neither Jew nor Greek, there is neither slave nor free person, there is not male and female; for you are all one in Christ Jesus” (Gal 3:28). In addition, all are part of God’s family, “so then you are no longer strangers and sojourners, but you are fellow citizens with the holy ones and members of the household of God” (Eph 2:19).

OUR FAITH ENGAGED IN IDENTITY

This section will discuss ways in which Asian and Pacific Island Catholics are already engaged in faith practices, as well as suggested actions. Some of these practices are similar across these communities, but others are particular to individual groups. It is our hope that these examples will generate other creative ways of engagement and support of Asian and Pacific Island Catholic communities.

Being Welcomed in the Church

Our faith encourages us to recognize Asian and Pacific Island Catholics in local parishes and across dioceses. For many Asian and Pacific Island Catholics, being in the Church is being at home. There is a shared expression of homecoming when speaking about the Church: *Gohyang* (Korean for “my hometown”); *kokoro no furusato* (Japanese for “the hometown of my heart”); or

hayi hao (Chamorro for “Who are you related to?”). There is also a shared ownership that continues to evolve and develop among and between Asian and Pacific Island communities.

Suggestions for Further Engagement

The following three levels of suggestions are starting points for further dialogue, as well as for the creation and implementation of strategic plans. More specific examples can be found in the sidebars and on the website of the Subcommittee on Asian and Pacific Island Affairs.

National Level

- *Invite cultural representation.* Include and intentionally invite the presence of diverse Asian and Pacific Island communities and representatives who may be geographically or socially isolated from larger national events. [\[Sidebar 9: Inviting Cultural Representation Around the Table\]](#) Inviting cultural representation “around the table” requires more than public announcements or the use of media tools. More successful invitations are achieved when national and diocesan leaders are engaged in *ongoing communication and contact* with key Asian and Pacific leaders throughout all stages of planning.

Diocesan Level

- *Share space.* Provide ecclesial spaces (use of facilities, access to resources, etc.) for Asian and Pacific Island communities to gather for worship, catechesis, fundraising, and socializing. Dioceses could develop standards for these and other activities.
- *Address racism.* As noted above, racism continues to be a reality in our society today. A particularly helpful skill is being able to recognize these tensions that may exist at the diocesan and parish levels. We highly recommend the USCCB pastoral letter on racism,

Brothers and Sisters to Us (1979), and consulting the fourth module in the USCCB Committee on Cultural Diversity in the Church resource, *Building Intercultural Competence for Ministers* (2012).

[\[Sidebar 10: Responding to the Sin of Racism as Christians\]](#)

[\[Sidebar 11: Responding to Racism on a Personal Level\]](#)

[\[Sidebar 12: Responding to Racism at the Parish Level\]](#)

Parish Level

- *Extend domestic hospitality practices.* Among Asian and Pacific Island communities, a variety of hospitality practices exist that take place before, during, and after domestic and community gatherings. We encourage families and pastoral leaders to develop approaches that would link and extend these forms of welcome into parish and diocesan events. [\[Sidebar 13: Cultural Sharing and Enrichment\]](#)

Recognizing the Gifts

The diversity of gifts that are generated within and emerge from Asian and Pacific Island communities is abundant. As noted above, this begins by recognizing the Asian and Pacific presence and then inviting various representatives “around the table” in national organizations and diocesan and parish planning meetings. The following suggestions take this further by addressing how the gifts may be shared.

Suggestions for Further Engagement

National and Diocesan Levels

- *Establish diocesan Asian and Pacific Island resource centers.* The USCCB and Catholic publishing companies already provide and continue to develop resources that are prepared for—and may stem from—Asian and Pacific Island communities. Many of these resources can be accessed through the organizations’ websites. [\[Sidebar 14: Examples of Resources\]](#) In addition to these publications, dioceses could take inventories of existing local Asian and Pacific Island resources and provide funding for new and emerging resources to be shared and distributed. An updated list could be sent periodically to local parishes.
- *Recognize the abundance of local gifts.* Local gifts that stem from Asian and Pacific Island communities may include opportunities [\[Sidebar 15: Cultural Art Forms for Liturgy\]](#) to teach native languages and customs; sharing music through singing liturgically appropriate songs and playing instruments suitable for sacred use; decorating worship spaces or pastoral centers with native textiles and fabric in accordance with norms and guidelines outlined in official documents; and leading fundraising events for national and international Catholic organizations that benefit Asian and Pacific countries and territories.¹⁶ While this list represents just a sampling, a host of other gifts yet to be discovered could contribute to the ministerial profile of a parish and the ongoing call to

¹⁶ Those who are in charge of fundraising campaigns and projects that benefit international entities should be aware of tax law requirements imposed on domestic charitable organizations and other federal legal considerations. See also the USCCB's complementary legislation to c. 1262 CIC: <http://www.usccb.org/beliefs-and-teachings/what-we-believe/canon-law/complementary-norms/canon-1262-fundraising-appeals.cfm>.

conversion and the work of evangelization. [Sidebar 16: St. Joseph Tongan Catholic Women's Group]

Parish Level

- *Invite parishioners through a communitarian approach.* Encourage Asian and Pacific Islander families and small ecclesial communities to bring forth and share their gifts with the local parish and diocese. A successful model of invitation occurs when pastors and other parish leaders spend more time *among and alongside* Asian and Pacific communities. Such invitations could be made through a community-oriented approach. For example, consider inviting *whole* Asian and Pacific Islander families and/or communities to choose *among themselves* which of their gifts could be shared and celebrated for wider parish and diocesan events.
- *Recognize the plurality and nuances of Asian and Pacific identities.* As noted above, Asian and Pacific Island Catholics are made up of ethnically, culturally, and socially diverse groups of people, while being united in one faith. Asian and Pacific Island families could participate in other cultural prayer services with which they may not be familiar, as a means of exploring and experiencing cultural nuances. For example, a Filipino family or small prayer group could invite other Asian and Pacific Island families or groups to their novenas, while Asian and Pacific families who practice the veneration of ancestors (*more about this below*) could invite other cultural groups who may not be familiar with these traditions to participate in their devotional practices.

Mary and the Communion of Saints

Devotion to the Blessed Virgin Mary remains one of the more popular present-day expressions of Christian life among all Asian and Pacific Island communities. Some of the best examples include the annual Marian pilgrimage to the Basilica of the National Shrine of the Immaculate Conception in Washington, DC, hosted by the Asian and Pacific Catholic Network and involving several dioceses; the Pilgrimage to Our Lady of Peace and Good Voyage, Birhen ng Antipolo, organized by the Filipino Catholic community at the National Shrine in Washington, DC; the Pilgrimage to Our Lady of Good Health, Vailankanni, sponsored by the Indian Catholic community, also at the National Shrine in Washington, DC [[Sidebar 17: Our Lady of Good Health, Vailankanni](#)]; the Vietnamese Marian Days, which has taken place annually since 1978 in Carthage, Missouri, and draws up to seventy thousand pilgrims; and the celebration of the Feast of Our Lady of Camarin, the most venerated title of Mary in Guam. These devotions to Mary represent the continual connectedness Asian and Pacific Island Catholics have toward the Blessed Virgin and a way in which many share their faith with one another. This may also benefit and strengthen the wider community of the Church.

In addition to Marian devotions, a growing list of saints, martyrs, and blessed continues to mark the faith life of Asian and Pacific Island Catholics, including St. Augustine Zhao Rong and Companions (China), St. Paul Miki and Companions (Japan), St. Andrew Dung-Lac and Companions (Vietnam), Sts. Andrew Kim Taegon, Paul Chong Hasang and Companions (Korea), St. Lorenzo Ruiz and St. Pedro Calungsod (the Philippines), St. Peter Chanel (Vanuatu), Blessed Nicholas Bunkerd Kitbamrung (Thailand), Blessed Isidore Ngei Ko Lat (Burma), Blessed Peter To Rot (Papua New Guinea), and the seventeen martyrs of Laos declared blessed

by Pope Francis on June 5, 2015. There are also many unnamed missionaries from Europe who died in Asian countries during times of Christian persecution.

The communion of saints is a constant reminder to Asian and Pacific Islanders that the Catholic faith took root in their homeland and now continues to be an important identity marker for them in the United States. Even though these exemplary figures are remembered by particular communities, they remain largely unknown among other Catholics. The Church also recognizes that persons who have been declared saints are worthy of public devotion throughout the universal Church. While the public devotions to beatified persons are normally limited to prescribed territories, we also acknowledge that immigrant faith communities from those territories often bring devotions to the blessed with them to the new land.

Suggestions for Further Engagement

National Level

- *Promote Marian devotions.* Since Marian devotions are widely celebrated among all Asian and Pacific Island communities, consider hosting and planning national events that foster these devotions and involve intercultural participation.
- Educate clergy and pastoral leaders on Asian and Pacific Island faith and religious practices, customs, devotions, and Eastern religions that will assist them in providing good pastoral ministry.

Diocesan Level

- *Interrelate liturgical celebrations and popular religious practices.* While official liturgies and sacramental celebrations remain central to the prayer life of the Church, parish

leaders should be aware of how all forms of popular religious practices interact with these liturgies. [Sidebar 18: The Universal Prayer] We encourage dioceses and parishes to read the *Instruction on Inculturation and the Roman Liturgy* (1994) and the *Directory on Popular Piety and the Liturgy: Principles and Guidelines* (2001), both by the Congregation for Divine Worship and the Discipline of the Sacraments, in order to better understand this relationship and to be mindful of diocesan policies and directives that have been issued on the matter.

- *Distribute catechetical resources.* Make sure there is a variety of cultural representation among available devotional resources, and look for opportunities to introduce, incorporate, and refer to these devotional practices during catechetical lessons and parish events.

Parish Level

- *Be open to various expressions of faith.* Many Asian and Pacific Island families and small ecclesial communities already foster a variety of devotional practices. We encourage continuing such practices while remaining open to variations in prayer forms and styles, which express the richness of the Asian and Pacific Island Catholic experience. For example, new and emerging art forms and musical expressions that coincide with the liturgical season may be incorporated into preexisting prayer forms.

II. Generations

OUR FAITH EXPRESSED

Family is an integral part of every Asian and Pacific Island community. For many, the cultural value of acknowledging generations past and present parallels an understanding of the Church's tradition. The beginning of the Gospel of Matthew, for example, lists the many generations that preceded Jesus, stretching back to Abraham and Sarah and continuing through a complex list of colorful characters. Asian and Pacific family structures are foundations for reflections on and discussions about generational concerns.

Filial Piety

Most often, the first generation (i.e., those who arrive in the United States as adolescents or adults) embraces filial piety as a key cultural variable for the functioning of the family. Filial piety means respecting and giving due obedience to one's parents while they are living and providing a proper funeral and remembrance for them when they die. While this Asian cultural tradition was formalized in places like China and Vietnam through a Confucian ideal of maintaining an orderly society through right relationships, filial piety is a value that is accepted by many other Asian and Pacific Island communities of other traditions where loyalty between parents and children is deeply felt. This loyalty extends to the responsibility of paying respect and reverence to all elders and ancestors. These expectations may not be clearly spelled out to the second and subsequent generations, but second-generation children often feel an obligation to their parents, who have sacrificed much to nurture, provide an education, and pass on the faith.

Family

The traditional Asian and Pacific Islander family may consist of several generations living under one roof. Some maintain this unity when they arrive in the United States. Others adjust to new circumstances that force them into separate households, but they remain in relative proximity to one another. Even in such circumstances, it is quite common for families and relatives to maintain ongoing relational connections throughout the year, sometimes from week to week.

Asian and Pacific Island communities consist also of transnational families living across different parts of the globe but struggling to maintain ongoing connections. The USCCB document *Harmony in Faith* describes the integrity of the family—fostered and maintained through a strong faith life—as a major concern of Asian and Pacific Islanders (see pp. 22-24). Many families are challenged by contemporary trends in United States society, such as a high divorce rate, lack of church participation, and the absence of a father or a mother. Some have been affected by these circumstances and fall into disintegration themselves, but others have been able to remain intact. In general, most Asian and Pacific Island Catholic families remain tightly knitted together.

First-generation Asian and Pacific Islanders are likely to identify themselves by a particular ethnicity or nationality rather than a general multicultural, pan-Asian, or pan-Pacific Island identity that others may wish to impose upon them. For instance, some may call themselves Burmese, Fijian, Tongan, or Thai rather than Asian or Pacific Islander.

Their reasons for migration to the United States and their modes of doing so (as economic migrants or as refugees) will shape their experiences in the United States. First-generation migrants and refugees will likely maintain strong emotional bonds to their homelands. These bonds further stress the duty and practice of sending care packages and substantial

remittances to families and friends. They also tend to continue to practice the faith as it was experienced in their home countries, especially through church participation and domestic worship practices.

The “1.5 generation” is comprised of children who come to the United States between the ages of five and twelve. Some members of this generation may embrace a pan-Asian or a pan-Pacific Island identity, while those of the second and subsequent generations—born in the United States—may more readily subsume their Asian or Pacific Island identity within the larger “American” identity (e.g., Chinese American) or simply see themselves as “American.” Regardless of how they identify, many still find themselves caught between two cultures: their particular Asian or Pacific Island culture and the larger US mainstream culture. They may wish to remain loyal to the culture and values of their parents but believe their parents’ homeland cannot be replicated in the United States. Many tend to have a strong grasp of their native language and customs, if not in linguistic fluency, at least in the grasping of particular communication codes, the appreciation of cultural practices, and the maintenance of familial customs, such as filial piety. But eventually, subsequent generations tend to lose fluency in their parents’ mother-tongue, disconnect from traditional practices and folklore, and become more drawn to surrounding cultural practices. Further, they may feel pressure to “succeed” within this mainstream culture.

Even though many Asian and Pacific Islanders are immigrants, there are exceptions, such as those from Hawaii, Guam, and the Pacific Island territories of the United States. These people are citizens of the United States and do not fit neatly into categories of immigrants, refugees, foreigners, or strangers. They, too, may experience stereotyping and discrimination and are not immune to the generational cultural struggles.

Discussions about Asian and Pacific Islanders often assume that they are newly arrived to the United States. While this may be true for some communities, many Chinese, Filipino, Indian, and Japanese Americans have been in this country for multiple generations. In fact, some Asian and Pacific groups can claim an early presence in the United States predating many European groups. For example, the first documented arrival of Filipinos in what is today the United States of America was October 18, 1587, in Morro Bay, California, and the first recorded settlement of Filipino Americans is found in New Orleans, Louisiana, in 1693. But it was the Immigration and Nationality Act of 1965 that significantly allowed the increase of the overall Asian and Pacific population by lifting the ban on immigration and eliminating previous immigration quotas. The explosion of Asian immigrants after 1965 may explain why many still view these US citizens as being newly arrived.

For first-generation immigrants, church participation remains a source of cultural pride and identity. Yet, first-generation immigrants feel they do not know how to reverse the declining trend of church participation in the second generation. Many among the immigrant generation fear there is not enough being done to retain their faith practices among the youth. Second- and subsequent generation Asian and Pacific Islanders grow up in the United States, where they encounter a series of differences with regard to the experience of church participation. Many in the younger generation do not see the church as a place for socialization; they may more readily feel at home within the larger US society. Further, they become influenced by a more relaxed attitude when it comes to participation in liturgical celebrations or other parish activities, to the lament of the first generation.

Some of these families may face challenges in working through interfaith and intercultural marriages. While second and subsequent generations have fewer qualms about

marrying outside of one's faith or ethnicity, such unions remain a major concern for the first generation. Some first-generation adults may hold a very strong view that marriage should take place either between people who share a faith or ethnic identity. Such views challenge the sensibilities of the second generation, who are more inclined to marry across religious, cultural, and ethnic lines. While the Church has concerns about interfaith marriages, there are no concerns about marriages between people of different ethnic heritages.

At the same time, church participation still remains strong among some second-generation Asian and Pacific Island Catholics, such as those in the Vietnamese Eucharistic Youth Movement and Youth for Christ, a strong tradition in the Filipino community. These two groups provide faith formation and organize periodic gatherings of young adults that create peer communities and help establish long-lasting friendships.

OUR FAITH ENGAGED ACROSS GENERATIONS

As the younger generations of Asian and Pacific Island Catholics find themselves maneuvering through a sea of expectations regarding the faith, a combination of dialogue, support, and understanding from all sides may provide Asian and Pacific communities with the tools for responding to these concerns.

Suggestions for Further Engagement

The following three levels of suggestions are starting points for further dialogue, as well as for the creation and implementation of strategic plans. More specific examples can be found in the sidebars and on the website of the Subcommittee on Asian and Pacific Island Affairs.

National and Diocesan Levels

- *Promote intergenerational dialogue.* Inspired by the Christian missionary call to spread the Good News, dioceses and national organizations could create collaborative models of dialogue between generations. For example, seminars or panel discussions during local or national conferences could focus on how each generation approaches the role of parenting with regard to communication, familial roles, duties, and expectations.

Parish Level

Since Asian and Pacific Island communities often view parishes as trustworthy foundations from which many of their pastoral needs could be addressed, diocesan offices and parishes may:

- *Promote intergenerational dialogue at the local level.* Similar to the previous example, intergenerational listening forums could take place at a parish level. The topics addressed may emerge from local concerns of the parish community. For examples of how to form collaborative models between cultural groups, see *Best Practices for Shared Parishes: So That They May All Be One* (Washington, DC: USCCB, 2014).
- *Expand resources for marriage preparation programs.* With the increase of interethnic, ecumenical and interreligious marriages in the United States, there is a need for more resources in native languages that include intercultural, ecumenical, and interfaith considerations. In addition, catechetical events and forums can provide dialogue on sensitive topics that may not be addressed successfully in domestic settings, such as cohabitation before marriage or interracial and interfaith marriages.
- *Celebrate liturgies with an ear to the youth.* Modeling after World Youth Day gatherings, celebrate liturgies that speak to the needs of the younger generations. We recommend that

parishes become familiar with two liturgical resources, one by the National Federation for Catholic Youth Ministry and one by the Federation of Diocesan Liturgical Commissions: *From Age to Age: The Challenge of Worship with Adolescents* (1997) and *For Ages Unending: The Ministry of Liturgy with Adolescents* (2014).

- *Support other forms of young adult Catholic communities.* Parents could encourage their children to strengthen their faith by living in an intentional Catholic community before beginning more traditional professional careers (e.g., a volunteer year with Maryknoll Lay Missioners, Jesuit Volunteer Corps, etc.). A useful guide to such opportunities can be found in the *Response Directory* from the Catholic Volunteer Network.
- *Plan ecumenical, interreligious, and intercultural gatherings.* For second-generation Asian and Pacific Island young adults, consider offering regular opportunities for young adults to share and reflect on the diversity of faith practices, traditions, and spirituality with their peers in similar stages of life (e.g., single or married, with or without children). Also consider building relationships with neighbors by sponsoring ecumenical, interreligious and/or interethnic events (e.g., potluck gatherings, major holiday celebrations, art shows, etc.) during which religious, cultural, or ethnic traditions could be shared, honored, and celebrated.

III. Leadership

Our Faith Expressed

Many Asian and Pacific Islanders value leadership and exhibit a healthy respect toward people in positions of authority, including in the Church. This value and other positive common traits of

many Asian and Pacific Island cultures are potentials for growth in and development of mature Christian living. As such, “the Church . . . fosters and takes to herself, insofar as they are good, the abilities, the resources and customs of peoples. In so taking them to herself she purifies, strengthens and elevates them” (*Lumen Gentium* [LG], no. 13).

Jesus Christ is the source of the Church’s authority: this is fundamental to the understanding of many Asian and Pacific Island Catholics. The Second Vatican Council expresses, “Jesus Christ, the eternal pastor, set up the holy Church, by entrusting the apostles with their mission as he himself had been sent by the Father. He willed that their successors, the bishops namely, should be the shepherds in his Church until the end of the world” (LG, no.18). The bishops, assisted by the priests and deacons, “have received charge of the community . . . in that they are teachers of doctrine, ministers of sacred worship, and holders of office in government” (LG, no. 20). They are at the service of the faithful who “exercise their baptismal priesthood through their participation, each according to his own vocation, in Christ’s mission as priest, prophet, and king” (CCC, no. 1546).

In the premodern Asian and Pacific Island cultures, power was derived from a hierarchy seen as the earthly manifestation of a cosmic order. There may still be remnants of this belief in some areas of Asian and Pacific Island cultures today. Since leadership is held in such high regard, leaders accept their role as a serious duty to fulfill. Respect for leaders is passed down from generation to generation, as parents are expected to teach their children early on to respect elders, leaders, and teachers. This plays a pivotal role in maintaining harmony in the family, community, and larger society.

Many Asian and Pacific Islanders also value leaders who are capable of maintaining harmony in the community, which is made possible by a unity of shared beliefs. This stems from

the obligations embedded in the practices of filial piety that instill qualities of humility and gratitude, and further bind the community together in a relational dynamic of guidance and service. Leaders also gain respect through sheer hard work, dedication to improving their communities, and maintaining order in the community. [\[Sidebar 19: Leadership Formation in the US Catholic Hmong Community\]](#) In turn, they gain the loyalty of their communities by fulfilling cultural expectations and by demonstrating care and concern toward the people they guide and protect.

Communal leadership is found in the writings of St. Paul, who refers to all the faithful as being part of the Body of Christ with their own special gifts and functions (Rom 12:4-6). The faithful must come to know their responsibility as brothers and sisters to one another. Christian responsibility is also summed up in the Letter to the Hebrews: “Obey your leaders and defer to them, for they keep watch over you and will have to give an account, that they may fulfill their task with joy and not with sorrow, for that would be of no advantage to you” (13:17). This principle calls for, not mere blind obedience, but a shared responsibility by the community in keeping the religious leader honest about the powerful responsibility inherent in a life of service to God and his people. All persons in a position of authority over the community are called to model the Christian life. The understanding is that they are able to lead and do exceptional things because of their trust in God and the support of the people.

These values can be applied to all religious leaders, including clergy, religious women and men, and lay persons. A reminder of genuine Church leadership that resonates especially with many Asian and Pacific Island Catholics can be found in Paul’s Letter to the Philippians, 2:1-11, where he exhorts the leaders of the Church in Philippi to imitate Jesus Christ. At the heart of this exhortation is the call to humble service, as Paul states, “Do nothing out of

selfishness or out of vainglory; rather, humbly regard others as more important than yourselves, each looking out not for his own interests, but [also] everyone for those of others” (Phil 2:3-4). Religious leaders are also respected because of their ability to become models of the spiritual life. The lifetime commitment of religious leaders to ministry and the Church, particularly the commitment of clergy and religious, is a reflection of God working in their lives and of God’s ordered universe.

One of the findings from the 2015 study on Asian and Pacific Island Catholics in the United States, is that good administrative skills of pastoral ministers are another aspect of leadership that many of these communities value. In many cases Asian and Pacific leaders, such as pastors, have to manage many people in a parish and be good stewards of the parish’s resources. Administrative skills are also used in the organization and management of national organizations and associations. These organizations and associations provide support, development, and fellowship, which, in turn, help sustain relationships with the people they have been appointed to serve.

The significant number of vocations to the priesthood and consecrated life is a distinct gift of Asian and Pacific Island Catholics to the Church in the United States. Survey findings in a Center for the Applied Research in the Apostolate study of the ordination class of 2016 shows that responding ordinands are more likely to be of Asian or Pacific Island background (15 percent) compared to the overall adult Catholic population of the United States. Of the religious profession class of 2015, more than one in six responding religious (16 percent) identify as Asian. [\[Sidebar 20: Part of the Family\]](#)

Asian and Pacific Island Catholics often embrace the opportunities afforded the laity in taking on leadership roles. This could mean serving as prayer leader in a small faith community

or domestic prayer gathering (e.g., the recitation of the Rosary and other devotional practices) or organizing celebrations around liturgical feast days. Some Asian and Pacific Island Catholic laypeople have moved into leadership roles in their parishes and dioceses and at the national level, while others have sought theological education in order to better serve their communities. None of these roles should go unnoticed, as they all provide an important service to the Church.

Leadership styles of some clergy, religious, or lay leaders may clash with the expectations of members of a parish, which could lead to dissension if not properly resolved. For example, international clergy or religious who are brought to minister to Asian and Pacific Island Catholics in the United States [[Sidebar 21: Guidelines for Receiving Pastoral Ministers](#)] may assume that the shared native culture is the same, without recognizing that cultures are dynamic and eventually change in new circumstances.

OUR FAITH ENGAGED IN LEADERSHIP

The Asian and Pacific Island Catholic community believes that issues about leadership, although they can be challenging, must be addressed. In the surveys and focus groups consulted prior to writing this pastoral response, many respondents stated that having leaders of their own ethnic heritage would be helpful in their faith life, since such leaders possess a cultural sensitivity that other well-intentioned and well-trained leaders may not naturally command. Cultural misunderstandings and insensitivities can sometimes create a barrier between communities and their appointed leaders.

Like all Catholics, Asian and Pacific Islanders realize that they are called to welcome pastors of diverse ethnic backgrounds as appointed by the local bishop.

Suggestions for Further Engagement

The following three levels of suggestions are starting points for further dialogue, as well as for the creation and implementation of strategic plans. More specific examples can be found in the sidebars and on the website of the Subcommittee on Asian and Pacific Island Affairs.

National Level

- *Closer relational ties at the international level.* We acknowledge current efforts that seek relational ties between the USCCB and episcopal conferences in Asia and the Pacific Island nations, including solidarity visits made by US bishops and efforts to strengthen ties with the US Catholic relief and development agencies such as Catholic Relief Services. At the same time, more formal and closer relational ties at the conference level, between the USCCB, the Federation of Asian Bishops' Conferences, and the *Conferentia Episcopalis Pacifici*, could be helpful.
- *Promote Asian and Pacific Island leadership positions at the episcopal level.* Currently, there is a small number of bishops of Asian and Pacific Island descent in the United States. More bishops of this heritage are desired by Asian and Pacific Island communities and would be a gift to the wider US Church. When exercising our right and responsibility to propose names of priests who are worthy to be appointed to the episcopate, we, as bishops, will continue to be mindful of the needs of Asian and Pacific Island Catholics (see c. 377 §2).
- *Support leadership training for Asian and Pacific Island pastoral ministers.* Provide funding and other support for further education and ongoing formation, which may include scholarships to national and regional conferences, local workshops, and seminars.

- *Help in obtaining non-minister working visas.* In collaboration with the Leadership Conference of Women Religious, the Council of Major Superiors of Women Religious, and the Catholic Legal Immigration Network, and with support from local communities and dioceses, help non-ministers obtain working visas (e.g., Special Immigrant Non-Minister Religious Worker visas).
- *Seek vocations through a communitarian approach.* A common method of vocation recruitment is approaching *individuals* to consider the diaconate, the priesthood, and/or the religious life. While this is important, vocation directors may also consider a more community-based approach to vocation recruitment. One example is approaching families and/or Asian and Pacific faith communities in the context of specific gatherings.

Diocesan Level

- *Welcome international ministers.* Draw upon resources that help guide international ministers who are assigned to dioceses and local parishes, including national and regional programs and the USCCB *Guidelines for Receiving Pastoral Ministers in the United States, Third Edition*.
- *Develop more vocation resources.* Provide vocational and media resources that are translated into native Asian and Pacific Island languages in order to help non-English-speaking Catholics promote vocations in those communities.

Parish Level

- *Foster vocations.* Since the fostering of vocations begins at home, within culturally specific communities, efforts should be made to encourage, pray for, and support Asian and Pacific Islander vocations to serve the community's pastoral needs. Families could

invite clergy and members of religious communities into their homes for meals and other special family events. Small ecclesial communities could collaborate with vocation promoters and host events that specifically focus on the topic of vocation discernment.

IV. Cultural Encounter and Dialogue in Faith

OUR FAITH EXPRESSED

In the Apostolic Exhortation *Ecclesia in America*, St. John Paul II draws attention to the many encounters Jesus had with the men and women of his time, as recounted in the Gospels.¹⁷ St. John Paul II further states that the transforming power of the personal encounter with Jesus Christ initiates “an authentic process of conversion, communion and solidarity.”¹⁸ In chapter four of John's Gospel, we witness a genuine encounter between Jesus—a Jew, and the woman at the well—a Samaritan. The Samaritan woman's journey of conversion, as a result of her dialogue with Christ, leads her to proclaim this encounter to the other Samaritans. This movement from encounter to conversion to proclamation—calls all Catholics, including those of Asian and Pacific Islander heritage, to become better evangelizers in our world today, and to remain faithful and steadfast as we await the eschatological fulfillment of the Reign of God.

An exemplary model of this process is found in the experience of the people of the Korean *yangban* (“scholars”), who introduced the Gospel to their fellow Koreans after first coming in contact with the Christian faith in China. They, in turn, spread the Gospel and

¹⁷ Pope John Paul II, *Ecclesia in America* (Washington, DC: USCCB, 1999), no. 8.

¹⁸ *Ibid.*

established communities of faith without foreign missionary assistance for many years.¹⁹ As Pope Francis notes, in stepping out of ourselves in encounter and dialogue, we will see that “faith is an encounter with Jesus, and we must do what Jesus does: encounter others.”²⁰ He particularly challenges all to encounter those who are poor and to critique social systems that inhibit the fulfillment of the Reign of God. Like the Samaritan woman, our encounter with Christ involves receiving the grace of repentance, conversion, and mission. Christ’s redeeming grace, his mercy, and his truth can touch and transform us in our cultural specificity and can make us heralds of the Good News to others. Pope Francis exhorts us, “Every Christian is a missionary to the extent that he or she has encountered the love of God in Christ Jesus: we no longer say that we are ‘disciples’ and ‘missionaries,’ but rather that we are always ‘missionary disciples.’”²¹

OUR FAITH ENGAGED THROUGH ENCOUNTERING AND DIALOGUE

Suggestions for Further Engagement

The following suggestions are starting points for further dialogue, as well as for the creation and implementation of strategic plans. More specific examples can be found in the sidebars and on the website of the Subcommittee on Asian and Pacific Island Affairs.

¹⁹ The 2001 statement *Harmony in Faith*, reminds us: “Catholicism in Korea . . . began through the initiative of Korean Confucian scholars in 1784 who had visited China and became Christians after reading Christian texts found in Beijing. Korean laity not only kept the faith alive but also shared it with others until the first missionaries arrived in 1836. In Japan, from the sixteenth to the nineteenth century, lay Catholics similarly kept the faith alive while the country was closed to Christian missionaries.”

²⁰ Pope Francis, Address to the Ecclesial Movements on the Vigil of Pentecost, May 18, 2013, http://w2.vatican.va/content/francesco/en/speeches/2013/may/documents/papa-francesco_20130518_veglia-pentecoste.html.

²¹ Pope Francis, *Evangelii Gaudium*, no. 120.

National Level

- National events, conferences, and activities may present opportunities for cultural groups to move beyond their own boundaries to achieve a unifying Catholic identity. This movement requires ongoing formation in intercultural and pastoral skills both for leaders and those cultural communities seeking their rightful place at the table. Achieving unity in diversity also requires that groups and leaders be open to accepting some degree of compromise on particular cultural practices, while remaining committed to a unifying vision for the Church. Appendix III in this document lists some available resources.

Diocesan Level

- Promoting intercultural dialogue in our dioceses is important and must be viewed as a dynamic process that requires intentionality, patience, cultural sensibility, and prayer. The USCCB Committee on Cultural Diversity in the Church resource, *Building Intercultural Competence for Ministers*, includes a module that spells out the basic principles for how to achieve ecclesial integration: (1) articulate a vision of ministry that promotes ecclesial integration and inclusion; (2) foster the inculturation of the Gospel in all cultures; (3) plan with people, not for people; (4) broaden one’s understanding of ministry groups, programs, and structures; and (5) empower people from different cultures and ethnicities for leadership positions. [\[Sidebar 22: “Saving Face”\]](#)

Parish Level

- Parishes, schools, and other Catholic institutions in a diocese may benefit from promoting intercultural competence training. Members of Asian and Pacific Island communities

should also be encouraged to deepen their understanding of their own traditions, as well as those of others, and in turn, look for creative ways of proclaiming the gospel message.

Conclusion

Encountering Christ in Harmony tells a faith story that is grounded in the long history of Asian and Pacific Island peoples whose strong belief in the Bible and in the traditions of the Catholic faith continues to sustain their identity and contribute to the wider Catholic Church. We have seen and heard how this identity is expressed and engaged through a myriad of pastoral activities and liturgical and devotional practices. [\[Sidebar 23: Examples of Asian and Pacific Island Activities and Events\]](#) Yet, even today, Asian and Pacific Island Catholics have a need to negotiate their place in the Church and society of the United States. These negotiations reveal the complexity of who Asian and Pacific Island Catholics are, especially when their views on identity, the various generations, and leadership are significantly challenged.

The goal of this response is to make Asian and Pacific Island Catholics feel at home, both in the Church and in the United States, while being able to preserve the richness of the spiritual and cultural backgrounds that they bring as contributing members of the Body of Christ. Our hope is that it will be utilized by Catholic dioceses, parishes, and small faith communities in the United States to develop their own plans of action and pastoral outreach to Asian and Pacific Islanders in the United States. As such, we foresee that it will mature, deepen, and expand as new pastoral insights emerge over the coming years. Our hope is that everyone will continue to learn from our Asian and Pacific Island brothers and sisters, celebrate their gifts, and contribute to their ongoing formation. As Pope Francis urges us to embrace our missionary call, may all of

us, as members of the one Body of Christ, forever proclaim the gospel message of love and mercy!

Prayer for Encountering Christ in Harmony

God of all harmony and source of our faith,

loving Father who chose us to be your own
and formed us together as one family in Christ,
send forth your Spirit among us.

May our encounters with Christ, your Son,

through the Scriptures and the breaking of the bread
remind us of our identity in Christ
amid the multitude of cultural heritages
present in your Church today.

May our encounters with the Blessed Virgin Mary

and with the communion of saints,
strengthen us so that we may sustain
and pass down the Catholic faith of our ancestors and elders
from one generation to the next.

May our encounters with one another,

in our families and parishes,
nurture more leaders among us,
that they may answer your call more readily,

and look to Christ, our Savior,
as the example of humble service.

Enliven our hearts this day and always,
so that, going forth into the world,
we may become better servants of your Word
and bearers of your love for all to see.

We ask this through our Lord, Jesus Christ,
who strengthens us in faith,
and in the power of the Holy Spirit,
who binds us together in love and harmony,
one God, forever and ever. Amen.

Appendix One

The following includes a summary of major findings from the study, “Asian and Pacific Island Catholics in the United States,” by Tricia C. Bruce, PhD; Jerry Z. Park PhD; and Stephen M. Cherry, PhD, which is a 2015 report prepared for the United States Conference of Catholic Bishops’ Secretariat of Cultural Diversity in the Church. For the full report, please refer to the following link: <http://www.usccb.org/issues-and-action/cultural-diversity/asian-pacific-islander/demographics/upload/API-Catholics-in-the-US-Report-October-2015.pdf>

Asian and Pacific Island Catholics in the United States

October 2015

Each of the following communities or self-identified ethnicities participated in a year-long study, which resulted in a wellspring of demographic data for the purposes of this pastoral response: Bengali, Burmese, Cambodian, Chamorro, Chinese, Fijian, Filipino, Hawaiian, Hmong, Indian, Indonesian, Japanese, Kmhmu, Knanaya, Korean, Laotian, Marshallese, Melanesian, Micronesian, Montagnard, Native Hawaiian, Pakistani, Polynesian, Samoan, Sri Lankan, Syro-Malabar, Syro-Malankara, Thai, Tongan, and Vietnamese. This wide representation does not mean that all or even a majority of the members of each particular ethnic group participated. But the study does provide a broad representation of participants across different Asian and Pacific Island ethnicities. It was significant that so many Asian and Pacific Island Catholics responded to this study, demonstrating a genuine desire to bring greater awareness to their presence in the Church in America.

Executive Summary

One out of every five Asian and Pacific Islanders in the United States is Catholic. Together, they comprise nearly three million US Catholics. Though concentrated especially along the West Coast of the United States, the presence of Asian and Pacific Island Catholics impacts dioceses throughout the country.

Asian and Pacific Island Catholics represent a broad spectrum of ethnic backgrounds and languages. Filipinos comprise the largest proportion of Asian and Pacific Island Catholics, followed by Vietnamese, Chinese, and Korean Catholics. Nearly eight in ten are first-generation immigrants, born outside of the United States. A similar proportion speak a language other than English at home. With the exception of Filipino immigrants to the United States, Asian immigrants are disproportionately Catholic compared to their presence in their countries of origin. For example, while less than 7 percent of Vietnam is Catholic, more than 30 percent of

Vietnamese immigrants identify as Catholic. Second-generation Asian and Pacific Island Catholics (those born in the United States to immigrant parents, and those immigrants who were raised in the United States) make up the second largest share of Asian and Pacific Island Catholics in the United States.

According to the 2014-2015 *National Study of Asian and Pacific Island Catholics*, most Asian and Pacific Island Catholics see their ethnicity and religion as equally important to their sense of who they are. For some, these identities work in harmony; for others, they present tensions, especially when relating to non-Catholic co-ethnics in their families and communities. Asian and Pacific Island Catholics tend to assign strong importance to traditional church teachings, such as the Vatican's authority, social justice, and a celibate male clergy.

Asian and Pacific Island Catholics report high levels of engagement with local parishes. While the majority of American Catholics attend Mass less than weekly, 89 percent of Asian and Pacific Island Catholics attend Mass at least weekly. Most belong to parishes where their own ethnicity constitutes less than 80 percent of the parish. Most do not attend the parish closest to their home. Despite the likelihood of being in the ethnic minority in their parishes, a majority of Asian and Pacific Island Catholics say that they have never felt uncomfortable because of their minority status. Many individuals frequent other parishes in addition to their home or registered parish, to participate in ethnic and national holidays and practices with others of the same background. Devotional practices stand out as particularly important to Asian and Pacific Island Catholics.

Leadership emerges as a key area of potential improvement expressed by Asian and Pacific Island Catholics. Many speak of their desire for skilled community managers, not just diverse priests. They seek leaders with sensitivity to Asian and Pacific Island Catholics' specific

needs and practices. A quarter report that their local priest has been at least occasionally insensitive toward their ethnic group. Many convey that they feel unheard, unacknowledged, or even invisible to parish and diocesan leaders. Even greater urgency accompanies Asian and Pacific Island Catholics' concern for cultural transmission across generations. Many express fears that their children will lose connections to their ethnicity, and/or to Catholicism. Nonetheless, local communities of Asian and Pacific Island Catholics maintain optimism for their future in the US Church, while also recognizing the need to shore up and share resources to meet immediate and long-term needs.

Appendix Two

Topline Report for In-Pew Surveys in Asian/Pacific Islander Catholic Parishes

Mark M. Gray, PhD, and Jonathan L. Wiggins, PhD, USCCB Secretariat of Cultural Diversity in the Church (2015), <http://www.usccb.org/issues-and-action/cultural-diversity/asian-pacific-islander/demographics/index.cfm>.

Appendix Three

Resources for Asian and Pacific Island Pastoral Ministry

The website of the USCCB Subcommittee on Asian and Pacific Island Affairs includes a host of Asian and Pacific Island resources: <http://www.usccb.org/issues-and-action/cultural-diversity/asian-pacific-islander/resources/index.cfm>.

In addition, the following resources below, listed in chronological order, should be in the data library of all pastoral leaders who are presently engaged in Asian and Pacific Islander ministry:

- *Brothers and Sisters to Us: Pastoral Letter on Racism*. Washington, DC: US Catholic Bishops, Committee on African American Catholics, 1979. <http://www.usccb.org/issues-and-action/cultural-diversity/african-american/brothers-and-sisters-to-us.cfm> or <https://store.usccb.org/brothers-and-sisters-to-us-p/653-0.htm>
- *The Instruction on Inculturation and the Roman Liturgy*. Vatican City: Congregation for Divine Worship and the Discipline of the Sacraments, 1994.
- *Towards a Pastoral Approach to Culture*. Vatican City: Pontifical Council for Culture, 1999. http://www.vatican.va/roman_curia/pontifical_councils/cultr/documents/rc_pc_pc-cultr_doc_03061999_pastoral_en.html
- *Directory on Popular Piety and the Liturgy: Principles and Guidelines*. Vatican City: Congregation for Divine Worship and the Discipline of the Sacraments, 2001. http://www.vatican.va/roman_curia/congregations/ccdds/documents/rc_con_ccdds_doc_20020513_vers-direttorio_en.html
- *Popular Devotional Practices: Basic Questions and Answers*. Washington, DC: USCCB, Committee on Divine Worship, 2003. <http://www.usccb.org/prayer-and-worship/prayers-and-devotions/prayers/popular-devotional-practices-basic-questions-and-answers.cfm>
- *Asian and Pacific Presence: Harmony in Faith*. Washington, DC: USCCB, Committee on Migration, 2001. <http://www.usccb.org/issues-and-action/cultural-diversity/asian->

- pacific-islander/resources/upload/AP-Pastoral-Statement-English.pdf* or
<http://store.usccb.org/asian-and-pacific-presence-p/5-449.htm>
- *Building Intercultural Competence for Ministers*. Washington, DC: USCCB, Committee on Cultural Diversity in the Church, 2012. <http://www.usccb.org/issues-and-action/cultural-diversity/intercultural-competencies/> or <http://store.usccb.org/Building-Intercultural-Competence-for-Ministers-p/7-887.htm>
 - *Liturgy in a Culturally Diverse Community: A Guide*. Washington, DC: Federation of Diocesan Commissions, 2012. <https://www.ocp.org/en-us/products/30113818> (Table of Contents: <https://fdlc.org/sites/default/files/files/Liturgy-Culturally-Diverse-Community-Sample.pdf>)
 - *Educating to Intercultural Dialogue in Catholic Schools, Living in Harmony for a Civilization of Love*. Vatican City: Congregation for Catholic Education, 2013. http://www.vatican.va/roman_curia/congregations/ccatheduc/documents/rc_con_ccatheduc_doc_20131028_dialogo-interculturale_en.html or <http://store.usccb.org/Educating-to-Intercultural-Dialogue-in-Catholic-Sc-p/7-477.htm>
 - *Best Practices for Shared Parishes: So That They All May Be One*. Washington, DC: USCCB, Committee on Cultural Diversity in the Church, 2014. Press release: <http://www.usccb.org/news/2014/14-051.cfm> and full document: <http://store.usccb.org/best-practices-for-shared-parishes-p/7-389.htm>
 - *Guidelines for Receiving Pastoral Ministers in the United States*. Washington, DC: USCCB, Committee on Clergy, Consecrated Life and Vocations, 2014.

<http://ccc.usccb.org/flipbooks/cclv-guidelines/cclv-guidelines/assets/basic-html/page-1.html> or <http://store.usccb.org/Guidelines-for-Receiving-Pastoral-Ministers-in-the-p/7-462.htm>

- *Asian Pacific Islander Catholics in the United States: A Preliminary Report*. Prepared by Jerry Z. Park, W. Matthew Henderson, Kenneth Vaughan, Tricia Bruce, and Stephen Cherry. Washington, DC: USCCB, 2015. <http://www.usccb.org/issues-and-action/cultural-diversity/asian-pacific-islander/resources/upload/Asian-Pacific-Islander-Catholics-in-the-United-States-A-Preliminary-Report.pdf>
- *Living as Missionary Disciples: A Resource for Evangelization*. Washington, DC: USCCB Committee on Evangelization and Catechesis, 2017. <http://ccc.usccb.org/flipbooks/living-as-missionary-disciples/files/assets/basic-html/page-1.html#> or <http://store.usccb.org/Living-as-Missionary-Disciples-p/7-558.htm>

Appendix Four

*Asian and Pacific Island Catholic Associations, Organizations, and Movements**

- Asian and Pacific Catholic Network
<https://www.facebook.com/APCN-366177420165506/>
- Federation of Vietnamese Catholics in the United States
<http://www.liendoanconggiao.net>
- Hmong American National Catholic Association
www.hanca.us/about-hmong/history

- Indian American Catholic Association
<http://www.iacausa.org>
- Korean American Priests Association
http://nacopkm.org/org_intro.asp
- Laotian National Catholic Conference
- National Association of Filipino Priests – USA
www.nafp-usa.org/nafp-usa
- National Conference of Burmese-American Catholics
www.ncbac.us/AboutUs.html
- North America Chinese Catholic Apostolate
<http://nacca.sfchinesecatholic.org>
- Vietnamese Eucharistic Youth Movement
<https://www.tntt.org/>
- Couples for Christ
<https://couplesforchristusa.org/>

Couples for Christ is an international private association of the Christian faithful approved by the Pontifical Council for the Laity. It is a “Catholic organization intended for the renewal and strengthening of Christian family life.” It started in the Philippines in 1981 with sixteen married couples as part of a prayer group called “*Ligaya ng Panginoon*” (“Joy of the Lord”), separated

from *Ligaya ng Panginoon* in 1993 and grew to a worldwide movement. (See “Brief History of CFC,” Couples for Christ USA, accessed July 14, 2017, <https://couplesforchristusa.org/>).

* Other National Catholic Asian and Pacific Island associations, organizations, and movements will be listed in the website of the Subcommittee on Asian and Pacific Island Affairs as the information becomes available.

Sidebars

Sidebar 1

US Catholic Population: Race, Ethnicity, & Birthplace Group Estimates, 2013

	Population	Catholic Population
White (non-Hispanic)	201,603,212	43,546,293
Black, African American, African, Afro Caribbean	39,875,893	2,990,692
<i>Black, African American, African, Afro Caribbean (non-Hispanic)</i>	<i>38,602,187</i>	<i>2,142,422</i>
<i>Born in Africa</i>	<i>1,280,200</i>	<i>337,973</i>
Asian, Native Hawaiian, Pacific Islander*	15,584,203	2,976,583
<i>Filipino</i>	<i>3,499,921</i>	<i>2,267,949</i>
<i>Vietnamese</i>	<i>1,779,679</i>	<i>494,750</i>
<i>Chinese</i>	<i>4,107,621</i>	<i>349,148</i>
<i>Korean</i>	<i>1,748,324</i>	<i>204,554</i>
<i>Native Hawaiian/Pacific Islander</i>	<i>553,144</i>	<i>151,009</i>
<i>Indian</i>	<i>3,260,460</i>	<i>149,981</i>
<i>Japanese</i>	<i>1,336,000</i>	<i>57,448</i>
Hispanic, Latino	51,704,967	30,454,225
<i>Native-born</i>	<i>30,639,814</i>	<i>16,422,941</i>
<i>Foreign-born</i>	<i>21,065,153</i>	<i>14,029,392</i>
American Indian, Alaskan Native	3,003,546	549,649

* Due to significant numbers of Asian American, Native Hawaiian, and Pacific Islander Americans having multiple racial, ethnic, and ancestral identities, totals for sub-groups do not add to the total Asian American, Native Hawaiian, and Pacific Islander group population number.

Source: Mark Gray, Mary Gautier, and Thomas Gaunt, SJ. *Cultural Diversity in the Church* June 2014 (Washington, DC: Center for the Applied Research in the Apostolate [CARA], 2014) p. 10.

The website of the Subcommittee on Asian and Pacific Island Affairs includes a link to demographic data on Asian Pacific Island Catholics: <http://www.usccb.org/issues-and-action/cultural-diversity/asian-pacific-islander/demographics/index.cfm>.

Sidebar 2

Fifteen US (Arch)Dioceses with the Most Asian and Pacific Island Catholics Have 63 Percent of the Total Asian and Pacific Island Catholic (APIC) Population

Arch/dioceses with > 50,000 Asian and Pacific Island Catholics	Population	State
Los Angeles	358,525	CA
Brooklyn	154,590	NY
San Jose	142,663	CA
Honolulu	142,008	HI
Oakland	139,228	CA
Orange	135,148	CA
San Francisco	117,073	CA
Seattle	110,184	WA
Sacramento	92,447	CA
San Diego	87,546	CA
Galveston-Houston	75,910	TX
New York	72,425	NY
San Bernardino	67,385	CA
Chicago	66,060	IL
Arlington	53,477	VA
Total	1,814,669	
All APIC est.	2,976,583	

Source: “Fifteen Arch(Dioceses) with the Most Asian and Pacific Island Catholics,” United States Conference of Catholic Bishops, accessed June 26, 2017, <http://www.usccb.org/issues-and-action/cultural-diversity/asian-pacific-islander/demographics/index.cfm>.

Sidebar 3

Regional-Level Results

This section of the report provides estimates for subgroup populations as well as the parishes serving these communities in each USCCB region where information is available. Region XV was not included in the study because it is not a geographical region and it does not consist of ecclesiastical provinces.

Asian American, Native Hawaiian, and Pacific Island Catholics, Population Estimates in USCCB Regions

USCCB Region*	Population	Parishes Serving Community**	Population Per Parish
I	90,758	16	5,672
II	284,373	18	15,799
III	125,319	42	2,984
IV	140,443	34	4,131
V	51,036	19	2,686
VI	78,241	12	6,520
VII	148,009	21	7,048
VIII	41,461	4	10,365
IX	47,079	17	2,769
X	207,312	49	4,231
XI	1,430,779	105	13,627
XII	168,013	19	8,843
XIII	102,597	13	7,874
XIV	180,103	21	8,576

* Regional totals do not add up exactly to the national-level estimates. However, the numbers are very similar. National totals are based on national-level affiliation estimators. Regional totals are based on regional estimators, where possible.

** Many parishes serving Asian Catholics serve more than one group (390 parishes minister to 463 communities).

Source: Gray, Gautier, and Thomas Gaunt, SJ, *Cultural Diversity in the Church*, p. 19.

Sidebar 4

Eastern Catholic Churches from India in the United States, 2017

Pope Francis points out that the history of Christianity in India has “led to three distinct *sui iuris* Churches, corresponding to ecclesial expressions of the same faith celebrated in different rites according to the three liturgical, spiritual, theological, and disciplinary traditions,”¹ namely the Latin Rite and the Syro-Malabar and Syro-Malankara Eastern Catholic Churches. “In the United States, there are about 87,000 Syro-Malabar Catholics which make up 14% of the Eastern Catholics in the country. They are included in the Syro-Malabar Eparchy of Saint Thomas the Apostle of Chicago (Illinois) which has 36 parishes and 25 missions served by 48 diocesan priests, 15 religious priests, 21 women religious, and nine seminarians. The Syro-Malankara community in the United States and Canada numbers 11,500 faithful within the Syro-Malankara Eparchy of Saint Mary Queen of Peace, based in Elmont, New York. It makes up 2% of the Eastern Catholics in the country. It has a total of 16 parishes and three mission communities served by 18 diocesan priests, one religious order priest, 34 women religious and two seminarians.”²

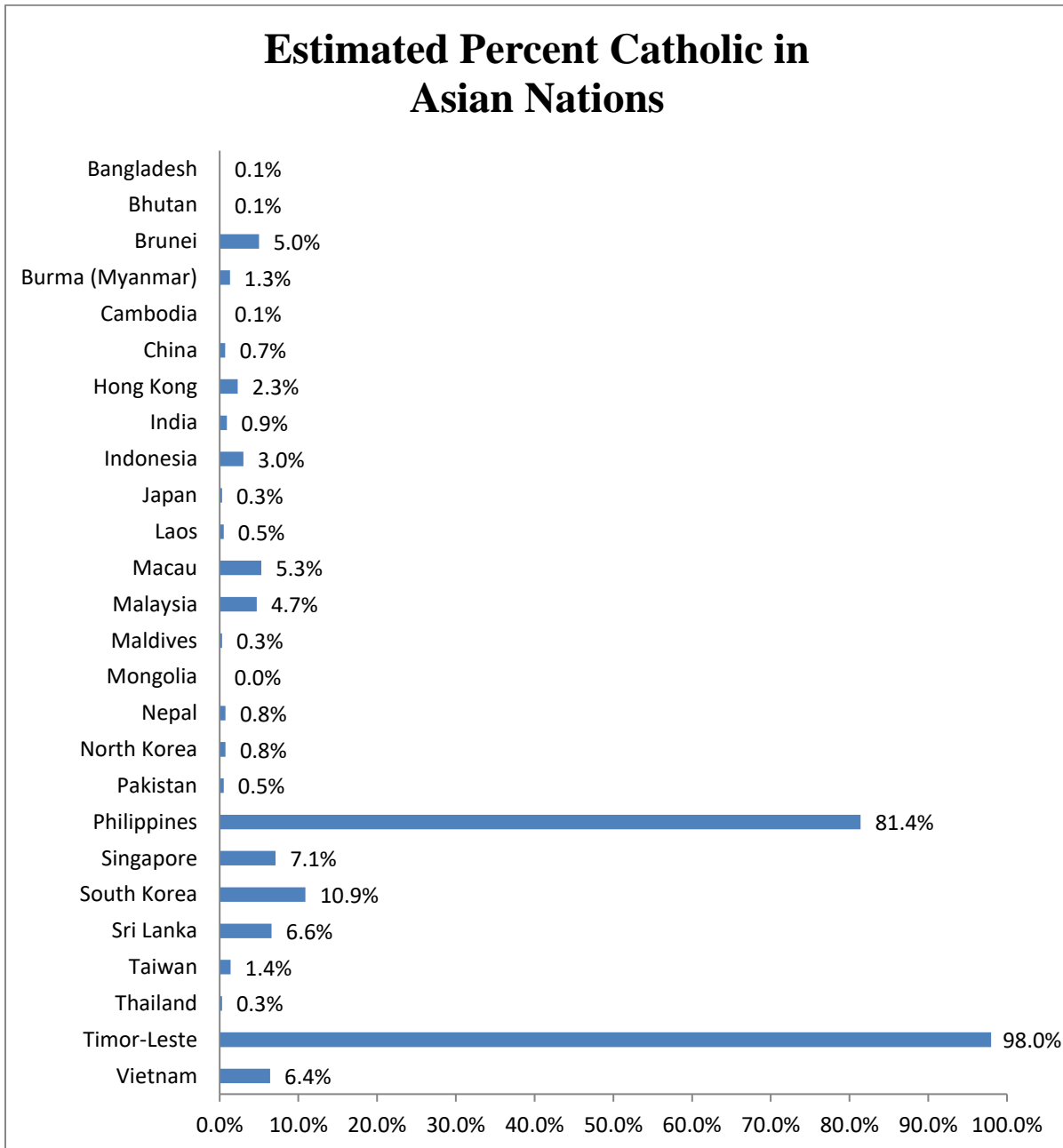
¹ Pope Francis, Letter to the Bishops of India, October 9, 2017,

http://w2.vatican.va/content/francesco/en/letters/2017/documents/papa-francesco_20171009_vescovi-india.html.

² Ron Roberson, CSP, email message October 17, 2017.

Sidebar 5

Estimated Percent Catholic in Asian Nations

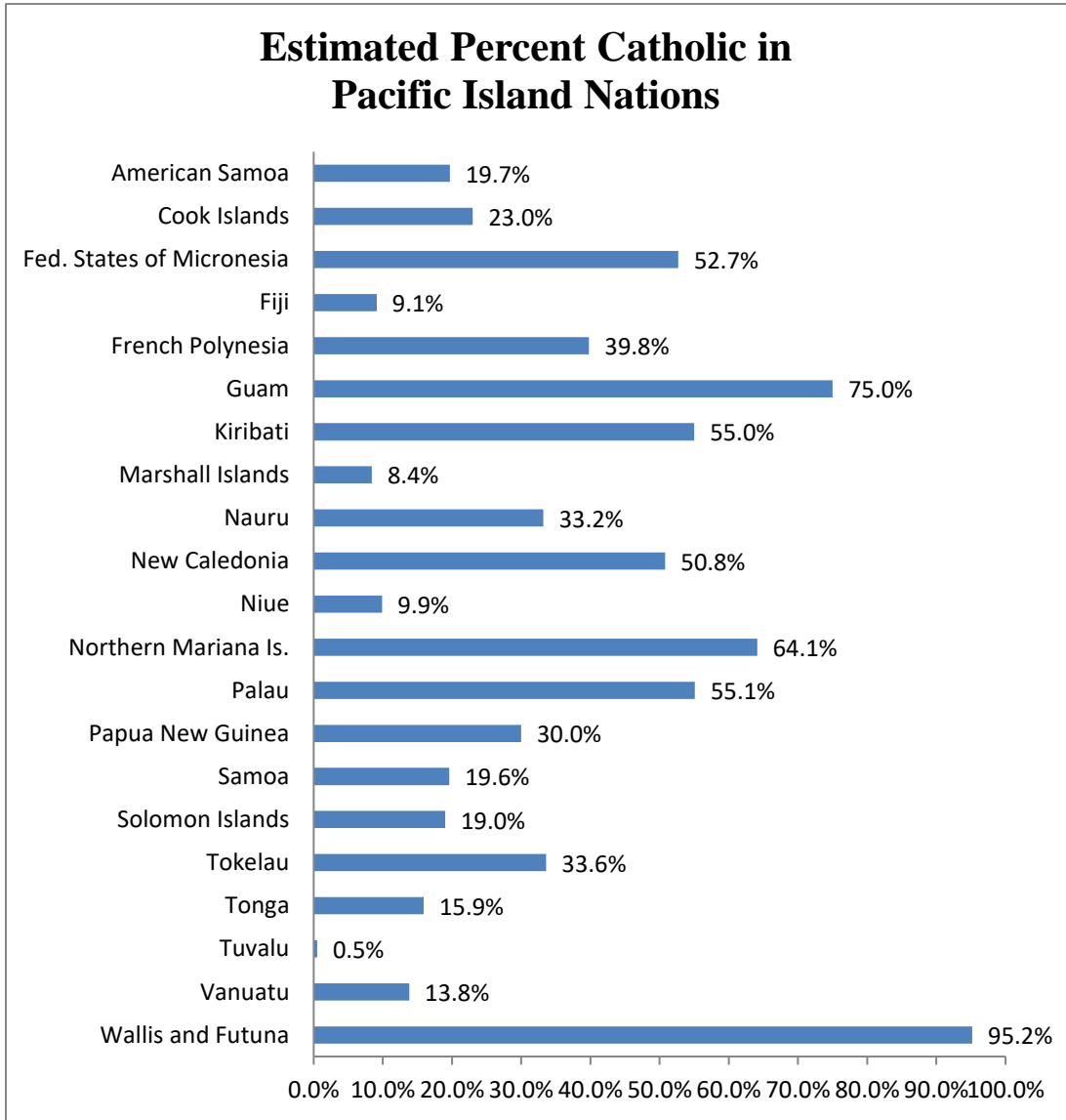


Source: Jerry Z. Park, W. Matthew Henderson, Kenneth Vaughn, Tricia Bruce, and Stephen Cherry, *Asian Pacific Islander Catholics in the United States: A Preliminary Report 2015*, p. 5 (citing Pew Research Center’s study of global religion, “Global Christianity – A Report on the

Size and Distribution of the World’s Christian Population,” Table: Christian Population as Percentages of Total Population by Country, December 2011).

Sidebar 6

Estimated Percent Catholic in Pacific Island Nations



Source: Park et al, *Asian Pacific Islander Catholics in the United States: A Preliminary Report*, 2015, p. 9 (citing Pew Research Center’s study of global religion, “Global Christianity – A

Report on the Size and Distribution of the World’s Christian Population,” Table: Christian Population as Percentages of Total Population by Country, December 2011).

Sidebar 7

Earliest Recorded Date of Filipinos in the United States

The earliest recorded date of Filipinos arriving in the United States is 1587. They were crew members of the Spanish galleon ship *Nuestra Señora Esperanza* who established a small settlement in Morro Bay of New Spain’s California coast. A more established settlement by Filipino galleon crew members occurred in St. Bernard Parish in Louisiana in 1763.

Sidebar 8

Definition of Racism

“Racism is the sin that says some human beings are inherently superior and others essentially inferior because of races. It is the sin that makes racial characteristics the determining factor for the exercise of human rights . . . The structures of our society are subtly racist, for these structures reflect the values which society upholds. They are geared to the success of the majority and the failure of the minority. Members of both groups give unwitting approval by accepting things as they are. Perhaps no single individual is to blame. The sinfulness is often anonymous but nonetheless real. The sin is social in nature in that each of us, in varying degrees, is responsible. All of us in some measure are accomplices. As our recent pastoral letter on moral values states: ‘The absence of personal fault for an evil does not absolve one of all responsibility. We must seek to resist and undo injustices we have not ceased, least we become bystanders who tacitly endorse evil and so share in guilt in it.’”

— from *Brothers and Sisters to Us: U.S. Catholic Bishops Pastoral Letter on Racism* (1979)

The late Cardinal Francis George pointed out that racism is a form of human division, conflict, and fragmentation that is personal, social, institutional, and structural. He said that, “Though God intended that all creation live in the harmony and love that unites it as one, human beings, exercising their free will, defied the will of God and replaced the divinely planned harmony with division, the divinely willed unity with conflict, the divinely intended community with fragmentation. One form of human division, conflict and fragmentation is racism: personal, social, institutional and structural. Racism mars our identity as a people, as the human race made in the image and likeness of God (Gen. 1:27)” (from *Dwell in My Love, A Pastoral Letter on Racism*, by Francis Cardinal George, OMI † [Archdiocese of Chicago, 2011]).

Sidebar 9

Inviting Cultural Representation Around the Table

A method for engaging Asian and Pacific Island Catholics who might be geographically or socially isolated from larger diocesan events is to establish an all-volunteer multicultural or specifically Asian and Pacific advisory group or council as a consultative structure to the diocesan bishop. This volunteer council would include representatives from each Asian and Pacific Island community. The council could meet three to four times a year, provide opportunities for discussions, and develop methods for promoting diocesan events that promote the participation of Asian and Pacific Islanders in the life of the Church. Existing canonical consultative structures, i.e., diocesan and parish pastoral councils, could benefit from greater cultural representation (see CIC 512, 536). Finally, written reports of the meetings could be

circulated throughout the diocese and to the different diocesan offices, including family life, youth ministry, and vocations.

Sidebar 10

Responding to the Sin of Racism as Christians

“In order to find the strength to overcome the evil of racism, we must look to Christ. In Christ Jesus ‘there does not exist among you Jew or Greek, slave or free, male or female. All are one in Christ Jesus’ (Gal 3:28). As St. John Paul II has said so clearly, ‘Our spirit is set in one direction, the only direction from our intellect, will and heart is—toward Christ our Redeemer, toward Christ the Redeemer of [humanity]’ (*Redemptor Hominis*, no. 7). It is in Christ, then, that the Church finds the central cause for its commitment to justice, and to the struggle for the human rights and dignity of all persons.”

— from *Brothers and Sisters to Us: U.S. Catholic Bishops Pastoral Letter on Racism* (1979)

Sidebar 11

Responding to Racism on a Personal Level

“As individuals, we should try to influence the attitudes of others by expressly rejecting racial stereotypes, racial slurs and racial jokes. We should influence the members of our families, especially our children, to be sensitive to the authentic human values and cultural contributions of each racial grouping in our country.”

— from *Brothers and Sisters to Us: U.S. Catholic Bishops Pastoral Letter on Racism* (1979)

Sidebar 12

Responding to Racism at the Parish Level

“We ask in particular that Catholic institutions such as schools, universities, social service agencies, and hospitals, where members of racial minorities are often employed in large numbers, review their policies to see that they faithfully conform to the Church's teaching on justice for workers and respect for their rights. We recommend that investment portfolios be examined in order to determine whether racist institutions and policies are inadvertently being supported; and that, wherever possible, the capital of religious groups be made available for new forms of alternative investment, such as cooperatives, land trusts, and housing for the poor. We further recommend that Catholic institutions avoid the services of agencies and industries which refuse to take affirmative action to achieve equal opportunity and that the Church itself always be a model as an equal opportunity employer.”

— from *Brothers and Sisters to Us: U.S. Catholic Bishops Pastoral Letter on Racism* (1979)

Sidebar 13

Cultural Sharing and Enrichment

One example of linking hospitality practices between domestic and parish settings is found in the variety of customary greetings in Asian and Pacific Island cultures. Examples include the traditional Japanese bow, which is considered to be a more appropriate form of greeting than a hug. Another example is the Polynesian greeting of the *honi*, which involves both parties pressing their noses together (face to face) and inhaling at the same time, which represents the exchange of breath and life. At the beginning of parish-wide events, representatives from

various cultural groups could introduce gestures of hospitality to the larger community as a means of cultural sharing and enrichment. Other categories of gestures could be introduced and shared by various cultural groups during other times of the year, depending on the pastoral context: e.g. gestures of thanksgiving, gift-giving, food blessing, and mourning.

Sidebar 14

Examples of Resources

Among the many gifts that could be collected in resource centers, consider the following:

- Publications in native languages (print and digital)
- Worship and liturgical resources (e.g., worship aids, songbooks, bible translations, and translations of official books)
- Catechetical resources for children, young adults, and RCIA

Sidebar 15

Cultural Art Forms for Liturgy

When considering the integration of cultural art forms within liturgical spaces, see *The General Instruction of the Roman Missal* (GIRM), nos. 288-318; and *Built of Living Stones: Art, Architecture, and Worship* (NCCB/USCC, 2000).

Sidebar 16

St. Joseph Tongan Catholic Women's Group

The St. Joseph Tongan Catholic Women's Group holds an annual celebration that brings together Tongan Catholic women and their families to celebrate the feast of St. Joseph and raise funds to assist the Diocese of Tonga for the formation of its future priests (from the Tongan Ministry

Report, US Tongan National Adviser, 2010, to the Subcommittee on Asian and Pacific Island Affairs).

Sidebar 17

Our Lady of Good Health, Vailankanni

Each year, on the first Saturday of September, the Indian American Catholic Association hosts an annual pilgrimage to the Basilica of the National Shrine of the Immaculate Conception in Washington, DC. Pilgrims, including Anglo-Indians, Goans, Mangaloreans, Sri Lankans, Tamils, Keralites, East-Indians, Bengalis, and Pakistanis, take part in a day-long celebration that includes a processional praying of the Rosary, the Sacrament of Reconciliation, a blessing of the children, and the celebration of the Eucharist.

Sidebar 18

The Universal Prayer

During Sunday Eucharist, consider including an intercession within the Universal Prayer that specifically recognizes an upcoming Asian and Pacific Island feast day, e.g., “As we prepare to celebrate the feast of Sts. Andrew Kim Taegon, Paul Chong Hasang, and Companions on September 20, we join in prayer with our Korean brothers and sisters throughout the world, so that our faith may be strengthened by their example of evangelization and prophetic witness.”

Sidebar 19

Leadership Formation in the US Catholic Hmong Community

Presently, there are no Hmong American priests in the United States, but there is a Hmong transitional deacon in the Archdiocese of St. Paul and Minneapolis. Every other year, Hmong

American Catholics gather for a national convention and leadership training program that includes formation tracks for their deacons, catechists, and parish, young adult, and youth ministers. The program is sponsored by the Hmong American National Catholic Association.

Sidebar 20

Part of the Family

For Asian and Pacific Island Catholics, the clergy and the men and women in consecrated life are often considered part of the immediate family. Being part of a family carries certain expectations, and to this extent, these leaders are looked upon to help foster prayerful lives and provide guidance and wisdom during times of discernment or crisis.

Sidebar 21

Guidelines for Receiving Pastoral Ministers

“International pastoral ministers have always been a part of the fabric of the Catholic Church in the United States. They were instrumental in bringing the faith to our shores, they helped nourish that faith, and they continue to serve generously among us to this day. Many of our American saints were international pastoral ministers, from St. Frances Xavier Cabrini to St. Mother Theodore Guerin, from St. Isaac Jogues to St. John Neumann and St. Damien de Veuster. We must acknowledge that, from the time of the earliest missionaries to our land until the present day, we have benefited from the ministry of so many from other lands and cultures. The richness of their diversity has helped us to appreciate and more fully embrace our catholicity.”

— *Guidelines for Receiving Pastoral Ministers in the United States* (Washington, DC: USCCB, 2014), p. A-1. <http://ccc.usccb.org/flipbooks/cclv-guidelines/#1>.

Sidebar 22

“Saving Face”

The practice of “saving face” is an intercultural communication dynamic. An individualistic or communitarian orientation “influences how a culture behaves to present itself to others and how it maintains self” (*Building Intercultural Competence for Ministers*, 2012).¹ This is translated in practical terms through direct and indirect communication techniques. In many individualistic cultures, there tends to prevail a more direct communication. However, in many Asian and Pacific Island cultures that have a communitarian orientation, indirect communication and greater use of body language to express feelings are common. For instance, one may shield a facial expression that would suggest conflict or shame, in order to present harmony. Also, one may control one’s emotions—in order to maintain one’s dignity and reputation—by hiding humiliating or embarrassing situations. Though not ubiquitous, “saving face” is a very common practice in many Asian and Pacific Island cultures and is shown in the way they engage in work places, communities, parishes, and worship settings.

The Congregation for Catholic Education’s *Intercultural Approach* (2013), reminds us that “today the possibilities of interaction between cultures have increased significantly, giving rise to new openings for intercultural dialogue: a dialogue that, if it is to be effective, has to set out from a deep-seated knowledge of the specific identity of the various dialogue partners.”

¹ See Stella Ting-Toomey in “The Matrix of Face: An Updated Face-Negotiation Theory” as cited in the resource, *Building Intercultural Competence for Ministers* from the Committee on Cultural Diversity in the Church.

Sidebar 23

Examples of Asian and Pacific Island Activities and Events

The USCCB Subcommittee on Asian and Pacific Island Affairs maintains a regular and up-to-date schedule of events by Asian and Pacific Island Catholic communities throughout the United States. Consider promoting and advertising these events should they occur in or near your diocese. <http://www.usccb.org/issues-and-action/cultural-diversity/asian-pacific-islander/news/index.cfm>