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POPE'S MESSAGE FOR LAUNCHING OF L'OSSERVATORE ROMANO'S MALAYALAM EDITION

On the occasion of the publication of the first issue of the weekly English edition of L'Osservatore Romano in Malayalam language, the Holy Father addressed a message to Catholics in Kerala, India. In the message released in June, the Pontiff regards the event "highly significant" for the Church in India. It will "keep the over six million Catholics in Kerala state fully informed about the ministry of the Pope and the Holy See." It will also "strengthen the bonds of faith and ecclesial communion linking the Catholic community to the See of Peter." The Pope hopes that the new translation will "aid the continuing work of evangelization." He expressed thanks to all those who made the project possible including the Carmel International Publishing House. (FIDES)

INDIA: SPECIAL COIN IN HONOR OF ST. ALPHONSA

The Reserve Bank of India plans to issue a special commemorative coin in honor of Indian-born Sister Alphonsa Muttathupadathu to mark the Catholic nun's canonization. The government will announce its decision on October 12 this year, the day Pope Benedict XVI officially declares Alphonsa a saint. Sr. Alphonsa of the Syro-Malabar Church was born in 1910 and took perpetual vows in 1936. Her tomb at Bharananganam near her convent is visited by a large number of devotees. She was beatified by Pope John Paul II in 1986 and last year, Pope Benedict XVI signed the decree approving the miracle that took place through her intercession. (SAR NEWS)

THAILAND: CRISIS MANAGEMENT SEMINAR

Some Leaders of the Thai church including Bishops, priests and religious attended a two-day seminar on "Crisis Management" June 26-27 in Bangkok. The seminar, organized by the Social Communications Office of the Thai bishops' conference (CSCT), aimed at increased awareness of the role of media in crisis situations. Resource speakers included lay public relations (PR) expert Premsiri Dilokpreechakul, former Signis Asia president Siriwan Santosakultarm, and former Unda world president Chainarong Monthienvichienchai. The talks stressed credibility, preparedness and courage as important components of PR. (CSCT)

HONG KONG: CATHOLIC PUBLISHERS AT BOOK FAIR

Eleven Catholic publishers participated in this year's annual book fair held from June 23 to 29 at the HK Trade and Development Council's Convention and Exhibition Centre. Visitors to Catholic stalls were fewer compared to the 461 secular stalls, but sales of Catholic books at the annual book fair have been steady in recent years, according to a Catholic bookstore manager. However, increasing production costs, translation and obtaining copyrights, deter Catholic publishers from producing more books, the manager added. (UCANEWS)

KOREA: CATHOLIC JOURNALISTS' FORUM ON POVERTY

The 8th Catholic Journalists' Forum held in June in Seoul discussed the interplay between information and poverty, as well as communication's role in "social emergencies." The event was organized by the Korean bishops' Social Communication Commission and attended by sociologists, theologians, academics, secular and diocesan media professionals. The participants recommended educating children from poor families, responsible journalism and increase of relevant Catholic informational material, among others, to help resolve poverty and marginalization in the country. (FIDES)

INDIA: EPIC FILM ON ST. THOMAS, THE APOSTLE

The project for an epic movie on the life of St Thomas, the apostle, was launched on July 3 at the Santhome Cathedral in Chennai, the saint's burial place. Some 25,000 Indian Catholics attended the function along with Madras Archbishop Malayappan Chinnapa and project director, Fr. Paul Raj Lourdusamy. The film will be made over a period of two years, with shootings in Tamil Nadu and Kerala states where the apostle landed in the year 52. James Caviezel, who played Jesus in the 2004 release "Passion of the Christ" by Mel Gibson, will also play Jesus in the film. Another Hollywood actor will play St. Thomas, says Fr. Paul. (SAR NEWS)

VIETNAM: PARISH AUDIO PROGRAM FOR CATECHISM

The Hoa Hung parish church in Kien Giang province plays audio programs over loudspeakers in its compound since 1991. The parish plays 30-minute reflections on the Bible, Sunday readings, saints' stories and prayers before the morning and evening Masses on Wednesdays, Thursdays and Sundays. Two nuns are in-charge of producing the audio programs every Tuesday, with the help of two local catechists and seven children. The program has increased attendance in Holy Mass and catechism classes, and helped draw aspirants to the religious life. Fr. Vincent Nguyen The Khanh, parish priest of Hoa Hung, started the program. The parish has 4,000 Catholics in a total population of 20,000. (UCANEWS)

INDIA: GENDER INEQUALITY IN MEDIA

A two-day colloquium held July 19-20 in Panaji, Goa focused on women media professionals suffering gender inequality in the workplace. The program titled "Women in Media: Fighting Stereotype-Identity and Gender in Goa" cited that women media professionals suffer from sexual harassment, job insecurity and lack of maternal benefits, among others. The colloquium recommended that media play a pro-active role on women issues. It also suggested having courses that will teach ways of dealing with these issues and using other media like theater, folk art and film to project them. The Media Information and Communication Center of India (MICCI) organized the program. (UCANEWS)

INDIA: CATHOLIC, HINDU PRIESTS SING TO PROMOTE RELIGIOUS AMITY

For the first time, priests from a Hindu temple and a Catholic church staged a concert by the roadside in New Delhi on June 29, singing devotional and patriotic songs for religious harmony. About 200 Catholics and Hindus witnessed the program organized by the priests of the temple, managed by International Society for Krishna Consciousness (ISKCON), and the Church of Transfiguration. The initiative for the concert came from Divine Word Fr. John Paul Herman, who usually leads Sunday Mass in the parish and who serves as media relations officer of Delhi archdiocese. Divine Word Fr. Babu Joseph, spokesperson for the Catholic Bishops' Conference of India, said such programs show that "people are ready to unite" and are "a sign of tolerance, unity and mutual understanding." (UCANEWS)

CAMBODIA: 5TH ANNIVERSARY OF CATHOLIC SOCIAL COMMUNICATIONS

This year marks the fifth anniversary of the Catholic Social Communications of Cambodia. Established in 2003 by the heads of the three Church jurisdictions in the country (Phnom Penh, Battambang and Kompong Cham), the office seeks increased awareness and use of the different means of communications for ministry. Fr Omer Giraldo, missionary from Colombia and rector of the major seminary in Phnom Penh, serves as director of the office. With the help of young lay volunteers, the office now produces radio programs for FEBC (Far East Broadcasting Co.) and six stations in the country. It publishes the "Messenger" newsletter, and maintains the website <www.catholiccambodia.org> (SIGNIS)

MONGOLIA: SACRED MUSIC A CHALLENGE FOR MONGOLIAN CHURCH

Mongolian Catholics are trying to build a repertoire of local liturgical music for their 16-year-old Church, but some say developing appropriate music remains the biggest challenge. The "young" Mongolian Church has "no Church music tradition to speak of," pointed Fr. Giorgio Marengo of the Church liturgical commission. A parishioner said the present Catholic songs are neither Mongolian, nor do they sound particularly sacred. Fr. Marengo said "we should invest more in the faith of people. When people develop a taste for sacred music, they will learn to discern if that music is good for praying or not." (UCANEWS)

TAJIKISTAN: BIBLE SOCIETY CELEBRATES GOD'S WORD THROUGH MUSIC

Catholic and Orthodox choirs as well as representatives of Protestant denominations performed at a concert on May 24, this year's designated "Bible Day" with more than 150 people from various Christian denominations in attendance. The event held at the Dushanbe Youth Theater was organized by the Ecumenical Bible Society of Tajikistan to bring Christians together and introduce the Bible to those unfamiliar with it. The society was founded in 1994, three years after Tajikistan gained independence with the collapse of the Soviet Union. (UCANEWS)

INDIA: SALESIAN AWARDED 'BEST REPORTER'

Salesian Fr. C. M. Paul received the John Barrett Award for Best Reporter at the 14th annual national journalists conference in Bangalore on May 12. The award is named after the Jesuit founder of the Indian Catholic Press Association (ICPA). Fr Paul was director of the Salesian News Agency (1992-95), and editor of Catechetics India published from Kolkata (1997-2006). He is currently Rome reporter for SAR News. (THE HERALD)

KOREA: INCULTURATION EFFORTS GIVES BIRTH TO NEW KOREAN HYMNS

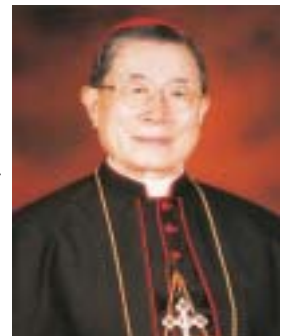
The Catholic Lay Apostolate Council of Korea presented the winners of its "Our Hymns" contest during a special evening Mass on June 19 at Myeongdong Cathedral in Seoul. The contest aims to promote Korean hymns that will help inculturate the liturgy. Lay council president Thomas Han Hong-soon said "creating hymns with Korean sentiments, hymns that are easy for Koreans to sing, will help the local Church promote inculturation of the liturgy." Auxiliary Bishop Andrew Yeom Soo-jung of Seoul, who presided the Mass, said in his homily that hymns help enrich people's prayers and are a means of communicating with God. Six winning composers were given the awards and their compositions were used during the liturgy. (CNUA)

WORLD CONFERENCE ON CATHOLIC RADIO INCLUDES RADIO VERITAS ASIA

The Pontifical Council for Social Communications sponsored a world-wide conference on Catholic radio June 19-21 at the Pontifical Urbanian University in Rome. The meeting brought together people from 50 countries representing 63 stations. Divine Word Fr. Roberto Ebisa, general manager of FABC's Radio Veritas Asia in the Philippines, was one of the presenters. The new president of the pontifical council, Archbishop Claudio Ma. Celli, said the event sought to "reflect and understand the identity and mission of a Catholic radio station in today's world." By analyzing the present with sights set on the future, initiatives may be drawn to make "the service of a Catholic radio station in the world more efficient," the prelate added. (ZENIT)

TAIWAN: CARDINAL PAUL SHAN SPEAKS ABOUT HIS FAITH TO NON-CHRISTIANS

Since Cardinal Paul Shan, 84, was diagnosed with lung cancer in mid-2006, he has given spiritual talks to audiences like university scholars, doctors, and criminals, who are mostly non-Christians. The former president of Taiwan's episcopal conference and executive board member of the FABC-Office of Social Communication, said he could talk more and better now about the "essential points" of his Christian faith



to non-Christians than in his 60 years as a Jesuit. Sometimes his talks are carried on TV, radio and newspapers. Taiwan's population is 97 percent non-Christians, while only 3 percent are Catholics and Protestants. (FIDES/UCANEWS)

TIMOR LESTE: YOUTH LEADERS TRAINED ON HANDLING EMOTIONS, NON-VERBAL COMMUNICATION

Fourteen youth leaders attended a three-day workshop in Dili June 15-17 on handling emotions and non-verbal communication. A member of the lay group "Youth for Christ," part of the Philippines-based "Couples for Christ," facilitated the workshop which aimed at better forming youth leaders through a process of "inner healing." The youth realized that emotions, gestures, words or even silence, communicate. Managing these will make them effective youth ministers. The violence and displacement the Timorese have gone through in recent history must have left inner hurts. Healing these hurts opens the youth leaders to healthier relationships, the facilitator said. (UCANEWS)