

World Union of Catholic Women's Organizations, Asia Pacific Regional Conference Outcome Statement.

May 1st-6th, 2016 : Venue: Novotel Lami

Two hundred representatives from the World Union of Catholic Women's Organizations Asia Pacific Region met in conference this week in Lami, Fiji, under the theme of "*In Hope and Mercy We Meet in God's Love*".

Delegates of the conference travelled from as far as Italy, Japan, Korea, Vanuatu, Australia, New Zealand, Tonga, Philippines and China. Fiji delegates represented all 34 Parishes across the country.

Pope Saint John Paul II stated that the family is a

'community of love, founded on marriage. Within the family each member is accepted, respected and honoured precisely because he or she is a person. The role of the family in building the culture of life is decisive and irreplaceable. As the domestic church, the family is summoned to proclaim, celebrate and serve the Gospel of life. It is above all in raising children that the family fulfils this mission. The family celebrates the Gospel of life through daily prayer.' (Theology of the Body: Human Love in the Divine Plan, The Gospel of Life, pages 92-94).

As such the family must be encouraged, respected and supported. This Conference presented strong, informative sessions on the Theology of the Body, its connections to Natural Family Planning and an insight into the profound understanding of the equality and complementarity of husband and wife.

Women delegates actively participated and shared their ideas on the Action and Strategies that needs to be addressed in order, to tackle the burning issues of Human Trafficking and Sexual Exploitation of Women and Children. Raising awareness to enlighten the family and community about this issue came out very strongly, as most of the delegates believe that the more we talk about these issues, the more the community and especially our families will be enlightened to take action.

The participation of so many young women was very encouraging and appreciated. Their valuable contributions augur well for the future of the organisation.

The complexity and insidious nature of documents produced by some international organisations, who take advantage of the vulnerability of people, their lack of understanding and their failure to thoroughly investigate documents and sources of funding, is a grave concern. Devious and unethical methods are sometimes employed to coerce people into the acceptance of philosophies they do not endorse.

Responding to the words of Pope Francis in *Laudato Si' Care for our Common Home*, our President General Maria Giovanna Ruggieri exhorted us to care for our environment and not to waste precious resources.

Prayer was emphasized as our source of strength, inspiration and understanding. The beauty and harmony of God's creation and His plans for our lives were acknowledged and praised.

Key Points from the Topics

WUCWO of the Asia Pacific region is concerned that;

- There is a lack of involvement of fathers in some families.
- Rights and responsibilities are co-dependent and cannot infringe upon others rights.
- Women's rights are equal to men's rights.
- Marriage and family are cornerstones of our society.
- Children need the protection of family life and parents are obliged to supervise their activities.
- Taboo subjects, like discussions on sex, will need to be explored to protect children from greater harm. Families will need appropriate assistance and advice, on this.

In keeping with the theme of our Conference, "*In Hope and Mercy, we meet in God's Love*" and in view of the avenues our discussions explored, the words of the Holy Father, Pope Francis, in *Amoris Laetitia* (290), recapitulate the general trend of our discussions.

"The family is thus an agent of pastoral activity through its explicit proclamation of the Gospel and its legacy of varied forms of witness, namely solidarity with the poor, openness to a diversity of people, the protection of creation, moral and material solidarity with other families, including those most in need, commitment to the promotion of the common good and the transformation of unjust social structures, beginning in the territory in which the family lives, through the practice of the corporal and spiritual works of Mercy" (310). All this is an expression of our profound Christian belief in the love of Jesus Christ, who even now lives in our midst and enables us to face together the storms of life at every stage. In all families the Good News needs to resound, in good times and in bad, as a source of light along the way. All of us should be able to say, thanks to the experience of our life in the family: "We come to believe in the love that God has for us" (1 Jn 4:16). Only on the basis of this experience will the Church's pastoral care for families enable them to be both domestic churches and a leaven of evangelization in society.

We applaud the Organizing Committee for their choice of excellent speakers who presented on the key topics.