CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

Background of the Study

The Emerging Asia

The formation of lay leaders as known within the Christian domain is and will be seriously sought after given the unprecedented changes in Asia. There is a strong need for leadership and maturity amongst the lay in order to understand, integrate, and apply faith to the changing needs and sitz-im-leben affecting the paradigms of human activity (social, political, economic, and environmental). This renders lay formation and leadership not only vital but also raises a need to review and better understand this much-felt need in the Asian context.

Causes of Concern

On the social frontier, “Modern-day Asia is marked today by swift and far-reaching transformation, a continent undergoing modernization and profound social
change, along with secularization and the break-up of traditional societies” (cf. FAPA I [FABC I, 1974, art. 4] 13).¹

On the economic and political front, per capita income and education levels, health and life span have increased in many parts of Asia, especially Singapore, Taiwan, Korea, and Japan, while more nations are continuing their quest to embrace modernity in varying degrees. Despite these political and economic changes, masses of Asians continue to be “deprived of access to material goods and resources which they need to create a truly human life for themselves” (FAPA I [FABC I, 1974, art. 19] 15).

The truth is that poverty in Asia is not purely an economic concept but is closely related to religio-cultural, socio-economic, and political systems, which have injustice built into them (FAPA I [BISA VI, 1978, art. 4] 212; [BISA VII, 1986, art. 6] 230). According to the Asian Development Bank report, while Asia has advanced economically, the “greater threat to developing Asia’s long-term growth and stability” is the widening income disparities of the past two decades.² In the long term this fails to lift people out of poverty with “the rich getting richer, and the poor getting poorer.”³

¹All references to FABC documents will generally be taken from the four volumes of For All the Peoples of Asia. The abbreviation FAPA will be used, followed by the volume number (e.g., 1) and the specific page number(s). The statements of FABC plenary assemblies will have prominence as it is the supreme body of FABC. All the important documents of FABC were published under the following volumes: ed. Gaudencio B. Rosales and Catalino G. Arévalo, For All the Peoples of Asia: Federation of Asian Bishops’ Conferences, Documents from 1970 to 1991 (hereafter, FAPA I) (Quezon City, Philippines: Claretian Publications, 1992). FAPA II, Documents from 1992 to 1996, ed. Franz-Josef Eilers (Quezon City, Philippines: Claretian Publications, 1997). FAPA III, Documents from 1997 to 2001, ed. Franz-Josef Eilers (Quezon City, Philippines: Claretian Publications, 2002). FAPA IV, Documents from 2002 to 2006, ed. Franz-Josef Eilers (Quezon City, Philippines: Claretian Publications, 2007).


³Globally, the richest 20% of the world controls 87.2% of wealth and the poorest 20% have only 1.4%. The lack of equal opportunities, access to new technology, education, infrastructure, and investment,
Pope John Paul II’s challenging call for a globalization without marginalization still echoes strong in human hearts. The Catholic social tradition has always maintained that “there are many human needs which find no place on the market” (CA 34).

The poor of Asia are a constant reminder and critique of the ambiguities of modernization and globalization as Felix Wilfred notes: “… what Asia seeks is a more complete ‘coming of age’ by the exercise of moral reason expressing itself through an ethical and humane quest.”

At the recent FABC Tenth Plenary Assembly, December 2012, the general secretary, in his paper “FABC at Forty Years: Responding to the Challenges of Asia: A New Evangelization,” outlined a list of fourteen “megatrends” that will continue to shape the evangelizing mission of the Church in Asia: globalization, culture, poverty, migrants and refugees, indigenous peoples, population, religious freedom, threats to life, social communication, ecology, laity, women, youth, Pentecostalism and vocations.

The Asian Ecclesial Context

Asia is a vast and diverse continent, home to 60% of the world’s population. It is the cradle of the major world religions and ancient cultures, history and traditions; it is “a region like Joseph’s coat of many colours” (FAPA I [ABM, 1970, art. 7] 4). Of the more particularly between rural and urban areas and between coastal and inland provinces enhances this disparity. See United Nations Human Development Report (New York: Oxford University Press, 1992).  


than four billion people living in Asia, Christians are estimated to be about 5% and Catholics 2.9% or about 110 million people.\(^7\)

In spite of the numerous zealous missionaries, educational institutions and health care facilities, the Church in Asia continues to be looked upon as a foreign entity, as Karotemprel notes: “Asians may appreciate the works of the Church, and have a greater admiration for the person of Jesus and his message, yet they are reluctant to embrace its sacramental and ecclesial form.”\(^8\)

Felix Wilfred, a renowned Asian theologian, has observed that the Church itself has failed to identify with the people as he states: “the local Churches in the countries of Asia have, by and large, kept themselves aloof from the mainstream of the life of the people, their history, struggles and dreams.”\(^9\)

Sensing that in coming decades “Asia will be in great ferment,” the bishops of FABC warned that “if the Asian Churches do not discover their own identity, they will have no future” (FAPA I [ACMC, 1977, art. 14 i-ii] 70). Since the Second Vatican Council, local Churches in all continents have embarked on a process to renew faith and articulate a new vision and theology of the Church in their own context and time.

In addressing these issues, the relevant object of study, reference and review would be FABC’s Theology of the Laity as well as the efforts of the institute of

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Formation, Fondacio Asia (IFF Asia) in the formation of lay leaders needed to bring about the transformation in society.\textsuperscript{10}

In the past 40 years\textsuperscript{11} FABC has been working to give a cohesive vision and understanding of Church. As noted in the sixth FABC plenary Assembly, 1995, the “overall thrust of the FABC’s activities in recent years has been to motivate the Churches of Asia towards ‘A New Way of Being Church’, a Church that is committed to becoming ‘a community of communities’ and a credible sign of salvation and liberation” (FAPA II [FABC VI, 1995, art. 3] 3).

IFF Asia participates in the vision of FABC by committing to be “a hub of formation for laity” and working for “a renewed Asian Church and society.”\textsuperscript{12}

\textbf{Statement of the Problem}

The changing needs and ecclesial landscape of Asia as presented in the \textit{Background of the Study} pose new challenges to the Church. The scope of this study, which focuses on the significance of formation for laity, takes into consideration the perspectives shared by the Second Vatican Council, FABC and IFF Asia in order to ascertain the Statement of the Problem.

\textsuperscript{10} IFF Asia is a school of discipleship-mission and was established by Fondacio in Europe, Africa and Asia. It offers an eleven-month intensive formation for young adults from Asian countries in human, social, spiritual and pastoral fields to be at the service of local communities and Churches. It is known for its holistic approach to formation. The basic program of formation caters to laity between the ages of early 20s to mid-30s, preferably college graduates and young professionals.

\textsuperscript{11} The origin of the FABC goes back to the historic gathering of 180 Asian bishops in Manila, Philippines, during the visit of Pope Paul VI in 1970. The statutes of FABC were approved in 1972, hence the fortieth anniversary celebration in 2012.

A significant point that is taken into consideration is that in the past, the Church tended to limit itself mostly to “the protection of its interests regarding religious freedom, the family and schools” (FAPA I [FABC IV, 1986, art. 3.1.7] 180). With the Church becoming involved in a wider range of issues that seriously affect all peoples, it signals “the need of the hour in Asia is for competent and principled lay people…” (FAPA I [art. 3.1.6] 180).

Even if recent statistics point to a growth in numbers of ordained priests, yet proportionate to the number of priests needed to serve the growing Catholic population in Asia, not to mention the explosion of human needs and new ministries, their numbers are inadequate.13 Coupled with this is the “weakening of faith in Christian communities … a decline in religious practice and a disengagement in transmitting the faith to new generations,” as highlighted in the synod of Bishops working document on the New Evangelization.14

The general overview of the Church of Asia shows significant advances in many areas of Church life since the Second Vatican Council with active participation of laity, women, and growth of ministries. Yet there are internal challenges, as the Asian bishops admit:

The structures of our ecclesial organization (sometimes so large, amorphous and impersonal) often image-forth “institution” in its less attractive aspects, and not


“community”; Church groups not infrequently remain individualist in ethos and practice. Sometimes organs of lay participation and co-responsibility have not been established, or are left inactive and impeded, existing only in name. Often enough the gifts and charisms of the laity—both women and men—are not duly recognized, welcomed or activated in significant functions and tasks of ministry and apostolate (FAPA I [FABC III, 1982, art. 9.3] 57).

Adolfo Nicolas, Superior General of the Jesuits, writing in the 1980s, saw the challenges of laity as lacking life models and formation, and the pre-Vatican mentality:

Lay spirituality remains very often at the level of the intellect and is not connected to life; it lacks models to emulate... the laity lack proper information, have inadequate formation; they show too much dependence on the clergy; usually, they lack time; and the pre-Vatican mentality, authoritarianism, over-education and “all-knowing-cult system,” on the part of the clergy, are some of the real difficulties against the full participation of the laity in the life of the Church.15

The Asian bishops have called for a “mutual catechesis” of “bishops, priests, religious and laity” (FAPA I [FABC III, 1982, art. 9.4] 58) to address the situation. In reference to the Second Vatican Council, they also called for the renewal of inner ecclesial structures not only by multiplying or strengthening existing structures, but by “creating the right atmosphere of communion, collegiality and co-responsibility for an

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active and fuller lay initiation, participation and action” (FAPA I [FABC IV, 1986, art. 4.5.2] 193).

More so, they point out, “The call of the laity … does not spring from the shortage of priests nor from the mandate of the hierarchy. It is a demand of their Christian identity…” (FAPA I [BILA III, 1986, art. 6] 244).

Against these scenarios, there then appears a crucial need to establish answers to the question of how the initiatives of Fondacio which are focused on evangelization, formation, and development can continue to enrich and enhance the formation of laity in the changing face of Asia.

Pope Benedict XVI in his Papal Address at the annual convention of the Diocese of Rome in 2009, and repeatedly at other gatherings, called for a true recognition of laity.\(^{16}\) He said lay people are called not simply to help their priests run their parishes, but to share fully in the responsibility of building up the Church. “This will require a change of mentality, especially regarding lay people—to move from considering them to be the clergy’s collaborators to recognizing them as truly sharing responsibility for the existence and action of the Church.”\(^{17}\)

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\(^{16}\) He repeated his call about a year later (2010) at a pastoral visit to the new parish in the northern part of the Diocese of Rome, stating that laity are ‘not just collaborators to the clergy but co-responsible for the Church’. He reiterated this message in August 2012 at the 6th Assembly of the International Catholic Action Forum saying, the laity should be seen as truly “co-responsible” for the Church, and not just “collaborators” with the clergy. Laity should be considered “persons truly ‘co-responsible’ for the being and activity of the Church.” Available from http://www.kandle.ie/2010/03/09/laity-co-reponsible/, accessed on 6 October, 2012.

The Pope added that, despite the teaching of the Second Vatican Council, too many people continue to identify the Church as the hierarchy or, having rejected that vision in an exaggerated way, they see the Church simply as a collection of people. He said in response it is “important to deepen and to live out this spirit of profound communion in the Church, which characterized the early Christian community, as the book of the Acts of the Apostles attests.”

If lay people are not merely the assistants of priests and bishops, who are they then? What is their identity and vocation?

The FABC workshop paper Lay Ministries in the Renewed Church of Asia (FABC Paper 92j, Thomas Vijay) says whilst the Church teaches officially that lay involvement and lay ministries are essential for the full effectiveness of the apostolate of the Church, the reality in the Asian Church is still far from actualizing this potential.

Though there are scattered efforts to promote lay involvement in the Church, the Asian Church, by and large, is too clericalized, institutionalized, and its leadership quite dominating. The parish life and activities depend very much on the interests and priorities of each parish priest, leaving the parish life very unstable and the people helpless…. [The Church] is not equipped enough to meet these growing challenges. Christian sects are making a good harvest out of our ill-formed and passive community. The number leaving the Church is growing daily….

The FABC paper goes on to question the passive state of the laity:

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Why is it that thousands of these qualified and resourceful women and men are not at the service of the gospel in the intersections of life they are placed? …. Why is it that the Church leadership generally do not feel a sense of urgency in activating the charisms and talents of the laity in ministries for the spreading of the Gospel and working towards the coming of the Reign of God?

The post-formation evaluation of former students or graduates of IFF Asia showed the challenges and needs faced by these young adults as they returned home and served on the ground in various ministries and roles. It revealed difficulties and gaps between knowledge and skills acquired and applying these in reality. It raised the need for spirituality, community life, ministry support, and pastoral care on the ground to sustain them in the mission. This was true across various local Churches in Asia, irrespective of the economic and social backgrounds of these countries.

Underlying these issues seems to be how clergy and laity across Asia understand Church, ministry, and the laity’s role in the mission of the Church. More importantly, how will the Church of Asia embark on its mission ad gentes for the “great harvest of faith” without the systematic formation and participation of its laity?

This theological study therefore seeks to answer the question: What are the significant factors in the FABC Theology of the Laity that can inform the IFF Asia

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19 The evaluations are found in the IFF Asia Report 2009-2012: Deepening Discipleship, Laity in Mission. (Manila: Published by Fondacio Asia, 2010), 73-74.

20 Pope John Paul II in his address to the participants of the VI Plenary Assembly of the FABC, 1995 re-echoed the significance of Asia, “As the dawn of the third millennium draws near, it is particularly in Asia, towards which the Church’s mission ad gentes ought to be chiefly directed.... We can pray that in the third Christian millennium, a great harvest of faith will be reaped in this vast and vital continent.” (John Paul II, “Harvest of Faith,” in Ecclesia in Asia, art. 1).
program of formation of young adults for integral evangelization in Asia’s local Churches?

The pastoral reflections and teachings of the FABC seek to apply the teachings of the Second Vatican Council to the Asian context. It is a compass for the Churches in Asia, offering a cohesive vision and understanding of “A New Way of Being Church.” Therefore, the question can also be posed as to how the IFF Asia basic program of formation for young adults for integral evangelization can be further developed consistent with the FABC Theology of the Laity; and what are some clarifications and affirmations that support IFF Asia’s initiatives.

Five areas have been isolated for the purpose of this study and are taken up under scope and limitations in this paper. The underlying assumption is to empower the laity through formation, to engage their untapped resources for the mission of the Church, and deepen their sense of belonging in the Catholic Church by helping them understand and develop their identity and role as laity.

Scope and Limitations

This study seeks to apply the renewed understanding of Church, laity, and ministry as found in a general reading of the Second Vatican Council documents, statements of FABC plenary assemblies from 1974 to 2012, and some related documents of bishops’ institutes. This is further supported by the viewpoints of other authors and articles.
However, as the scope of materials and authors is immense and spread over a period of time, the study aims to focus only on select key themes relevant to the scope of this study; as such this presentation is not to be treated as exhaustive.

Relying on the documents of the Second Vatican Council and the FABC’s Theology of the Laity with its teachings on ministry and formation, this study hopes to clarify, affirm, and develop the content and approach of IFF Asia’s basic program of formation for young adults. This process can bring greater understanding, validate, and establish IFF Asia’s legitimacy, and further contribute towards the development of the basic formation program.

The study hopes to identify and summarize common elements and differences between IFF Asia and FABC, in the following five areas:

1. Understanding of Renewal or Vision of New Way of Being Church;
2. Formation of Laity, and the Underlying Vision of the Human Person;
3. Relation to Local Church or Ecclesiology;
4. Mission and Integral Evangelization; and
5. Method of Approach or Pedagogy.

The second step would be to check the coherence or alignment of the rationale, content, and evaluation findings of IFF Asia’s program of formation against the FABC teachings to further establish how much of this theology is being integrated by IFF Asia and incarnated in local Churches.

However, this study will not carry out any evaluation of IFF Asia’s program content. Instead, the study will compare and contrast the existing IFF Asia program with
the FABC teachings relating to the role and theology of the laity. The study also does not attempt to assess any existing formation activities involving lay ministry in the various parishes, dioceses or lay movements within the Church. The scope of the study is restricted to IFF Asia and FABC focus on lay formation. Hence the study shall use the findings of evaluation and dialogue carried out with IFF Asia’s students and the local Churches where the students originate.

**Significance of the Study**

For IFF Asia, the contribution towards lay formation is as significant as fulfilling the FABC’s Theology of the Laity. At the same time, as stated in the Background of the Study, there are global trends and shifts affecting society and cultures that directly affect the evangelizing mission of the Church.

Pope Paul VI also stated in *Evangelii Nuntiandi* that “there can be no new humanity without new men and women” (EN 18). In the same spirit, for the renewed ecclesiology of the Second Vatican Council and FABC to take root, and for laity and ministries to grow, the Church has to invest in the formation of its members and accompany them along new pathways.

The FABC Seventh Plenary Assembly states that formation and on-going formation of all are “pivotal and crucial in the process of becoming Asian and in fulfilling our mission in an Asian way” (FAPA III [FABC VII, 2000, art. 2] 13).

Likewise, the Asian bishops are clear that “The renewal of Asian society which the Lord bids us to accomplish in dialogue and collaboration with peoples of other
religious traditions and persons of goodwill requires the effort of the whole Church…. they [laity] are the primary evangelizers of culture and of cultures, and of the whole fabric of life in society” (FAPA I [FABC V, 1990, art. 5.1] 283).

Given the express need and significance of the formation of laity currently undertaken by IFF Asia, it is important for IFF Asia to posit a unique approach to formation for laity that translates to being inductive, holistic, Christ-centered, communitarian, and missionary as well as emphasizing lay discipleship.

The call to mission *ad gentes* and the local context demand urgency from the Churches of Asia to review their understanding and application of the theology of the laity for “a renewed Church in Asia and its mission of love and service.”

Given all of the above considerations, the study therefore can help to articulate the relation between FABC ecclesiology, laity, and the ministry with the content and thrust of IFF Asia formation program. Besides affirming the need for formation of laity and their role in fulfilling the mission and ministry of the Church in Asia, it will be beneficial to FABC and local Churches to know and to study IFF Asia’s approach to formation, and the impact it has had.

This exercise of contrasting and aligning has not been done before and therefore will be deemed as beneficial to IFF Asia. In particular, it will help to articulate the inherent theology within Fondacio and IFF Asia in their work of evangelization and formation.

21 This was the theme of the Seventh FABC Plenary Assembly, 2000
The study will establish the possible ways of incarnating the FABC’s Theology of the Laity through further reflection. It prompts the question of which attitudes, skills and knowledge (ASK) will ensure the transference of the FABC theology to local Churches and laity, and what mutual insights can be gained by both FABC and IFF Asia.

The study should provoke a wider ecclesial reflection in Asia on the needs and challenges of laity and young pastoral workers as they strive to live out their baptismal call and serve in mission. It can help identify what support is needed for formation, and what changes in structures and culture of local Churches are required for a better reception and incarnation of the FABC vision.

For the participating Churches (present and future), the study can provide insights into ways of further enhancing their respective initiatives in lay formation as well as helping them understand their roles and responsibilities as local Churches involved in the formation and mission of laity.

In essence, the study aims to provide a basis for the tripartite relation between FABC, local Churches and IFF Asia, and eventually to explore further and enrich this symbiotic link that has always been a pillar of the Church in its evangelizing mission in the world.

**Methodology**

The researcher will employ historical and theological research for analysis, synthesis and subsequent recommendations. In order to establish the understanding of Church or ecclesiology and consequently, the identity and mission of the laity, the
methodology is based on a review of the following references although not restricted entirely to them:

1. Second Vatican Council documents
2. FABC Plenary Assembly Statements I to X from 1974 to 2012
3. The Asian Colloquium on Ministries in the Church, 1977
4. Documents that relate to the scope of the study from *For All the Peoples of Asia* (FAPA, vols. I–IV).

Secondly, the researcher will then compare these understandings about laity garnered from the listed readings and research to the vision-mission, general program content, approach to formation, and evaluations of IFF Asia to verify how the FABC theology is being incarnated and its impact on the ground as the students of IFF Asia return to serve in local Churches.

Thirdly, using a comparative study approach, the writer will draw upon the reflections of theologians and experts in this field to arrive at recommendations and actions to address the basic formation program at IFF Asia and for the Church at large in Asia.

Underlying this study is the *see-judge-act* methodology developed by the Young Christian Workers (YCW) movement that was also adopted by FABC from its early days in 1972. Since the early 1990s the FABC has promoted the Asian Integral Pastoral Approach (AsIPA) to foster the growth of a participatory Church through Basic Ecclesial Communities (BEC).
In the context of this study therefore, the “seeing” will consist of examining the documents of the Second Vatican Council and statements of FABC in order to help arrive at an accurate and holistic understanding of laity and ministry within a total ecclesiology. The “judging” or discerning aspect in the chosen methodology will encompass reflection on the challenges faced by laity and the students of IFF Asia on the ground within the context of the formation program and Church teachings. The “acting” aspect will take the form of recommendations for the IFF Asia program of formation.

Essentially the theory that forms the anchor of this study is the systems theory promoted by Peter Senge. “Systems” thinking is a way of seeing reality that emphasizes the whole or inter-relationships among the parts, rather than the parts themselves. Systems are everywhere—from “biological organisms (including human bodies), the atmosphere, diseases, ecology, political entities, communities, industries, families, teams—and all organizations.”

Gertrude Foley points out that for almost a thousand years, “western thought interpreted reality from the perspective of a worldview characterized by dualism and hierarchy.” This mindset helped people “to think in linear, dualistic and hierarchical ways in dealing with problems, organizing work, structuring society, Church....” This framework is no longer adequate to respond to the challenges at hand.

As Peter Senge emphasizes, “we have to develop a sense of connectedness, a sense of working together as part of a system, where each part of the system is affecting

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and being affected by the others, and where the whole is greater than the sum of its parts.”

This will require a change in thinking about interacting and learning from one another at every level.

Systems thinking can help address the rigid habit of “either/or” thinking, to think about ‘wholes’, to honor genuine difference and diversity, and go beyond assumptions and mental models that are causing the problems in the first place.

**Definition of Terms**

A definition of terms is included to provide the reader a frame of understanding of the various terms being used in the context of the thesis:

**FABC.** The statutes of the Federation of Asian Bishops’ Conferences or FABC states that it is a “voluntary association of Episcopal conferences” in Asia and was “established with the approval of the Holy See.” Its purpose is to “foster among its members solidarity and co-responsibility for the welfare of the Church and society in Asia.” The origin of the FABC dates back to the historic gathering of 180 bishops from Asia as they gathered to meet Pope Paul VI on the occasion of his visit to Manila, Philippines. The statutes of FABC were approved on 16 November 1972 by Pope Paul VI.

**Integral Evangelization.** Evangelization comes from the Latin word _euaggelion_ meaning “gospel” or “good news,” which in turn carries a wide range of meaning—good

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25 FABC Central Secretariat, *Statutes of the FABC* (Hong Kong, 1999), art. 1.
news of truth, hope, peace, immortality, faith in the risen Christ, and salvation. The term *Evangelization* is often used interchangeably with the term *Mission*. The singular evangelizing mission of the Church embraces the following five aspects and represents integral or holistic evangelization:26 (a) Presence and Witness; (b) Social Development and Human Liberation; (c) Liturgical Life, Prayer and Contemplation; (d) Interreligious Dialogue; and (e) Proclamation and Catechesis.

For the Church, evangelizing means “bringing the Good News into all the strata of humanity, and through its influence transforming humanity from within and making it new… the Church evangelizes when she seeks to convert, solely through the divine power of the message she proclaims, both the personal and collective consciences of people, the activities in which they engage, and the lives and concrete milieu which are theirs” (EN 18).

**Mission.** Mission generally means sending someone to do something on behalf of another. The Catholic Church does not think of mission any longer in purely propagandistic term or converting people. Mission is understood as the mission of God himself, or *Missio Dei*, the redeeming task of Jesus, the Spirit and the Church in the world.27 Mission is two-way: faith is shared but not imposed, and the missionary is enriched by discovering God’s salvation already at work in the culture and people to whom he or she is sent.

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Local Church. For the FABC, the primary focus of the task of evangelization, at their first Plenary Assembly was the building up of a truly local Church (FAPA I [FABC 1, 1974, art. 9-12] 14).

For the local Church is the realization and the enfleshment of the Body of Christ in a given people, a given place and time…. the local Church is a Church incarnate in a people, a Church indigenous and acculturated … a Church in continuous, humble and loving dialogue with the living traditions, the cultures, the religions—in brief, with all the life realities of the people…."

At their Fifth Plenary Assembly they affirmed that the “local Church is the acting subject of mission” that is, “the people of God in a given milieu, the whole Christian community—laity, religious, clergy…. Their time has come for Asia.” And it is “by responding and serving the needs of the peoples of Asia that the different Christian communities become truly local Churches” (FAPA I [FABC V, 1990, art. 3.3.1-3] 281).

Laity. While the Second Vatican Council defined laity as non-ordained and non-religious, the Asian Bishops have described lay people in the context of the entire community rooted in the realities of Asia and following Jesus. At the First Asian Laity Meeting of the FABC held in 1994, the bishops referred to the laity as “Asian citizens and Christians” (FAPA II, 119). For them lay people are “Asian Christians,” “disciples of Christ,” “full-fledged members” of the Church, “mature subjects and persons with dignity and freedom,” with their gifts and powers as well as rights and responsibilities. They also use the terms “Christ’s faithful” and “Christians” to mean lay people (FAPA I [FABC IV,
1986] 191-193). Lay leaders can be defined broadly as lay persons who play a leadership and service role in any ministry at a local community, parish, diocese, or national level.

**Theology of the Laity.** In the classical form, theology is defined as ‘faith seeking understanding.’ The Theology of the Laity seeks to articulate the understanding of laity, their identity, vocation and mission, within the People of God. The FABC Fourth Plenary Assembly on *The Vocation and Mission of the Laity in the Church and in the World of Asia* situates clearly the identity of laity in their baptism, the “common priesthood of life” of all believers. The Messianic function of the people of God consists of the “real priesthood of life, witness and service of the whole community, and building up God’s Kingdom” (FAPA I [FABC IV, 1986, art. 4.4.2] 192). They are a “communion of committed disciples ... working for the liberation of Asia” with their Master (FAPA I [art. 4.1.3] 191). “Discipleship in Asia must be incarnated, ecclesial and communitarian, based on the Word of God, the sacraments of the Church, to seek the Reign of God.” Therefore, there is but “one Christian spirituality, namely, that which is common to all disciples of Jesus in his Church, whether lay or clerical, priests, bishops or religious” (FAPA I, 195-197).

**Young Adults.** Youth, according to the United Nations (UN) definition, are people between 15 and 24 years of age. In psychology, young adults are those in the age group of 20 to 40 years. They may be physically mature, but their character and personality are still developing as they gain experience. The Church meanwhile defines young adults as those between the ages of 19 to 39. It is a period in life when they make major life decisions in education, career, states of life; thus expanding their definition of
self and family, and reconciling experiences of faith, Church, and the world. The Institute of Formation, Fondacio Asia (IFF Asia) program of formation targets those between the ages of early 20s to mid-30s.

**Fondacio.** Born in 1974 in France, in the spirit of the Second Vatican Council, Fondacio is recognized as part of the new ecclesial movements and communities under the Pontifical Council for Laity. It has pontifical status of an “international private association of the faithful.” It has about 3,000 members, of which 120 are full time lay workers or permanents, and is present in about 20 over countries. Fondacio is involved in services of evangelization, formation and projects of development.28

**IFF Asia.** The Fondacio institutes are schools of formation created and animated by Fondacio in the four continents (Europe, Africa, Asia, Latin America). They work in partnership with universities, institutions, and Church communities to build a new generation of young leaders. They seek to form individuals rooted on faith and ethics, human potential and an informed understanding of their context. The Institute of Formation, Fondacio Asia (IFF Asia) offers an eleven-month intensive formation for young adults from various Asian countries in human, social, spiritual (including catechetical and basic theology) and pastoral formation at the service of local communities and Churches. As a school of discipleship-mission, it is known for its holistic approach to formation. Established in 2006, the basic program of formation in IFF Asia caters to young adults between the ages of early 20s to mid-30s, preferably college graduates and young professionals. After their period of formation, they must

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28 For more information on IFF Asia, see [http://www.fondacio-asia.org](http://www.fondacio-asia.org), and on Fondacio, see [http://www.fondacio.org/?lang=en](http://www.fondacio.org/?lang=en)
return to serve their local communities and Churches for a period of two years, either part time or full time. In line with FABC’s call, the vision of the institute is to form laity and young adults for “a renewed Asian Church and society.”

Asia. It is the largest and most populous continent, with approximately 4.3 billion people or 60% of the world population. It covers 8.7% of the Earth’s total surface area and comprises 30% of its land area. Given its diversity of ethnic groups, cultures, geography, economics, and government systems, Asia—a toponym dating back to classical antiquity—is ‘more a cultural concept’ incorporating diverse regions and peoples than a homogeneous physical entity. It is bounded by the Pacific Ocean in the east, by the Indian Ocean in the south, by the Arctic Ocean in the north, and the Mediterranean and Red Seas in the west.29

Presentation of Individual Chapters

The thesis consists of six chapters. Chapter I presents briefly the background of Asia in transition, examining the emerging Asia in the midst of the various socio-political and socio-economic developments and how the accompanying concerns or problems are related and effecting the mission of the Church in Asia. The purpose is to establish the Statement of the Problem. The chapter also addresses the scope and limitations of the study given the extensive coverage of the Second Vatican Council and FABC documents in relation to the Theology of the Laity and the Formation of the Laity. The methodology,

definition of terms, and the relevant literature review provide further clarity and profiling of the study.

Chapter II focuses on the theological foundation and understanding of Church, Laity and ministry as expounded in the Second Vatican Council documents as these documents form the anchor for the teaching magisterium of the Church. Both the pre- and post-Vatican II understanding of the laity is also examined briefly, followed by a deeper examination of the renewed understanding of Church and how the Council documents signify the life of the Church in today’s context of socio-economic and socio-political changes. An overview of the role and significance of laity in the history of the Church is examined to establish if these have been static or evolving. The focus is on communion ecclesiology and the role of laity as the study is designed to promote the holistic understanding and re-discovery of Church as the People of God.

Chapter III attempts to provide an Asian theological basis for the study. It begins by looking more in-depth at the Asian social and ecclesial context within which the laity find themselves in today. It then explores the FABC theology of the Laity and Church, in particular, through a review of the Plenary Statements. The FABC teachings on ministries and formation are also examined as these documents help establish an appreciation of the radical newness of the meaning and role of ministries and the recommended formation for the Church in Asia. The chapter captures the symbiotic connection between Theology of the Laity, Vatican II and FABC which is crucial in examining the IFF Asia program in its various dimensions.
Chapter IV takes a look at the concept of movements in the Church and its significance in history. This is to provide a context within which to situate lay movements and its growing phenomena since the Second Vatican Council, given both the role of Fondacio as a lay movement and IFF Asia as its’ institute of lay formation. The chapter unfolds the vision-mission and spirituality of Fondacio as well as the program content and approach of IFF Asia that falls under the scope of this study.

Chapter V establishes the linkage between the Second Vatican Council and FABC teachings with the IFF Asia program of formation in the areas of theology of the laity, ministry, and lay formation. It also compares and contrasts the understanding and practice of IFF Asia program of formation against the teachings of FABC. These are necessary in order to clarify and establish what needs to be further developed for the future of the Church in Asia in so far as lay formation is concerned.

The final Chapter VI presents conclusions and recommendations on lay formation that could be taken up for further study and discussion by IFF Asia, local Churches, and the FABC. In drawing out some useful learning and insights for the researcher and readers, this chapter posits valid questions and points the path forward with the hope that it could promote further discussion for all interested parties.

Summarily, the six chapters weave a story of the role of the laity in the emerging world of Asia where the Church continues to face challenges, prompting new forms of vocations and ministries especially amongst the laity as part of its evangelizing mission. In helping IFF Asia to re-examine its teaching and training programs, the study would also provide insights and reasons for improvement.
Review of Literature and Related Studies

The study uses a wide range of books, articles, theses and web-based research. The main sources of reference are those under Church and ministries, laity and formation, evangelization and social sciences. Among the many sources, some significant books, articles, and thesis are elaborated. The four volumes of *For All the Peoples of Asia* (FAPA) form a comprehensive sourcebook for the documents of FABC from 1970 to 2006. The plenary statements together with the various FABC Papers are essential references that form the basis of understanding the FABC theological vision and ecclesiology of the Asian Churches. Specific FABC documents and papers on laity, formation, and mission have been of particular use. Two of these that need to be highlighted are the conclusions of the March 1977 *Asian Colloquium on Ministries in the Church* and the statements of the Fourth Plenary Assembly on *The Vocation and Mission of the Laity in the Church and the World of Asia*, held in September 1986. These two documents are found in FAPA and provide the most comprehensive treatment of the topics under discussion.

Yves Congar, a French Dominican theologian, was a pioneer on ecclesiology and theology of the laity. He is recognized as one of the most important theologians of the Second Vatican Council and the 20th century. His writings, found in *The Mystery of the Church*, *This Church That I Love*, and *Lay People in the Church*, form the bedrock

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30 FABC Papers are published by the FABC Secretariat in Hong Kong and also made available online. See [http://www.fabc.org/offices/csec/ocsec_fabc_papers.html](http://www.fabc.org/offices/csec/ocsec_fabc_papers.html)


to understanding and loving the Church, and promotes a holistic or total understanding of Church and laity. Congar draws from various biblical, patristic, and medieval sources to bring out profound insights on the Church as institution and community.

*Documents of Vatican Council II* edited by James Kroeger contains all the sixteen documents of the Second Vatican Council (1962-1965). *Exploring the Treasures of Vatican II* by the same author is a collection of succulent and invaluable documentation of speeches, essays, and reflections on the event of the Council by its protagonists and contemporaries. It also contains a popular bibliography of the Council.

*Becoming Local Church* by James Kroeger is another collection of essays on the local Church and growing mission consciousness of Asia’s local Churches. It explores five aspects of “becoming local Church,” namely, the history, theology, evangelization, dialogue, and paschal reflections. Another Kroeger book, *Asia—Church in Mission*, explores indigenous mission initiatives particularly among Asia's dedicated laity and religious women that have *ad gentes* evangelization as their primary charism.

Two books by Kenan Osborne, *Ministry: Lay Ministry in the Roman Catholic Church* and *Priesthood: A History of the Ordained Ministry in the Roman Catholic Church*
Church\textsuperscript{39} contain excellent scholarly research and provide a sound foundation for understanding laity and ministry, as well as the emergence of structures and orders from Scripture and Tradition. They address the nature of leadership and relationship between ordained and other ministries. Orders and Ministry\textsuperscript{40} is a summary of his earlier works on Ministry and Priesthood, adapted to the globalizing context and the challenges these forces pose for the Church. Complementing this is Edward Schillebeeckx writing on the development of ministry and calling for the ecclesial recognition of pastoral teams in Ministry.\textsuperscript{41}

Give Vatican II a Chance\textsuperscript{42} by Aloysius Pieris, is a collection of provocative essays written over a period of time on understanding the “crisis” generated by the Second Vatican Council, the call to renewal, the relationship between the center and periphery, and retracing the emergence of structures in the early Church. Against the temptation of traditionalism and fundamentalism, he pleads to give the Council a chance to continue unfolding in the life of the Church. This study of the structures and ministries in the early Church is reinforced by Raymond Brown’s two books on scripture and

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\textsuperscript{40} Kenan Osborne, Orders and Ministry: Leadership in the World Church (Maryknoll, New York: Orbis Books, 2006).
\textsuperscript{42} Aloysius Pieris, Give Vatican II a Chance: Yes to Incessant Renewal No to Reform of the Reforms (Sri Lanka: Tulana Research Center, 2010).

Peter Hai expounds the FABC Theology of the Laity in a series of articles extracted from his doctoral thesis in the *East Asian Pastoral Review*. He reflects on the historical context of laity and features of the FABC’s Theology of the Laity, and an evaluation and reflection on the future of this theology. It is probably the most up-to-date study in this field. A great indebtedness is owed to Hai for this comprehensive treatment of FABC’s work and use of his materials.

*Lay Ministries in the Mission and Ministry of the Church of Asia* by Petrus Handoko looks at the understanding of laity and lay ministries in the mission of the Church of Asia as found in the documents of FABC. He emphasizes the messianic mission of the Church of Asia and provides some critique of various concepts.

The writings of Joseph Ratzinger in “The Ecclesial Movements,” provide the understanding on the emergence and role of ecclesial movements in the history of the Church, and how they continue to be relevant and linked to apostolic succession.

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Peter Senge is a well renowned author and consultant on the theory and practice of Systems Thinking, which provides the undergirding theory of this thesis. Two of his books referred here are *The Fifth Discipline* and *Rethinking the Future*.48

*IFF Asia Report 2009-2012*,49 published by Fondacio Asia, provides necessary information on the formation program as well as findings of the post-formation evaluation. Some additional data are drawn from IFF Asia’s unpublished materials such as the documentation on *Dialogue with Local Churches and Sending Organizations, 2009*,50 and *Annual Reports* to partners and directors. In addition, the *Fondacio Statutes*,51 the *Document on Spirituality and Charter of Institutes*52 are also referenced.

**Chapter Summary**

This first chapter has presented the general introduction of the emerging socio-political and socio-economic landscapes of Asia where the role of laity needs to find its footing. It shows that there is a need for leadership and for mature Christians to play a role in the Church’s evangelizing mission. And in the ecclesial landscape, there is a need for the Church to move towards a more meaningful recognition of laity, helping the lay


50 Institute of Formation, Fondacio Asia (IFF Asia), *Dialogue with Local Churches and Sending Organizations*. Documentation of meeting organized by the Institute with sending organizations (local Churches), St. Vincent School of Theology, and invited participants at Quezon City, Philippines, 2009 (unpublished).


people to claim their identity and fulfill their vocation as baptized through education and
formation.