

James H. Kroeger, MM

Radio Veritas Asia

Radio Veritas Asia (RVA) has reached a significant milestone; it is now celebrating its golden anniversary of service to Asia's peoples (1969-2019). Various titles can capture the identity and mission of RVA; it is appropriately described as "the missionary of Asia," "the Asian voice of Christianity" or "the Catholic voice of Asia." RVA's own vision statement describes this apostolic initiative as the "voice of the Church that is realizing the mission of crossing borders and sharing Christ through Gospel values to the people of Asia."

Voice of Popes

Two "saint-popes" (Paul VI and John Paul II) have spoken of the pivotal mission of RVA and also have personally visited its center in Manila. Paul VI sent the following message on April 11, 1969 when RVA was inaugurated; he spoke of Radio Veritas as "giving to the truth a new and powerful voice in a continental area of increasing significance in world affairs."

On November 29, 1970, during his Manila stop on his ten-day Asian journey, Pope Paul VI visited the RVA premises. He personally offered his "encouragement for an ever more enlightened, generous and fruitful activity.... It is our fervent wish that through it [RVA] there may reach you the echo of the teachings of Christ, to raise your hearts to the God of love and truth. We hope that it will knit among you, its listeners, bonds of evangelical love ... [so that] you may together undertake the construction of a more just and more united society."

Twenty-five years later, on January 14, 1995, during special ceremonies marking its silver jubilee, Pope John Paul II praised RVA for its quarter-century service and challenged it to find an "ever more effective way of sustaining and informing the faith of those who already believe in Christ, and of proclaiming him and his Kingdom to those who do not yet know him." For RVA, "the future can only mean greater commitment to evangelization as the Third Millennium of the Redemption approaches."

Furthermore, John Paul II said that this "voice of Asian Christianity" is a "powerful expression of the co-responsibility of the bishops of Asia" in

fulfilling the "Church's missionary mandate." Through its diversity of programs, RVA "contributes to the human development of countless individuals and families." It also provides consolation and strength "to the Church of Silence and to all those Christians who have suffered and continue to suffer for their fidelity" to their faith and to the Church.

In his apostolic exhortation, *Ecclesia in Asia* (1999), John Paul II said: "I echo the Synod Fathers' commendation of *Radio Veritas Asia*, the only continent-wide radio station for the Church in Asia, for its almost thirty years of evangelization through broadcasting. Efforts must be made to strengthen this excellent instrument of mission ... [as] an important means of sustaining and nurturing a sense of Catholic identity and of spreading knowledge of Catholic moral principles" (EA 48).

Milestones of RVA History

Pope Pius XII first had the idea of a Church radio station for Asians to address the needs of Catholics in the region. On December 10, 1958 (still in the pre-Vatican II era) at a meeting in Manila, the Conference of Southeast Asian Bishops decided to establish, operate, and maintain a Catholic radio station to serve as an instrument of evangelization and information. Radio Veritas studios were formally inaugurated on April 11, 1969. RVA relied on shortwave radio technology to reach audiences in the Asia-Pacific, the Indian subcontinent, and mainland China; it also reached many Filipino overseas workers in the Middle East. Financial support from the German Church aid agencies *Missio* and *Misereor* as well as the Vatican's Congregation for the Evangelization of Peoples has been substantial; this is complemented with assistance from various local Churches throughout Asia.

In addition to the encouragement given by Popes Paul VI and John Paul II (already noted), other significant milestones in the history of RVA include its brave coverage of the assassination of former senator Benigno "Ninoy" Aquino on August 21, 1983; RVA was the only radio station

to broadcast the slain senator's funeral procession in Manila. Then, on February 22, 1986, through Radio Veritas Cardinal Sin called the Filipino populace to show support and converge on EDSA; this resulted in the four-day bloodless revolution now known as the "People Power Revolution." In the same year, RVA received the prestigious Ramon Magsaysay Award (popularly called "Asia's Nobel Peace Prize") for "its role in using truth to depose an oppressive and corrupt regime and restore Filipino faith in the electoral process." In 1991, Radio Veritas separated into two entities: the "Asia-wide" branch and the "domestic" segment that serves the Philippine public; both continue their effective operations today.

Vision of Missionary Evangelization

An official statement of RVA for its silver anniversary captures well its vision of evangelization: "Radio Veritas Asia seeks to reaffirm and strengthen its commitment in proclaiming to peoples and cultures the message of the Gospel." It strives to be "a stimulus of authentic human values and an instrument of salvation in Jesus Christ." One may validly assert that RVA fulfills Pope Paul VI's succinct description of evangelization: "evangelizing means bringing the Good News into all strata of humanity, and through its influence transforming humanity from within and making it new" (*Evangelii Nuntiandi* 18). Another expression of this same vision is to see mission as "integral evangelization," addressing all dimensions of the human person and society, including the political, economic, cultural, educational, social, and religious aspects of a truly human life.

Thus, as RVA broadcasts in about twenty languages, it provides a wide diversity of programs, fostering the growth of Asia's local Churches and their role in dialogue with religions and cultures. It also airs news and programs on health, community development, science and technology, women and youth empowerment, family issues, and historical perspectives. Readings from the sacred texts of Buddhism, Christianity, Hinduism, and Islam are broadcast. In addition, there are programs on Christian liturgy and catechesis, as well as features about significant Asian personalities who have contributed to integral human development and liberation in the Asian context. Truly, RVA seeks to bring Gospel values into all dimensions of life of Asia's diverse peoples.

RVA also seeks to integrate the paradigm of evangelization promoted by the Federation of Asian Bishops' Conferences (FABC). The FABC vision of the Asian Church's mission is captured in its "triple dialogue" formula, initially enunciated in the First FABC Plenary Assembly in 1974. It envisions genuinely Asian local Churches "in continuous, humble and loving dialogue with the living traditions, the cultures, the religions—in brief, with all the life-realities of the people." In FABC V (1990) the vision was reaffirmed: "Mission will mean a dialogue with Asia's poor, with its local cultures, and with other religious traditions." FABC X (2012) noted: "We thank the Lord for a challenging vision of Church in Asia." In a word, this *operative paradigm* of holistic evangelization [the "triple dialogue" approach] is the *interpretive key* to understanding and appreciating the dynamic local Churches in Asia today. And, RVA has consistently fostered this "Asian" vision of being Church in today's contemporary societies.

Conclusion

As RVA observes its golden jubilee of service to the vast Asian continent, our hearts overflow with gratitude for what has been accomplished. Yet, all realize that missionary evangelization is never a static reality. Change, renewal, transformation, and discernment are constants in the Church's evangelizing mission; one never finishes reading the "signs of the times" and interpreting them in the light of the Gospel (cf. GS 4). Certainly, with the Lord's abundant graciousness, RVA's mission in the coming fifty years will prove most fruitful—as has the past half century. Following Pope Francis' insights, one can add one new title to describe RVA: "Asia's Dynamic, Joyful Missionary-Disciple"!



Fr. James Kroeger with Cardinal Tagle

SEDOS RESIDENTIAL SEMINAR

ONLINE (from Rome)

3 May - 7 May 2021

Living Green Mission

TIME	MONDAY, 3/5/2021 Opening Session
03:00 - 03:15	Opening Prayer
03:15 - 03:30	Opening Address: Fr. Tesfaye T. Gebresilasie, MCCJ, SEDOS President (EN)
03:30 - 04:15	OPENING SPEECH: Fr. Joshtram Kureethadam, SDB <i>The Ten Green Commandments of Laudato Si' (EN)</i> <i>Dicastery for Integral Human Development, Rome</i>
04:15 - 04:30	<i>Coffee / Tea Break (video)</i>
04:30 - 05:15	Special Talk: Jane Mellett <i>The Call to Ecological Conversion (EN)</i> Laudato Si' Officer, <i>Trocaire</i> , Maynooth, Ireland
TIME	TUESDAY, 4/5/2021 Education Aspect
09:00 - 09:15	Prayer in Portuguese / Orientation – Moderator: Kathleen Storms
09:15 - 10:45	Fr. Petero Matairatu, SM <i>Practices and Principles of Tutu Rural Training Project (EN)</i> Director of <i>Marist Rural Training Centre</i> , Taveuni Island, Fiji
10:45 - 11:15	<i>Coffee / Tea Break</i>
11:15 - 12:45	Sr. Helen Grealy, RC, and Fr. Brian Grogan, SJ <i>Loving Sister Earth (EN)</i> <i>Loving Sister Earth Movement</i> , Ireland
15:00 - 16.00	Discussion in small groups (optional)