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Press Release: Meeting of the Chairpersons of Doctrinal Commissions of the Episcopal Conferences of Asia with a Delegation from the Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith in Bangkok, Thailand (15-18 January 2019)

From 15 to 18 January 2019, a meeting was held between a Delegation from the Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith and the Chairpersons of Doctrinal Commissions, or the Representatives, of the Asian Bishops' Conferences at Baan Phu Waan Pastoral Centre, Bangkok, Thailand. The meeting was jointly prepared by the Office of Theological Concerns of the Federation of Asian Bishops' Conferences (FABC) and the Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith.

The Roman Delegation consisted of Cardinal Luis F. Ladaria, SJ, Prefect of the Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith, Archbishop J. Augustine Di Noia, OP, Adjunct Secretary, Fr. Hermann Geissler, FSO, Head of the Doctrinal Section, and Fathers Walter Oxley and John Peter Jeromiyas, Officials. On the first day, Archbishop Paul Tschang In-Nam, the Apostolic Nuncio of the Holy See in Thailand, accompanied by Fr. Dario Pavis, Secretary of the Apostolic Nunciature, also attended the meeting.

The Asian Bishops' Conferences were represented by Cardinal Oswald Gracias, the outgoing President of the FABC, Cardinal Charles Bo, the incoming President of the FABC, Cardinal Luis Antonio Tagle, President of the FABC Office of Theological Concerns, Cardinal Louis-Marie Ling Mangkhanekhoun (Laos Cambodia) and Cardinal Orlando Quevedo (Philippines); as well as by Archbishops Peter Liu Chen-Chung (Taiwan), Hyginus Kim Hee-joong (Korea) and Felix Machado (India); and by Bishops Bejoy D'Cruze, OMI (Bangladesh), Benny Travas (Pakistan), John Baptist Lee Keh-mien (Taiwan), Joseph Abella (Japan), Adrianus Sunarko, OFM (Indonesia), Valence Mendis (Sri Lanka), John Do Van Ngan (Vietnam), Virgilio do Carmo da Silva, SDB (Timor Leste), Joseph Chusak Sirisut (Thailand), Felix Lian Khen Thang (Myanmar) and Joseph Guo Jincai (China); and Fathers William LaRousse (Assistant Secretary General of the FABC), Clarence Devadass (Executive Secretary of the FABC Office of Theological Concerns), Paul Nguyen Thanh Sang (Vietnam), Antony Mariyan Pereira (Taiwan) and Zhang Qiu Lin (China).

On the first day the Delegation from the Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith met some Bishops and Theologians of the FABC Office of Theological Concerns for a fraternal and open colloquium aimed at fostering mutual understanding and cooperation. Archbishop Di Noia offered a presentation on the recent document of the Congregation, *Placuit Deo*, on Some Aspects of Christian Salvation, followed by a discussion on its implications

in Asia. Later the Theologians had an opportunity to bring to the attention of the Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith the different contexts and challenges which they encounter in their service to the Church.

The following two days were dedicated to the conversations with the Representatives of the various Bishops' Conferences. After Cardinal Gracias had given a cordial welcome, Cardinal Bo read the Message of His Holiness Pope Francis, in which the Holy Father highlighted that the goal of the gathering is "to reaffirm our common responsibility for the unity and integrity of the Catholic Faith and to explore new ways and methods to bear witness to the Gospel amid the challenges" of the vast continent of Asia that is marked by religious, linguistic and cultural diversity. Drawing attention to the call addressed to the whole Church in the Apostolic Exhortation *Evangelii Gaudium* "to go forth", the Successor of Peter stated that he is pleased "that the Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith is actively supporting the important work of the Episcopal Conferences and especially of their Doctrinal Commissions, as they assist and foster the effective and fraternal cooperation among the Pastors of the Church in Asia".

The different sessions were introduced with reflections on the following topics: *The Role and Functions of Doctrinal Commissions in the Service of the Catholic Faith* (by Cardinal Ladaria); *The Meaning of Christian Salvation in the Midst of New Challenges in Asia* (by Cardinal Tagle and Archbishop Di Noia); *Living the Christian Faith in an Interreligious and Multicultural Context* (Archbishop Machado); *Evangelization in the Context of Asia* (Bishop Lee and Bishop Guo).

The interventions elucidated practical means to make the Gospel message more relevant and effective in this vast continent expressing their determination to work together in fraternal collaboration for the common mission of the Church. The interactions and discussions contributed to clarifying questions and exploring creative ways to give witness to the Gospel of Jesus Christ. On each day the Eucharistic con-celebration was an opportunity to pray together for the Church in Asia, and an informal gathering in the evening helped to strengthen ties of friendship. An atmosphere of cordiality and openness prevailed among the participants throughout the meeting. All the participants were grateful for the wonderful hospitality offered at the Baan Phu Waan Pastoral Centre in Bangkok.

The meeting provided a precious opportunity to enhance the collaboration between the Doctrinal Commissions of the Episcopal Conferences of Asia, the FABC Office of Theological Concerns and the Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith. It also served to promote the cooperation among the Doctrinal Commissions of this great continent, which continues to be enriched by the invaluable contribution of the Catholic Faith.
