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BUREAU DE PRESSE DU SAINT-SIEGE  
PRESSEAMT DES HEILIGEN STUHLS

# BOLLETTINO

SALA STAMPA DELLA SANTA SEDE

N. 190126b

Saturday 26.01.2019

## **Press Release: Theological Symposium on Christian Faith in a Multicultural Context organized by the Catholic Bishops' Conference of India and the Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith (Bangalore, India, January 21-24, 2019)**

A Theological Symposium on Christian Faith in a Multicultural Context was held at St. John's Medical College Campus in Bangalore, India from January 21 to 24, 2019. The Symposium, organized by the Catholic Bishops' Conference of India (CBCI) and the Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith (CDF), was attended by 44 bishops and theologians from India.

The CDF Delegation consisted of Cardinal Luis F. Ladaria Ferrer, S.J., prefect of the Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith, Archbishop J. Augustine Di Noia, O.P, adjunct secretary, and some officials of the same dicastery. Archbishop Giambattista Diquattro, the apostolic nuncio of the Holy See in India, also took part in the meeting.

The participants from the Indian Episcopate, representing the three ritual Churches of the country, were led by Cardinal Oswald Gracias, president of the CBCI, Cardinal Moran Mor Baselios Cleemis, president of the Holy Episcopal Synod of the Syro-Malankara Church, Cardinal Mar George Alencherry, president of the Holy Episcopal Synod of the Syro-Malabar Church, and Archbishop Thomas Mar Koorilos, chairman of the CBCI Office for Doctrine. The meeting was attended by another 18 archbishops and bishops, and 22 theologians, priests, sisters and laymen, representing the three *sui iuris* Churches in India.

The idea for an annual meeting between bishops and theologians in India was initiated in 1996. Later, during the gathering of a delegation of Indian Bishops with representatives of various dicasteries of the Holy See in Rome, a proposal was made for the participation of the CDF in such a meeting. Responding affirmatively to this invitation, the congregation participated in a Theological Colloquium with bishops and theologians from January 16 to 22, 2011.

Eight years later, this Symposium was organized to foster mutual understanding and fraternal cooperation. The Indian subcontinent is indeed a touchstone for the peaceful coexistence of peoples with considerable linguistic, religious and cultural diversities. Its great natural and human resources make it one of the most promising countries in the world. Having received the Gospel from the very beginning of Christianity, Catholics in India

have made outstanding contributions to the development of the country, especially through numerous educational institutions, healthcare centres, social welfare organizations and charitable works.

At the beginning of the gathering, the President of the CBCI offered a warm welcome to all the participants and recalled the purpose of the Symposium. The Prefect of the CDF then delivered an inaugural address on the specific vocation of the theologian for the promotion of the Catholic faith.

Taking into account the multicultural context of India, the topics chosen for the five sessions of the theological symposium addressed some of the challenges facing the Church today: *The Meaning of Christian Salvation in a Pluralistic World: Reflections on the Message of Placuit Deo* (Archbishop J. Augustine Di Noia, O.P.); *Sent, Built on Rock, Ablaze: Harmonizing Hierarchical and Charismatic Gifts in a Little Indian Flock* (Prof. Francis Gonsalves, S.J.; Response by Prof. Thomas Kollampampil, CMI); *Multiculturalism in India and its Challenges* (Bishop Thomas Dabre; Response by Bishop Barnabas Mar Jacob, O.I.C.); *Evangelization and Interreligious Interactions. Biblical and Patristic Reflections* (Prof. Thomas Manjaly; Response by Prof. Sr. Metti Amirtham); *Living the Christian Faith in an Inter-religious and Multi-cultural Context* (Archbishop Felix Machado).

The presentations were followed by lively discussions oriented towards a deeper understanding of the themes, taking into account the specific situation of the Church in India and the challenges to which bishops and theologians need to respond. A spirit of open dialogue, mutual respect, and cordial exchange of thoughts and experiences characterized the discussions and enabled all to have a greater appreciation of the issues involved. Different questions regarding the specific role and work of the CDF., and its cooperation with the Episcopal Conferences and their Doctrinal Commissions, were clarified. The Masses, celebrated according to the different Rites, gave joyful expression to the specific nature of the unity and diversity of the Church in India. Informal exchanges during the meals, and in the evenings, offered possibilities to deepen personal contacts and friendships. The participants were thankful for the wonderful hospitality offered by the St. John's Medical College Campus in Bangalore.

The Theological Symposium was an enriching experience for all participants who, as Pastors and Theologians, are called to work together for the common mission of the Church. The meeting concluded on a note of hope that the People of God, united among themselves under the care of their Bishops, continue to contribute to the common good of this great country.

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