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## COMMUNIQUE ON THE COLLOQUIUM BETWEEN REPRESENTATIVES OF THE HOLY SEE, THE CATHOLIC BISHOPS' CONFERENCE OF INDIA [CBCI] AND THEOLOGIAN OF INDIA (JANUARY 16-22, 2011)

COMMUNIQUE ON THE COLLOQUIUM BETWEEN REPRESENTATIVES OF THE HOLY SEE, THE CATHOLIC BISHOPS' CONFERENCE OF INDIA [CBCI] AND THEOLOGIAN OF INDIA (JANUARY 16-22, 2011) **COOPERATORES VERITATIS - SEEKING THE TRUTH TOGETHER** From January 16 – 22, 2011, a Colloquium was held at St. John's National Academy of Health Sciences in Bangalore, India, in which a delegation from the Holy See met with twenty-eight members of the Bishops' Conference of India and twenty-six theologians from various parts of the country. The delegation of the Holy See was led by His Eminence William Cardinal Levada, Prefect of the Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith, assisted by His Excellency Archbishop Luis Ladaria, S.I., the Secretary of the Congregation, Mons. Charles Scicluna, Promoter of Justice, and three officials. The members of the Indian Episcopate who participated in the Colloquium represented the three Ritual *sui iuris* Churches in India, led by His Eminence Oswald Cardinal Gracias, the Archbishop of Bombay and President of the Catholic Bishops Conference of India (CBCI). In addition, His Eminence Telesphore Cardinal Toppo, Archbishop of Ranchi and President of the Latin Rite Conference of Catholic Bishops of India (CCBI), His Beatitude Moran Mor Baselios Cleemis, Major Archbishop-Catholicos and President of the Holy Episcopal Synod of the Syro-Malankara Catholic Church, His Excellency Bishop George Punnakottil of the Syro-Malabar Church, Bishop of Kothamangalam and Vice-President of the CBCI, and His Excellency Bishop Joseph Kallarangatt, Bishop of Palai and Chairman of the Doctrinal Commission of the CBCI were among those participating. The theologians who took part were also drawn from the three *sui iuris* Churches. The Colloquium was the fruit of the longstanding cooperation between the Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith and the Catholic Bishops Conference of India and was prepared and organized by His Excellency Bishop Thomas Dabre of Poona, who had earlier served as the Chairman of the Doctrinal Commission of the CBCI, with the expert assistance of Father Dominic Veliath, S.D.B., Secretary of the Doctrinal Commission of the CBCI and also member of the International Theological Commission. The Apostolic Nuncio to India, His Grace Archbishop Salvatore Pennacchio also took part in the proceedings. The annual colloquia between Bishops and theologians in India began in 1996. In a subsequent meeting held in Rome that same year between a number of the Bishops of India and representatives of various Dicasteries of the Holy See, the hope was expressed that, at some point in the future, the Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith might take part in such a gathering. The Colloquium in Bangalore was the realization of that hope, and was specifically intended as a forum for addressing some of the theological issues facing the Catholic Church in India in a collaborative atmosphere of dialogue and discussion. As is well known, in the great nation of India there are more than a billion human beings, of whom

approximately 2.3% are Christians. The Catholic Church in India had its origins in the witness of Saint Thomas the Apostle and received new impetus with the missionary activity of Saint Francis Xavier. Today, Catholics in India, though few in number, make a widely appreciated contribution to the welfare of the country, above all through numerous educational institutions, healthcare facilities, social welfare initiatives and charitable works. It was the specific and unique character of the Catholic Church in India which provided the context for the presentations and discussions during the Colloquium in Bangalore. In the first part of the Colloquium, theologians addressed questions such as the specific role of the theologian in the Church, theological methodology in the East and in the West, inculturation, Jesus Christ as the one Saviour of all people, the relationship between the Church of Christ and the other religions, the Christian concept of authentic human liberation, the role of the faith community (the "*sensus fidelium*"), and the distinctiveness of Christian prayer and spirituality. Each theological presentation was followed by lively and sustained dialogue in which all the participants - theologians, Bishops, and representatives of the Holy See – freely offered their contributions to a deeper understanding of the issues at hand. The discussions sought to take account of the Catholic presence in the distinctively Indian context, while at the same time emphasizing the inestimable gift of the universality of the Catholic faith, which is always to be communicated in its integrity and authenticity. The singular importance of the role of the theologian in the Church was stressed, as well as the need, especially when one seeks to elaborate a contextualized theology, to build on a solid theological foundation, always faithful to the teaching authority of the Church. The second part of the Colloquium was organized for Bishops and the representatives of the Holy See. These days were devoted to various questions relating to the specific role and responsibility of Bishops in the Church, such as the Bishop as teacher of the faith, the functioning of the Doctrinal Commission of the Bishops' Conference, the formation of future priests and members of religious congregations, and the correct adjudication of the more serious canonical delicts. The week-long Colloquium was an experience of intense work and fruitful dialogue in which many questions were clarified and valuable initiatives proposed. It is hoped that the fruits of the Colloquium, already felt by the participants in the shared experience of liturgical prayer according to the three ritual expressions of the Catholic Church in India, will continue to benefit not only the Church, but also the wider society in India for years to come.

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