

Help Families Discover Christ: Cardinal Alencherry

Santosh Digal

COLOMBO, Sri Lanka: The Church in Asia needs to help families discover Christ in themselves and others, says Cardinal George Alencherry, head of the Syro-Malabar Church, one of the two Oriental rites in India.

“We all need to find Christ in ourselves and to help others to discover Him in the lives of our families and peoples – that is evangelization,” the cardinal told the participants of the Federation of Asian Bishops’ Conferences (FABC).

The 71-year-old prelate led the Mass in the Syro-Malabar rite on December 2, the fourth day of the FABC plenary now underway in Negombo, some 40 km north of the Sri Lankan capital of Colombo.

The Mass in English included hymns in Syriac, Hindi, Tamil and Sinhala, besides Malayalam. Cardinal Alencherry pronounced the consecration prayers of the Mass in Syriac language.

This was the second time the FABC organized a Mass in a rite different from Latin, said Cardinal Alencherry, who is the Major Archbishop of Ernakulam-Angamaly in Kerala, southern India. He also heads the Syro-Malabar Catholic Bishops’ Council.

Most of nearly 145 FABC participants witnessed the Syro-Malabar Mass for the first time.

The assembly is addressing the theme, “The Asian Catholic Family: Domestic Church of the Poor on a Mission of Mercy.”

Referring to the theme, Cardinal Alencherry said the bishops should discover Christ in their lives and help families to do the same as they explore ways to make the mission of mercy by becoming a Church of the poor.

“Our mission of mercy for families also could desirably be a discovery of Christ both for ourselves and for our families. It is a common mission of the Church - of bishops, priests, men and women of consecrated life and of the families themselves—a common task,” he added.

The prelate noted that Asian families that exist in a multi-religious environment get influenced by other beliefs. Asian religions, he said, strive to discover God’s presence whereas Christians believe Christ as God’s unique gift to the world.

“God is mercy and Jesus Christ manifested the face of God’s mercy to us. In the past, the pastors to some extent, seem to have forgotten this fact and emphasized only the demands of the laws and regulations in the Church, forgetting the mercy of God he wanted to give through the observance of the Law,” the cardinal added.

The cardinal admitted people, including Christians, fail to understand fully the presence of Christ in the whole world as St Francis of Assisi discovered.

“Let us also make hundreds and thousands of our families encounter this Jesus in their lives and receive His blessings. Let all this work for the good of the church and the process of peace reconciliation in this country,” the cardinal added.

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