

Instill Passion for Jesus in Families: Cardinal Filoni

By Santosh Digal

Colombo: A top Vatican official has urged Catholic bishops of Asia to instill a passion for Jesus in Catholic families.

“I encourage you to be close to the Asian Catholic families in order to accompany them in their mission as evangelizers, missionaries and teachers of faith,” Cardinal Fernando Filoni, Prefect of the Congregation for the Evangelization of Peoples, said in a message to the Asian bishops’ eleventh plenary assembly.

The Vatican official urged the Federation of Asian Bishops’ Conferences (FABC) to empower families by creating appropriate faith programs that will take them to the fore-front of evangelization in the region.

“Instill in them a passion for Jesus, a passion for His people and a passion for His mission,” said message that FABC president Cardinal Oswald Gracias read out on December 3, the penultimate day of plenary assembly that began on November 28.

More than 140 bishops, FABC officials and funding partners addressed the theme, “The Asian Catholic Family: Domestic Church of the Poor on a Mission of Mercy.” The bishops met at Negombo, a coastal town near the Sri Lankan capital of Colombo.

Cardinal Filoni says Catholic families in Asia are in a better position to shape a merciful Church in the region where widespread poverty provides the Church an occasion to give preferential option for the poor while proclaiming the gospel.

“Surely, the Asian Catholic family has an advantage to evangelize people from the perspective of the poor and hence create an inculturated Asian Catholic community from the same context,” said the 70-year-old Italian cardinal.

He also pointed out that although Asia has rich culture, traditions and religions, its widespread poverty causes problems for the people.

The Vatican official commended the Church in Asia for sending “a great number of missionaries” to preach the Gospel in many parts of the world. However, the cardinal wants the Asian bishops to preach in their region’s fast-tracking society.

Cardinal Filoni praised the bishops for choosing the theme concerning family, which he says is the natural garden for nurturing vocations. “It is there, in the family that they bloom, grow and reach maturation for the good of the Church and society at large,” he reiterated.

Family remains the most complete and rich school of humanity where people experience love, fidelity, respect and defense of life. The Catholic family’s arduous task is to transmit and guard Catholic values and virtues to young ones through education in order to build and promote the good of the individual persons and community at large, Cardinal Filoni stressed.

The Congregation for the Evangelization of Peoples was founded in Rome in 1622 by Pope Gregory XV. It is the Vatican department responsible for missionary work and related activities.

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[Santosh Digal of Matters India (www.mattersindia.com) prepared this report for FABC Office of Social Communication.]