

Recognition of Church on periphery: Cardinal D'Rozario

By T S Thomas and Jose Kavi

Negombo, Sri Lanka: Bangladesh's first cardinal says his elevation is Pope Francis' way of recognizing a Church on the periphery.

"This new status has humbled me because I know that I am not worthy to receive it," Cardinal Patrick D'Rozario, Archbishop of Dhaka, told the media team of the Federation of Asian Bishops' Conferences (FABC) on December 3.

On October 9, Pope Francis made the 73-year-old prelate as a cardinal along with 16 others.

"I had no clue on this earlier. I came to know about it when my people started greeting me, and television channels and journalists started calling me," he narrated the events of the day of announcement.

The new cardinal recalled that it was the feast of Rosary and he was getting ready for Mass when altar boys congratulated him. "When I asked them why, they said they heard the news that I was made a cardinal."

He said he had found it difficult to accept the honor initially. "However, reflecting on Mother Mary's response to Angel Gabriel, I too bowed to God's will," the Cardinal said.

He said the prayer convinced him to "rejoice with my people" as he sees his cardinalship as a gift from the pope to Bangladesh and its people who belong to many religions.

"It's recognition by the Holy Father for the people of Bangladesh and Asia and I humbly surrender to the will of God," he added.

The cardinal shared his sentiments while attending FABC's seventh plenary assembly at Negombo, near Colombo.

He said it was his fifth FABC plenary since he began attending it in 1990, the year Saint Pope John Paul II made him the bishop of Rajshahi.

He said he could notice a sea of change from the first assembly to the fifth one.

"In 1990, I could notice only a section of bishops, mostly from south Asia and the Philippines actively participating in the plenary and the rest were mere spectators. Now everyone shares their views," he explained.

He also observed greater cordiality and understanding among prelates from different countries. He said the barriers between Asia's chopstick culture and hand culture have crumbled as prelates seem greater interests to know about their counterparts from other regions.

“The Asian Church is experiencing greater unity, communion and togetherness with a clear focus now,” said the FABC veteran.

Born on October 1, 1943, Cardinal D’Rozario is a member of the Congregation of Holy Cross, a missionary religious society. He was ordained a priest in 1972.

One of the first tasks of the new cardinal would be to receive Pope Francis who plans to visit Bangladesh along with India in 2017.

He said the pope told him that he would come to Bangladesh on November 19 when he was made a cardinal in Rome.

The new cardinal commended Pope Francis’ love for Anawin by recognizing those living on the periphery.

Anawim is a Hebrew word from the Old Testament which describes the "poor ones" who remained faithful to God in times of difficulty.

Catholics form only 0.2 percent of Bangladesh’s 153 million people.

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