

## **Vulnerability Should Not Deter Preaching Gospel: Cardinal Tagle** By Santosh Digal

Colombo, Sri Lanka: An Asian Church leader has urged bishops of the region to follow the example of St Francis Xavier to proclaim the Gospel to the poor throughout the world.

“Missionary situations may change time to time and place to place, but what remains the same and constant is the proclamation of the Gospel,” said Cardinal Luis Antonio G. Tagle, Archbishop of Manila while leading the Mass on Dec 3, the feast of Jesuit Saint Francis Xavier, for the participants of the plenary assembly of the Federation of Asian Bishops’ Conferences (FABC).

St Francis Xavier, one of the founding members of the Society of Jesus, preached Christianity in several Asian countries in the 16<sup>th</sup> century. He is reputed to have converted more people than anyone else has done since Saint Paul. He preached mostly to poor of Asia inside thatched huts turned as chapels on coastal areas.



Cardinal Tagle, who offered the Mass inside a makeshift chapel of a seashore hotel, reminded the 140 bishops, FABC officials and funding partners that mission is their identity.

The 59-year-old cardinal reminded the bishops that everyone is vulnerable and that God has called them to preach in their vulnerability. “It is God who reigns and rules over us,” he added.

Therefore a vulnerable missionary becomes a merciful missionary to all the families in Asia and beyond amid people’s limitations and imperfections, the cardinal said.

He also said what is most inevitable in the Church’s mission is dialogue and not conquest. Francis Xavier came to Asia along with colonial powers, but charted his own mission of mercy away from the ruling class.

“Vulnerability of poor people should not be an occasion for exploitation and manipulation, which is often the case,” the cardinal said and added God’s mercy is manifested most in human vulnerability.

“We, cardinals, bishops, priests, religious and lay people, intensify our constant dialogue with the poor and all, in which we express our solidarity, understanding and love,” said Cardinal Tagle, chairman of FABC office of Theological Concerns and the president of Caritas Internationalis.

“In humble dialogue with the poor and the needy, there is hope, mercy, and sharing,” he added.

The November 28-December 4 FABC meet addressed the theme, “The Asian Catholic Family: Domestic Church of the Poor on a Mission of Mercy.”

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