

“Youngest Cardinal” Enlivens FABC Meet

Cardinal Fernandez is among the three new cardinals of Asia

Negombo, Sri Lanka: An enlivening presence at the eleventh plenary assembly of the Federation of Asian Bishops Conference (FABC) in Colombo, Sri Lanka, was a prelate from Malaysia.

Cardinal Anthony Soter Fernandez, Archbishop Emeritus of Kuala Lumpur, was introduced to the assembly as the “youngest” cardinal of Asia.

The 84-year-old prelate is among the three new cardinals who attended the November 28-December 4 FABC meet.

Pope Francis appointed him along with other 16 others on November 19.

He was first the bishop of Penang (1978-1983) and later became archbishop of Kuala Lumpur from 1983 to 2003.

“I am neither excited, nor unhappy about my appointment as cardinal, and I just accept it as the will of God,” said the cardinal, when the FABC Media team approached him for his comments on his new status in the Church.

Other new cardinals from Asia-Oceania are Archbishop John Ribat of Papua New Guinea and Archbishop Patrick D’Rozario of Bangladesh.

“I don’t plan to take up any greater tasks, but just continue with I have been doing so far,” said the senior cardinal, who wants to specially concentrate on aged and ailing priests in his country.

Referring to the FABC meet, the cardinal said he is particularly happy about participating in this “very important” meeting with a very significant theme on Catholic Family.

Cardinal Fenandez will complete 50 years as a priest on December 10. He was ordained for Penang diocese in 1966 and then became its bishop.

Malaysia is a nation of over 28 million people. The large majority are Muslims (60%), and Christians constitute 2.6 million (9.2%), out of whom, over one million are Catholics (3.7%).

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[TS Thomas of Matters (www.mattersindia.com) prepared this report for FABC Office of Social Communication.]