



## **ASIA - "Asian Christians, the icon of God's love": the challenge of evangelization in the Assembly of the FABC**

Xan Loc (Agenzia Fides) - For Christians who live in a diverse and complex context such as Asia, the challenges are "to enter into people's lives; remove barriers, build bridges of dialogue; live the core values of faith, stand by those who suffer injustice, to present Christ as the living Word." And, looking at the internal life of the Church, we must "believe in the Word of God, make our work a sign of the transcendent, to resist the internal secularization". Is what is stated in an exclusive note sent to Fides Agency by His Exc. Mgr. Thomas Menampampil, head of the Office for Evangelization in the "Federation of Asian Bishops' Conferences" (FABC), presenting the 10th Plenary Assembly of the Federation which opened today at the Pastoral Centre of Xuan Loc, in Vietnam. The central theme of the Assembly is "40 years of the FABC: responding to the challenges of Asia." The Assembly, which meets every four years, is attended by over 100 delegates, elected by the 19 episcopal conferences of the FABC, and the Special Envoy of the Holy Father, Cardinal Archbishop Emeritus of Manila, Gaudencio Rosales.

Archbishop Menampampil notes that "it is essential in Asia to preach the message through symbols: Christians must become icons of God's love for the people of Asia."

Clearing the field of all misunderstandings, the Archbishop said that "evangelization is not a form of campaigning, a commercial, ideological propaganda. It is not a spiritual boxing match. It is not a threat to the cultural heritage or the identity and traditions of the peoples of Asia. Christ comes to uplift, heal and strengthen, not to damage or destroy everything that is of human value."

"Evangelization - he explains - is the central mission of the Church. It is the activity that keeps the Christian community alive and makes it effective in serving the Lord and humanity.

To evangelize means delivering the goodness of God to every person in human society. It is a privilege to be asked to contribute to this work."

"The first thing to do, if we want to work seriously for evangelization - Archbishop Menampampil continues - is to enter into people's lives. We cannot organize this work at a distance. We may be able to maintain a powerful organizational machine, but it would be a lifeless structure".

In Asia, the Archbishop notes, "we do not live in a secular world, but in a society that takes religion seriously." To be effective, therefore, "we must insist on earth 'God-is-alive'. We have to fight not against impiety, but against the abuse of religion for political reasons. Our task is not to plant religious faith in the hearts of men (it is already there), but to present Jesus Christ as the Way, the Truth and the Life. To be able to do this, we need to be people of deep faith. Conversation, depth in relationships, in depth understanding of the Word of God, depth in the relationship with God are needed. " (PA) (Agenzia Fides 10/12/2012)