



VATICAN - " In this Congress, we place Christ at the center": Cardinal Filoni opened the American Missionary Congress (CAM4-Comla 9) in Maracaibo

Maracaibo (Agenzia Fides) - "In this Congress, we place Christ at the center and, as our Master, we intend to listen to His voice, to welcome His message, allowing it to enter our hearts and to prepare us for the mission. This is exactly the theme chosen for this Congress: to make ourselves "Missionary Disciples of Jesus Christ from America in a Secularized and Multicultural World". This is what Cardinal Fernando Filoni, Prefect of the Congregation for the Evangelization of peoples, special Envoy of the Holy Father, said to more than three thousand participants on the occasion of the solemns celebration of the opening of the Fourth American Missionary Congress (CAM 4) and IX Latin American Missionary Congress (COMLA IX), gathered in the great square in front of the Basilica of Our Lady of Chiquinquira in Maracaibo which took place yesterday afternoon, November 26.

Citing the Letter of Designation, Cardinal Filoni highlighted that in this way "the Pope not only wanted to be present among you, but he also asked me to assure you of his affection and to bring you his cordial greetings". In the same Letter, Pope Francis wrote, in reference to the Conciliar Document Ad Gentes, that the Church's true and profound nature is missionary. It is for this very reason that she continues to dedicate herself with great enthusiasm even today to her mission, so that the Gospel might be announced to all peoples, following along the same path traced by the Lord".

In his homily, Cardinal Filoni focused on the Liturgy of the Word today, which stresses the design of God, conceived before time began. "Jesus, the Long-Awaited One, appears as the light of the nations, the light of the one who believes, the light of faith", he stressed, then continued citing the Gospel passage of Mary's visit to St. Elizabeth, which highlights "the centrality of Christ in the history of salvation and that, as a consequence, becomes the center of our preaching, which is actually the preaching of the Church".

"After more than five centuries of Evangelization on this Continent, we need to reflect upon how our people, who have also received and welcomed the faith, live and believe. We need to ask ourselves what predominates in the pastoral approach in our Churches: whether it is more focused upon conservation or upon proclamation; whether it concentrates only upon our American or Latin-American realities, or rather, is open to the world; whether at times its closeness to the poor appears in words, but in reality is quite distanced from them, not of the mind that they have anything to offer us. We must ask ourselves if ours is a pastoral approach that is attentive to putting Christ in the first place and at the center of everything, or instead, as Pope Francis says, is one that is self-referential, politically charged, ideological, without heart, and formalized".

Concluding his homily, Cardinal Filoni urged to put " the school of Jesus the Master" to prepare ourselves for the mission, "we ask Christ to make Himself our brother, our light, and our good". (SL) (Agenzia Fides 27/11/2013)

> LINKS

The full text of the Cardinal's homily, in Italian: http://www.fides.org/ita/attachments/view/file/C.Fil_CAM4_Om_IT.doc:

The full text of the Cardinal's homily, in English: http://www.fides.org/eng/attachments/view/file/C.Fil_CAM4_Om_INGL.doc:

The full text of the Cardinal's homily, in Spanish: http://www.fides.org/spa/attachments/view/file/C.Fil_CAM4_Om_SPA.doc: