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Bangkok Hosts Interreligious Meeting

Group Looks at Social Challenges That Need Cooperation Between Creeds

ROME, JAN. 24, 2012 ([Zenit.org](http://www.zenit.org)).- Religious leaders from regions of Asia and the West met in Thailand this month to consider the various social challenges that can be dealt with through religious dialogue and cooperation between different creeds.

Fifty experts and scholars of Asian cultures and religions, including Buddhism, Christianity, Confucianism, Hinduism, Islam, Jainism and Taoism – from Cambodia, China, Hong Kong, India, the Lebanon, Macao, the Philippines, Taiwan, Thailand, Turkey, Vietnam and the United States -- met Jan. 11-13, as reported last Friday by L'Osservatore Romano.

The event was coordinated by Archbishop Thomas Menamparampil, the retired archbishop Guwahati, India, who is in charge of the office for evangelization of the Federation of Asian Episcopal Conferences.

The group discussed violence, the economic crisis, corruption, conflicts between cultures, environmental damage, the destruction of cultures and values, as well as good government.

One of the purposes of the encounter was to demonstrate the rich religious and cultural diversity of the different countries. As well, it was intended to create positive attitudes toward other religious traditions and to highlight the goodness, truth and beauty present in them.

Archbishop Menamparampil was pleased with the numbers present at the meeting and pointed out that this type of event has as its objective "to seek visions and inspirations from the culture and tradition represented by each scholar."

"With progressive world globalization, there is an infinity of possibilities for dialogue between culture, civilization and faith; it is an occasion to hear the ideas of each one and to learn from others' point of view," he added.

Other topics included reflections on Asia's intrinsic values, ecology in Taoism, the challenge of ethical action in the Chinese context, and Confucian ethics in modern society.

Asked if this cultural exchange can help to alleviate tensions in some parts of Asia, where Christians, as well as ethnic and religious minorities, are victims of attacks, the archbishop said that

"it could be a valuable contribution, but the profound cause of the tensions must be studied and the motives of dissatisfaction."

Archbishop Menamparampil added that "at first it was very difficult to communicate to the people the project of bringing together persons of different cultures and traditions to talk among themselves, but once the idea was clarified, many have supported it enthusiastically."

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