

Vatican prefect calls on religious to recommit themselves

The path to love is through Christ, Cardinal de Aviz tells symposium



The head of the Vatican congregation of consecrated life has called on religious to undergo a holistic recommitment to the people they serve in order to better serve the Church in Asia.

"We cannot evangelize using weapons or politics. We have to live in such a way that we love the people we serve with a passion by making Christ the center of our lives. It is not just enough to be charitable to others," said Cardinal Joao Braz de Aviz, prefect of the Congregation for Institutes of Consecrated Life and Societies of Apostolic Life.

He was speaking to about 90 religious priests, brothers, nuns and bishops from across Asia while inaugurating the Federation of Asian Bishops' Conferences five-day symposium on consecrated life on July 21 at the Redemptorist Center in Pattaya, Thailand. "Consecrated Life at the Service of New Evangelization" was the theme of that meeting.

The Franciscan cardinal also called on religious and those in other forms of consecrated lives to make God — not money or power — the center of their lives.

"We have to change our understanding and relationship to power and money. We are all called to discipleship to use in a good way the goods that we have," he said.

"Put God — not oneself — in the center of our lives in order to go to the peripheries of the world (to be of service)," he told those gathered.

"We are not better than others in the church," he said, adding that "evangelical radicality is not specific to consecrated life but to everyone (because) there are no first- and second-class Christians."

“We have to live in such a way that we can live with passion not with the history and culture of our individual congregation but with Christ as our center,” he said.

Those in consecrated lives should also “walk a further step in our passion to live as brothers and sisters and not as superiors and subjects,” he added.

This was possible if religious “discover God as love. This does not need to be invented because God is love,” he said.

Cardinal de Aviz also called for a holistic and mature understanding of their vocation.

“We must talk about our problems, our challenges, our difficulties,” he said.

Those in consecrated life should “not be prohibited to talk of sexuality. We have to assimilate the man and woman in our lives.”

He called on men and women to respect each other. “Men alone are not humankind. Women alone are not humankind. We need both because we are created in the image of God’s love,” the cardinal said.

He accepted though that women were often sidelined in the church but that Pope Francis “wants women to enter where decisions are taken.”

Pope Francis declared that 2015 would be an international Year of Consecrated Life. It began Nov. 30 on the first Sunday of Advent and is to close on the World Day of Consecrated Life next Feb. 2

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