

## Unification of churches stressed at Indian symposium

Discussion on Reformation examines results of schism and how common bonds can heal the division



November 3, 2017

Church leaders at an ecumenical symposium in Kolkata, eastern India, have stressed the need for Christian unification as they studied Protestant Reformation, which challenged the 16th century Catholic Church to amend its ways.

“This symposium on unification of the Churches is very significant. What unites us in Christ is greater than what divides us,” said Jesuit Father Felix Raj, principal of Kolkata’s [St. Xavier’s College](#) at the symposium called “Revisiting the Reformation.”

The program marked the first anniversary of the Joint Declaration for the Joint Commemoration of the 500th anniversary of the Protestant Reformation, which Pope Francis and Bishop Munib Yunan, President of the [Lutheran World Federation](#), signed on Oct. 13, 2016 in Lund, in Sweden.

Father John Romus, former dean of the Morning Star College major seminary in Barrackpore highlighted how the Reformation helped the Catholic Church re-examine itself.

It also gave space for “cultural pluralism” allowing many denominational churches to exist alongside the Catholic Church. Lutheran theology also taught the need for Christians to stand up for human rights, Father Romus said.

Reverend Sunil Michael Caleb, Principal of Bishop’s College in Kolkata, taking the Protestant perspective, said the Reformation was “a necessary tragedy.” It was necessary to protest against rampant corruption in the Church but the resulting split was a tragedy, he said.

“While the Reformation was a historical event in Europe, its unfortunate result has been the exporting of these divisions and denominations to countries like India,” Reverend Caleb said. Archbishop Thomas D’Souza of Calcutta urged participants to learn from what happened 500 years ago. “Our task is to move forward believing in God, while commemorating Martin Luther’s 95 Theses of protest,” he said.

UCA News