



CATHOLIC BISHOPS CONFERENCE OF INDIA (CBCI)

CBCI Centre, 1 Ashok Place, Near Gole Dakkhana, New Delhi - 110 001 India

Tel: +91 11 2334 4470; Mob: +91 9871147838.

Web. www.cbci.in ; Email: secretarygeneral@cbci.in

Message from President CBCI : A Tribute to Cardinal Toppo

Cardinal Telesphore Toppo: A Shepherd of the Tribal Church (1939-2023)

Cardinal Telesphore Toppo was indeed truly a shepherd of the tribal people. He was the first and only Cardinal of the Tribal Communities of Asia. He was a visionary who dreamt and spent his whole life for the welfare of his people. Walking with them, sharing their sorrows and burdens, he was truly a priest, a Bishop, and a Cardinal of the Tribal people. Today, as we lay him to rest in the abode of the heavenly father, the Church in India recalls with gratitude the munificent blessings that God had showered on the Archdiocese of Ranchi and the whole of Chotanagpur region, through the person of Cardinal Telesphore.

He was a man of extraordinary gifts. He was a Leader of the Church in India. Twice he was elected as the President of the Conference of Catholic Bishops of India (CCBI) and once he was elected as the President of the Catholic Bishops' Conference of India (CBCI). Cardinal Telesphore also served the Universal Church as President Delegate of the 11th Ordinary General Assembly of the Synod of Bishops in October 2005 where the theme was, "The Eucharist: Source and Summit of the Life and Mission of the Church". He was a member of the Council of Cardinals for the study of organizational and Economic Affairs of the Holy See. Pope Francis appointed him as his Special Envoy to the XI Plenary Assembly of the Federation of Asian Bishops' Conferences (FABC) in 2016.

He was a priest for more than 54 years; a Bishop for about 45 years and he was a Cardinal for 20 years. Today as we bid adieu to this great leader of the Church in North India, we remember the innumerable qualities that he possessed; He was a person who had all the qualities of the Shepherd. He was easily approachable; a very generous, affectionate and compassionate person to the poor and the marginalized and he became the voice of his people. Like St. Paul, Cardinal too lived his life saying, "I have become all things to all people so that by all possible means I might save some. I do all this for the sake of the gospel, that I may share in its blessings." (1 Cor. 9:22-23)

We have many good memories with him as we worked with him on many occasions. I wish very much that I was present in person but because I have to be part of the Synod in Rome I send this message of heartfelt condolences to the Archbishop of Ranchi, Most



CATHOLIC BISHOPS CONFERENCE OF INDIA (CBCI)

CBCI Centre, 1 Ashok Place, Near Gole Dakhana, New Delhi - 110 001 India

Tel: +91 11 2334 4470; Mob: +91 9871147838.

Web. www.cbci.in ; Email: secretarygeneral@cbci.in

Reverend Felix Toppo and to my fellow Bishops, and the Priests and Brothers and Sisters of various Religious Congregations and to all the lay faithful of the Ranchi diocese! Please accept our condolences from all the bishops of the Catholic Bishops' Conference of India.

I had personally informed our Holy Father, Pope Francis about the demise of Cardinal Toppo and the Holy Father cherished his good memories about him and he asked me to convey his condolences and prayers to all of you! Dear Archbishop Felix Toppo, at this moment we wish that the Archdiocese of Ranchi may grow from strength to strength guided by the lofty ideals and plans set by your predecessor Cardinal Telesphore Toppo.

The Church in India mourns for him today and entrusts him to the Lord who has called him to the heavenly abode he has prepared. Cardinal Telesphore 'has fought the good fight, has finished the race, and has kept the faith.' (2 Timothy 4:7).

May Cardinal Telesphore rest in Peace! May his spirit continue to guide the church in India!

Thank you!

Rome
5 October 2023

Archbishop Andrews Thazhath
President, CBCI