Congress of Asian Theologians’ Ninth Summit begins in Indonesia

The Ninth Congress of Asian Theologians (CATS-IX) was inaugurated in a solemn ceremony held at the Gereja Bethel Indonesia (GBI) Medan Plaza auditorium in Medan, Indonesia's North Sumatra province.

More than 120 theologians from across Asia are participating in the CATS-IX. The participants took part in the opening worship service together with the local hosts, and witnessed traditional Indonesian worship that included welcoming cultural performances.


Rev. Purba said, “Creation works cannot be separated from salvation works. The order and arrangement of the world must be a space of life for all creations, and a meeting space for God Himself. God’s self-revelation, the design of
creation, and the salvation of humans are all united. Humans cannot know the Creator without knowing His creations.”

Archbishop Dr Willem TP Simarmata, Moderator of the CCA, opened CATS-IX with a call for a theological resistance to discrimination. He appealed to restore and renew the creation and overcome human’s dominance over earth. Emphasizing the need for participatory and inclusive ways of living together, Dr Simarmata said, “We must intensify our commitment to justice and peace for the healing of creation, in order to address Asia’s contemporary challenges.”

Dr Mathews George Chunakara, General Secretary of CCA who delivered the introductory and welcome address, pertinently asked, “Considering the enormous human resources, intellectual capacities, potentials, opportunities for mutual interactions and exchanges that are available within Asia, how successful have we been in presenting an authentic Asian theology?”

He elaborated upon the theme of CATS-IX, “Reconciliation, Renewal, and Restoration: Divine Indicative and Human Imperative”, by stating that several issues in Asia concerning land, life, human relations, security, peace, and justice must be articulated on the basis of biblical and theological perceptions and convictions from an Asian perspective. The indicative-imperative model, he said, provided the “scope for innovative theological thinking rooted in Asia’s pluralistic contexts, which could then facilitate an articulation of the theme with authentic Asian theological emphasis”.

The CCA General Secretary further added, “The discussions of CATS-IX prelude two major events that the CCA will organize in the near future with almost similar themes. The theme of the forthcoming Asian Ecumenical Women’s Assembly (AEWA) in November 2019 will be ‘Arise, Be Awake to Reconcile, Renew and Restore the Creation’, and the theme of the CCA General Assembly will be, ‘God, Renew Us in Your Spirit and Restore the Creation’.”
Dr Henriette Hutabarat Lebang, Chairperson of the Communion of Churches in Indonesia (PGI) greeted the participants said, “CATS is a tremendous opportunity for young and old theologians ponder together in a rapidly changing Asia”.

Fr Clarence Devadass of the Federation of Asian Catholic Bishops’ Conferences (FABC), said that CATS was just one of the many collaborative efforts between the CCA and the FABC. The opening of CATS-IX was timely and auspicious, according to him, as it coincided with the Feast of Transfiguration. He hoped that CATS too would be a catalyst in transfiguring the work of theologians in Asia.

Rev. Bambang Jonan, Senior Pastor Emeritus of the GBI/ Medan Plaza, the host of CATS-IX addressed the participants, and said “With the competitive aspects in all walks of life, the relationship as religious people within the framework of the Great Commandment of Christ and as people created by God, we have the responsibility to conserve the earth, God’s creation.”

Four thematic presentations based on the main theme and sub-themes, seminar sessions, workshops, Bible studies and inter-faith dialogue sessions are part of the agenda of the four days’ sessions.