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TAJIKISTAN: SECULAR NEWS DEAF ON CHRISTIAN PERSECUTION IN INDIA

Secular media like Euronews and all Russian channels did not mention any word about the recent Christian persecution in India, Father Exequiel Ayala, parish priest of St. Joseph parish in Dushanbe, said. The Argentine Incarnate Word missionary and his parishioners were only able to follow the events through Catholic news agencies. Fr. Carlos Avila, head of the sui iuris (self-governing) mission in Tajikistan says: "I saw plenty of reporting about the terrorist attack on a hotel in neighboring Pakistan, but nothing about murders of Christians in India," referring to the recent bombing of the Marriott Hotel in Islamabad. It gives him the impression that Christian lives are less important than others in modern society, or that a kind of "Christophobia" is at work. The small Catholic community in Tajikistan, with 250 registered members, is praying for the violence in India. Fr. Ayala offered special prayers during Sunday Masses on Sept. 28 and Oct. 5 at his parish. (UCANEWS)

KOREA: RELIGIONS SHOWCASED AT FESTIVAL

The Korean Council of Religious Leaders (KCRL) organized the 12th Korean Religious Culture Festival on October 25 at the open square of the National Museum of Korea in Seoul. The festival aimed to exhibit harmony and cooperation among religions in South Korea while helping young people understand the values in religions. KCRL comprises leaders of Buddhism, Catholicism, Confucianism, Protestantism, Korean traditional religions, and Chondogyo and Won Buddhism, both founded in Korea. KCRL was established in 1997. Since then, it has organized the interreligious fair annually to promote harmony and cooperation among religions. (UCANEWS)

HONGKONG: NEW BOOK LAUNCHED ABOUT CEMETERIES

The Centre for Catholic Studies of the Chinese University of Hong Kong (CUHK) launched a new book entitled "Michael and the Dragon - 19th century Catholic cemeteries and Hong Kong" on August 23. The book's editor, Fr. Louis Ha Ke-loon, associate director of the centre, said the book is the product of research into the 19th century graves at St. Michael's Catholic cemetery, Happy Valley, and will be available to schools for use in general education subjects. Fr. Ha expressed hope that the book, which had an initial print run of 25,000 copies, would lead people to reflect on the question of life and death. (SE)

CHINA: UPDATED GUIDE FOR VISITORS WHO WISH TO ATTEND CHURCH

The seventh edition of the "Guide to the Catholic Church in China" is now available with an enlarged listing of churches, websites, and photographs, including those of new and restored churches. The 620-page guide book is useful for Catholics visiting or working in China who wish to learn more about the churches there. The guide book is authored by now Paris-based Fr. Jean Charbonnier. It was first published in 1986. The last edition was published in 2004. (CN)

ECUMENICAL BODY URGES INDIAN GOVERNMENT TO PROTECT CHRISTIANS

The Asian body of the World Association for Christian Communication (AR-WACC) in an appeal has urged all secular and democratic forces in India to provide immediate protection to Christians, their churches and related institutions, Asia Pacific Ecumenical News (APEN) reported on October 9. The appeal signed by AR-WACC President, Rev. Dr. Samuel Meshack, urged the Indian federal government and state governments to express their solidarity against groups spreading communal hatred and fundamentalism. Christians in the eastern Indian state of Orissa have been under attack allegedly by Hindu communal groups since August 24, 2009. Violence against Christians also erupted during Christmas 2007 leaving more than 100 churches and Christian homes destroyed. (APEN)

PHILIPPINES: BRITISH COMEDY FUSS ALL HUFF AND PUFF SAYS PRIEST

A good reaction to racism is self-examination, Fr Edwin Corros says in the wake of complains about the British television's comedy release "Harry and Paul" where Filipino domestic workers are portrayed as sex objects. Racism is inherent in each country, the executive secretary of the Episcopal Commission on Migrants and Itinerant People said. There are plenty of examples of Filipinos indulging in racist behavior, but every person must struggle to identify it in their own person and to overcome it, the priest explained. The outcry about the British comedy is petty and prompted by a sense of insecurity. What is more important is for Filipinos to prove that this kind of stereotyping of them is not true, Fr. Corros said. (SE)

VIETNAM: DISABLED PEOPLE BRING JOY TO FLOOD-AFFECTED CHILDREN

People with disabilities from Ho Chi Minh city helped organize a Mid-autumn Festival celebration on Sept 13 for some 850 poor children of the severely flooded Minh Quan village in Yen Bai province. The children ate fruit and sweets, listened to festival songs, and received gifts and clothes. The aim was to bring joy and ease the suffering of families and young people left by the flooding in August, which destroyed crops and properties. (CN)

PHILIPPINES: COUPLES FOR CHRIST GOES HI-TECH

The first-ever teleconferencing of the Couples for Christ Cooperatives Federation (CCF) was held on Sept 2 at the Couples for Christ (CFC) office, bringing together members of the body's executive committee from different parts of the country. CFC is the Pro-Life, Pro-Family and Pro-Poor organization in the Philippines aimed at "building the Church of the home and building the Church of the poor." Its ministries include Kids for Christ, Youth for Christ and Singles for Christ. (CBCP MONITOR)

ASIA NEEDS NEW WAYS OF COMMUNICATING THE GOSPEL, BISHOPS TOLD SYNOD

Participants of the Synod of Bishops on the Word of God October 5-26 in Rome suggested improved ways of communicating God's Word in today's world. From Asia, Archbishop Thomas Menampampil of Guwahati, India, in his continental report mentioned the need for strengthening theological formation in Asia implying the use of new expressions in order to communicate the true meaning of God's word to people of different cultural backgrounds. Salesian Bishop Prathan Sridarunsil of Surat Thani, Thailand, cited efforts of the Thai Church to use modern technology in developing basic ecclesial communities, conducting Bible studies in formation houses, and in all its catechism work. (SE/L'OR)

From the Message of the XII Ordinary General Assembly of the Synod of Bishops on the Word of God

"... Communication now casts a network that envelops the entire globe and the call of Christ gains a new meaning: 'What I say to you in the dark, tell in the daylight, what you hear in whispers, proclaim from the housetops.' (Mt 10:27) Of course, the sacred Word must have its primary transparency and diffusion through the printed text, with translations made according to the multiplicity of languages on our planet. But the voice of the divine Word must echo even through the radio, the information highway of the internet, the channels of 'on line' virtual circulation, CDs, DVDs, podcasts, etc. It must appear on all television and movie screens, in the press, and in cultural and social events.

This new communication, in relationship to the traditional one, has created its own specific and expressive grammar and, therefore, makes it necessary not only to be technically prepared, but also culturally for this task. In an age dominated by images put forward, in particular, by hegemonic means of communication such as television, the privileged model of Christ is still meaningful and evocative today. He would turn to the sign, the story, the example, the daily experience, the parable: 'He told them many things in parables... indeed, he would never speak to them except in parables.' (Mt 13:3, 34)

In proclaiming the Kingdom of God, Jesus never spoke over the heads of the people with a vague, abstract or ethereal language. Rather, he would conquer them by starting there where their feet were placed, in order to lead them, through daily events, to the revelation of the Kingdom of Heaven..." (no. 12, 24 October 2008)

SINGAPORE: GUIDE FOR FAMILIES WITH MAIDS

The Archdiocesan Commission for the Pastoral Care of Migrants and Itinerant People and the Caritas Singapore Community Council (CSCC) published a booklet entitled "Dignity in the Home" for the World Day for Migrants and Refugees, celebrated in Singapore on Sept 28. The booklet contains a message from Archbishop Nicholas Chia who urges all families that employ a foreign domestic helper to read this guide. In his message, the prelate said: "May our Catholic families be a light to others in practicing justice and love." There are more than 170,000 foreign domestic helpers working in Singapore. This means that one out of every six families employs a foreign domestic helper - one of the world's highest ratios, says Archbishop Chia. (CN)

SRI LANKA: GOV'T RECOGNIZES CONTRIBUTIONS OF CHRISTIAN WRITERS

Christian writers received awards for the contributions to Sri Lankan Christian literature at the first National Christian Literary Festival October 6 in Colombo. The religious affairs ministry's Department of Christian Religious Affairs and the Catholic and Protestant Churches organized the event, which drew some 2,000 people including Catholic and Protestant Church leaders, and Buddhist monks. Among those who received the award were Italian Jesuit Fr. Vito Perniola for his nine-volume "History of the Catholic Church in Sri Lanka. Fr. Nicolapillai Maria Saveri, founder and director of the Centre for Performing Arts, was cited for promoting Christian arts and culture. Hector Welgampola was cited for his 50 years service in Catholic media and his "Asian Church Glossary and Stylebook" published by the FABC-OSC in August. (UCANEWS/ FABC-OSC)

PHILIPPINES: 'SILSILAH' FOUNDER LAUNCHES COMMEMORATIVE BOOK

PIME Father Sebastiano D'Ambra has written a book titled "Call to a Dream" to mark the 25th anniversary of his founding the "Silsilah Dialogue Movement" in May 2009. The priest started the movement in the 1970s amidst the rising Muslim-Christian conflict in Mindanao, the country's largest island in the south. The vision is "life-in-dialogue for all Muslims, Christians and peoples of other living faiths (for) harmony, solidarity and peace." The book chronicles how the priest started the movement, how it flourished, and his understanding of dialogue not simply as a strategy, but as a personal "orientation" arising from one's relationship with God. Silsilah's headquarters is in Zamboanga City, Mindanao. Its Dialogue Institute offers regular week- and month-long courses on Dialogue. (SB)

MALAYSIA: YOUTH CONFERENCE ON SEX

A team from Family Life Society (FLS) conducted a two-day "Good News about Sex" for about 80 youth at the Church of St. Xavier, Kuala Lumpur. The dynamics were aided by the book "Theology of the Body for Teens" published by Ascension Press. Through the use of movie clips, practical exercises, journaling activities but also Mass and Eucharistic Adoration young Malaysians were presented a vision of what human sexuality is all about, linking it to their own deepest aspirations for happiness and God's Plan of Love. Some participants said their view of sex has changed after the conference. (CN)

VIETNAM: GOV'T REMOVES CROSS AND STATUE FROM CHURCH COMPOUND

A security officer, alleged to be working on government orders, removed the iron cross at the site of the former Vatican embassy in Hanoi on Sept 25. Local church sources say that along with the cross, the Pieta replica and candles were placed by dozens of unknown persons into three boxes and loaded them onto a truck. Government authorities have nearly completed a tree park being constructed at the site of the former embassy, despite protests by the Vietnamese Catholic community. Catholics were caught by surprise when construction of the park started on Sept 19. Archbishop Joseph Ngo Quang Kiet of Hanoi said the building of the former nunciature had also been used as a discotheque and business office despite appeals for the return of the facilities. Earlier this year, the government promised to return the former nunciature to the local church. (SE)