

THE MISSION IMPERATIVE: BISHOP ALENCHERRY

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The mission imperative 'You are the light of the World' is made explicit again in the words of Jesus, "Let your light shine before others, so that they may see the good things you do and praise your Father in heaven". This was emphasized by Bishop George Alencherry at the Eucharist celebrated by Cardinal Varkey Vithayathil in the Syro-Malabar rite during the Prabhu Yesu Mahotsav at the St. Pius College, Goregaon in Mumbai on Friday.

"The evangelist Mathew gives three images to explain the missionary role of those who follow Jesus. They are, to be the salt, light and a city built on a hill. As salt they have to sanctify, purify and preserve the world in its relationship to God. As light they have to illuminate the world. Like a city built on a hill the Church as a whole must be seen as a community that lives out visibly the relationships proclaimed in the beatitudes," explained Bishop Alencherry, while speaking on the theme of the day – You Are The Light of the World.

In the New Testament, Jesus has made his followers the light of the world. It is in him, in the strength of his word and love, that we have to enlighten the world, through direct and indirect preaching, through catechesis and education services, through art, architecture, literature, through the media, through health and pro-life services, through development works, through ministries to the poor, the marginalized, and the prisoners, the bishop stressed.

He said, light makes us see things as they are. When the light of God is in us, when the light of God manifested in Jesus is in us, we see everything in the light of God, according to the values of the Gospel and give witness to them. This is our mission, our work of evangelization. The disciples of Christ as individuals or as the Church do not impose anything on others, needless to say that they do not force others to get them converted to Christian faith.

The true Christian, he said, preaches and professes what he believes namely the truth of the Gospel that has already converted him to God's love. It is the same truth of the Gospel, to which the Christian bears witness by word and love that penetrates the hearts of people and causes the change or conversion of their vision of life. This is God's work, not of man, and no one can hold it back. The Spirit blows where it wills, Bishop Alencherry said to the gathering of 1500 delegates from all over India, on the third day of the Indian Mission Congress.

"The more we are seized by Christ and anointed by His Spirit, the more we will be impelled to give witness to his word and love, to be committed to his mission, to be bearers of his light to others. The less we are so, the less will be our commitment to his

mission. From this lack of depth in faith in Christ and love of his church comes also the lack of zeal for the mission of Christ, nay even doubts about it and questions against its relevance," he said.

In conclusion, Bishop Alencherry said, "The true disciple of Christ radiates his light by his witness of prayer too. He is a man of God who attracts men to God. Let us pray that the traditional prayer of our great country *tamasoma jyothir gamaya* may get its fulfilling complementarily in the light of Christ.