

The 11th CFM Continental Asia Conference was held in Colombo, Sri Lanka on November 23-26, 2018. It was a great success thanks to the close partnership between the clergy and the CFM leadership of Sri Lanka in promoting the family and life apostolate in Sri Lanka. The conference theme: “Towards Realization of Amoris Laetitia and Gaudete et Exsultate in Asia” was apt because it reflects the current realities of marriages and families in the world today.

We congratulate the CFMers of Sri Lanka - its members and leadership headed by their president-couple Janaka and Rashika Silva; Rev. Fr. Claude Nonis, Director-Archdiocesan Family Apostolate of Colombo and Coordinator-National Family Apostolate; and Rev. Fr. Sunil Kumara Peiris, CFM Chaplain of Sri Lanka for their commitment and dedication to the CFM mission. Their planning, enthusiasm and participation was outstanding — from the pickup at the airport to the Inaugural Mass & opening ceremony to the Conference sessions, fellowship night, tour of Colombo, and the send-off. All moments to remember and cherish.

The countries that were represented were: India, Philippines, Singapore, Sri Lanka & Thailand. Malaysia is in the process of starting a CFM group, so to get a better understanding of the CFM they were invited by the Continental Asia Presidents, Wilma & Epifano Cua, to attend the Sri Lanka Conference.

CONFERENCE PROGRAM

Friday, November 23, 2018

Eucharistic celebration – at St Peter & Paul Church. Main celebrant Most Rev Dr Malcolm Cardinal Ranjith, Archbishop of Colombo

Opening ceremony at the Main Ballroom of Hotel Saninro – procession with each country President couple carrying their CFM banner & flag, lighting of the lamp, formal welcome & introduction of country delegates, keynote address by the Archbishop of Colombo, release of Souvenir, cultural program & dinner. Our talented CFM India group wowed the audience with its lively rendition of the ‘lungi dance’ & ‘India meri hai’!

Saturday, November 24, 2018

Morning praise followed by breakfast. Each country President couple presented their Report, and finally the Continental Asia Presidents presented the Report of their 3-year tenure.

After the coffee break we were divided into groups for the group discussions on the Challenges and Issues to the Family in Today’s Society. Each group was given questions touching different issues: Individualism a threat to family life, Divorce & separation, Alcoholism & the use of drugs, Homosexuality, living together & adultery.

Each group leader presented a summary of the points their members had brought up.

Before lunch, Bishop Gerado Alminaza, Continental Asia chaplain celebrated the Holy Eucharist.

After lunch, Rev Fr Daya Shelton Welikadaarachchi, Episcopal Vicar, spoke about “Theological and biblical underpinnings in *Amoris Laetitia* (AL) which stand in good stead in the family ministry of Christian family” (AL chapters 1&3).

Next was an extremely moving panel presentation on “The sacramental nature of Holy Matrimony – inner response given to Divine Vocation” by one couple from each country, each one sharing in a personal way how Marriage is a Vocation.

After the tea break there was sharing by a couple, Captain Roshan Perera & Priyanka, on the “Physical Aspect of Marriage” (AL chapter 5).

Before dinner, the Continental Asia executive committee meeting was held at which Anita & Lukose Vallatharai were selected as the President couple for 2019-22.

During dinner there was lively impromptu singing and dancing with all the delegates participating.

Sunday, November 25, 2018

The day started with the Holy Eucharist celebrated by Rev Fr Claude Nonis. After breakfast Mr B.C.I. Perera, Retd Deputy Director of Education, spoke on ‘The parental role in the education of children in the family’ (AL chapter 7).

After the coffee break, Rev Fr Wimalsiri Jayasooriya, Dean of Theology, National Seminary, spoke about ‘Propositions in *Amoris Laetitia* for family catechesis and ministry manifest a strategic plan at the grass root level (chapters 4,6,9).

Before lunch there was one more talk on ‘The significance of chapter 8 in our strategy and approach to hurting individuals, couples and families’ by Bishop Gerado Alminaza.

After lunch Rev Fr Claude Nonis spoke on “How Pope Francis’ new encyclical *Gaudete et Exsultate* complements *Amoris Laetitia* in one’s Christian discipleship”.

After tea, we set out on a bus tour of Colombo ending with dinner in one of the malls, enjoying local Srilankan cuisine.

Monday, November 26, 2018

During the Executive Board meeting it had been decided to elect two vice presidents in light of the fact that the Continent of Asia comprises about 48 countries and presently CFM is present only in five countries. The newly elected executive board members for 2019-22 are:

President-Couple: Lukose & Anita Vallatharai - India

Vice-President Couples:

1. Elliot & Grace Kam - Philippines
2. Michael & Lucia Sukeewat -Thailand

Continental Chaplain: Rev. Fr. Xavier Sanjivi - India

The outgoing President couple, Wilma & Epifano Cua and the President couple elect, Anita & Lukose Vallatharai said a few words. Epifano & Wilma then presented the Conference Resolutions for the next three years which were unanimously adopted and approved by the delegates of the 11th Continental Asia Conference:

1. To integrate the “call to holiness,” articulated in the beatitudes, with every faith formation activity, mindful of the signs of holiness in the world. (*Gaudate et Exsultate*).
2. To be engaged as “salt of the earth” and “light of the world,” in the mission of accompanying and integrating irregular situations with pastoral discernment and mercy, by reaching out to those who suffer from weakness.
3. To sensitize members about the transformational nature of love throughout a marriage, which is a lifetime commitment as both a sacrament and a vocation. (*Amoris Laetitia*).
4. To embark on leadership renewal / facilitators training programs in order to strengthen member Christian Family Movements in essential aspects, at national and continental levels.
5. To work towards greater expansion of the CFM/CFSM in our own countries by promoting linkages with parishes and by cooperating with the hierarchy and to take it to Asian countries where it is non-existent, cognizant and considerate of their distinctive cultures.
6. To facilitate greater expansion of the CFM/CFSM by networking with other family-oriented organizations or associations and by linking with the family and life ministry of the various dioceses and parishes of the Church.
7. To encourage more young people to join the CFM/CFSM that they may be better prepared for their vocations and receive training in ethical and effective leadership.
8. To constructively utilize social media such as websites, Twitter, Facebook, Skype and other social networking sites as tools for evangelization.

The final Eucharistic was celebrated by Rev Fr Xavier Sanjivi, the new CFM Continental Asia chaplain.

The new executive board was installed and felicitated. After lunch, there was photo taking, fond farewells were exchanged and the delegates started leaving with wonderful memories of their stay in Srilanka and the warm hospitality of all the CFM Srilanka members.