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Inaugural Welcome Address of H.E. Charles Cardinal Bo, President, FABC

## **HISTORY BECKONS; THE SPIRIT MOVES – WELCOME TO THE JUBILEE OF HOPE TO ASIAN CHURCH!**

With great joy and jubilation on behalf of the FABC I warmly welcome all my brother bishops, priests, sisters and people of God. May the blessings of the living, loving and liberating God Jesus be with us all.

We waited for this moment of grace! This Pentecostal moment! Happy Jubilee.

This is a glorious moment for the Asian Church, the FABC crossing the Golden jubilee. As the third millennium marches along, history beckons and the Spirit moves: together we say: Onward Asian Church! This is the moment for Asia. The Joy of Jubilee may call us to make this century a call to synodality, call to be good news to Asia and the world.

These are moments of Grace and Gratitude. First of all, gratitude to our graceful host Cardinal FRANCIS XAVIER KRIENGSAK KOVITHAVANIJ and the Thai Church. Let showers of blessings be upon all those who spent days and nights planning and preparing for this event. We feel so blessed to be here.

As the spiritual panorama unfolds in front of us, we are treated to a glittering presence of diverse and colorful people. We thank the Lord for the vibrant diversity of the great continent of Asia, the cradle of great religions, home of great cultures. Welcome to every culture, every language, every

country. Let us join together to make this moment, Asia's moment in the Church's history. All plans and hopes find their convergence today.

Every diocese has been preparing for this jubilee in a synodal way for the last few years. I warmly thank all the bishops, religious and priests and the people of God for this participation in communion.

At this jubilee I wish to echo the call of Saint John Paul II whose spirit hovers over our gathering. Participating in the Asian Synod, 1999, the prophetic Pope proclaimed:

The Jubilee is an occasion for proclaiming that "The Savior of the world was born in Asia" (*Apostolic Exhortation Ecclesia in Asia, released by Pope John Paul II on November 6, 1996*). Yes. We accept that challenge today. Christ, born in Asia, needs to be proclaimed the vast multitude in this biggest continent.

As we gratefully gather to thank the Lord, we are guided by the same Saint John Paul II in our Jubilee celebrations: *"To remember the past with gratitude, to live the present with enthusiasm and to look forward to the future with confidence."*

We have much to be thankful for: the Asian theological reflections, the three-fold dialogue with cultures, religions and poor, our attention to women and youth concerns, our collaboration during great challenges, our support to persecuted brothers and sisters, our contribution to health and education in many Asian countries and our ongoing collaboration across the cultures, all that made FABC a robust organization. We are grateful for the people of God in Asia, their steadfastness amidst threats, their generosity amidst challenges, their enthusiasm despite their tiny size in many Asian Countries. They are the light, seed and the yeast of the Asian Church.

When the Pope Saint John Paul calls for living the present with hope, we are reminded of the words of Pope Francis in Myanmar in an inter religious meeting: "For when we speak with one voice in affirming the timeless value of justice, peace and the fundamental dignity of each human person, we offer

a word of hope.” As the dream of Christ returning to Asia, the Asian Church is called upon to exhibit an evangelical enthusiasm for justice and peace.

The future calls for a pilgrimage of confidence. History beckons; the Spirit moves us; let us proclaim the missionary call to the Asian Church, let us make this a century of Jesus' Good News to the whole of Asia. Let us not forget this is the first continent where the Christ message was proclaimed. This is the continent where great men like Apostle Thomas, Francis Xavier and countless men and women generously offered their service in the integral evangelization ministry. Let their example spur

Let this gathering be God's outpouring of the Holy Spirit. Multiple languages, multiple cultures: let us hear the same language of God's call in the coming days. Let the Holy Spirit be the animator of our words and actions.

Our task is reflected in the theme of the Jubilee FABC 50: Journeying together as peoples of Asia “...and they went a different way.” (Mt 2:12) which aims to reflect on the “re-emerging and emerging realities and challenges of the Church in Asia.”

Like those wise men from the East, we have come here to encounter Jesus, to be inspired by the mystery of incarnation. Like those men, let the star of hope guide in different ways, but the same destination: the dream of Jesus in establishing a humanity liberated from the grip of evil and man-made disasters. Let Mary, the star of Evangelization, the mother of Magnificat, bless every moment of our presence and deliberations. May her intercession make us sing with her at the end of these celebrations: The Lord Has Done Marvels for us.

Before I conclude, on behalf of the whole of the FABC and all present here, let me thank you dear wonderful and generous people of Thailand, the land of smiles, for your magnanimity. A warm welcome to every one of you.

Let the celebrations begin, let the outpouring of the Spirit open our eyes, let our hearts be blessed with the Grace of the Trinitarian missionary zeal.