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Draw strength from spirituality, cardinal tells Indian bishops

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The new president of the Catholic Bishops' Conference of India said the church should draw strength from spirituality to engage in works of charity.

"Energy for charitable works should come from our spiritual strength," Cardinal Baselios Thottunkal of Trivandrum told a news conference Wednesday at the end of the weeklong bishops' assembly.

Quoting an incident in the life of Blessed Teresa of Kolkata, the 54-year old major archbishop of the Syro-Malankara church said when a reporter asked Blessed Teresa "what is the source of your energy," she took the reporter to the chapel and pointed to the tabernacle.

"There is need for deep spiritual renewal in the church," reiterated Thottunkal, who made the remarks in response to questions from reporters on growing spiritual conventions and other activities in the church and recommendations from the conference to address the issue.

A statement from the Catholic Bishops' Conference of India urged the bishops to be "spirit-filled men of God, giving priority to prayer and the word of God, helping our clergy and lay faithful to become aware of God's presence and activity in their lives."

"Following the example of Pope Francis, we will live a genuinely simple, humble and welcoming and outgoing life, reaching out to the all people," the conference statement said.

"We will so orient the formation of future priests and religious that they enter the ministry with an attitude of humility, ready to serve the poor and marginalized sections," it said.

Cardinal Oswald Gracias of Mumbai, outgoing conference president, said the challenge for the church is to be "the church of the poor."

Amid corruption plaguing every sphere of the society, the bishops' assembly also urged the church institutions to be "examples of transparency."

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