



APOSTOLIC NUNCIATURE
IN INDIA

STATEMENT

The Apostolic Nunciature in India wishes to state the following clarifications about the meeting of the *Dalit Christian Liberation Movement* (DCLM) with the Apostolic Nuncio, Archbishop Leopoldo Girelli, that took place at Bishop's House, Vellore, on 2 February 2022 and reported by some News Agencies.

The Apostolic Nuncio, willing to understand more the reality of the Dalit Catholic Community, has listened attentively to the grievances presented by the DCLM, stating that there is discrimination of Dalits in selecting the Ecclesiastical Hierarchy in India and the Apostolic Nuncios are held responsible for that.

Archbishop Girelli has replied that there is no discrimination in the selection of episcopal candidates and in the appointment of new Bishops. The responsibility of the Apostolic Nuncio is only to verify the priestly integrity of the candidates in order to establish their suitability for the office of Bishop, making no distinction based on ethnicity, caste, language or social status. In doing this, the Apostolic Nunciature stringently follows clear principles of the Holy See in the process of determining the Church's leadership (Canon 377-378).

In this process, the Apostolic Nunciature, aware of the contribution of the Dalit people in the Catholic Church in India, always gives consideration to Dalit candidates for episcopacy.

The Apostolic Nuncio also pointed out that the episcopal ministry in the Church is to be intended as a service to the people and not as a position of power.

With reference to the Dalit policy issued by the Catholic Bishops' Conference of India (CBCI), the Apostolic Nunciature fully supports it and recommends its implementation as it states: "Caste with its consequent effects of discrimination and 'caste mentality' has no place in Christianity" (47).

In the Catholic Church, "the mutual sense of belonging is prior to the emergence of individual groups. Each particular group becomes part of the fabric of universal communion and there discovers its own beauty" (Pope Francis, *Fratelli tutti*, n. 149).

New Delhi, 7 February 2022

