

Bishop to Hasan: Stop joking, seriously
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Terence Netto

Catholic Bishop Dr Paul Tan Chee Ing described the latest claims on alleged Christian proselytisation of Muslims by Hasan Ali as "hilarious if not for their nature which would tend to inflame the feelings of the credulous."

"I pray and hope people are not that credulous because what he says has the tendency to incite people but, frankly, on reading some of the things he imputes to so-called Christian missionaries, my first impulse is to laugh," said the head of the Catholic Church in the Melaka-Johor diocese.

"If it weren't for the tendency of some of the things he says to inflame the feelings of sections of the public, you could laugh this man to scorn," remarked the Jesuit-trained prelate.

But this is no laughing matter

However, Bishop Tan asserted that religion is too serious a matter for jokes, of the deliberate or advertent kind, which is why he is puzzled as to why Hassan is not being restrained by the authorities who are apt to clamp down on religious provocateurs.

"Here is a case where if one truly espouses moderation, one should tamp down on Hasan Ali's obvious trespasses against it," argued the bishop.

Hasan, the former Selangor state executive councillor for Islamic Affairs, had reiterated that Christian missionaries donning Muslim robes have gone into mosques to pray with Muslims in order to convert them.

Hasan, who was expelled by PAS last month for repudiating the party line on a host of issues, also claimed that 51 Muslim apostates had confided in him that they had undergone baptism and had consumed holy water.

"The short answer to these claims is that Christian missionaries cannot wear a masquerade while on mission for the faith and holy water is used in baptism and for signing Christians but never for consumption," said Bishop Tan.

"Whoever is supposedly doing these things that Hasan says Christian missionaries are doing and getting the people they convert to do them, is not of the Christian creed but a mockery of it," he asserted.

Relying on innuendos and insinuations

Bishop Tan, who is concurrently president of the Catholic Bishops' Conference of Malaysia, Singapore and Brunei, observed that Hasan's campaign against alleged Christian proselytisation of Muslims was "heavily reliant on innuendo and insinuation."

"It's very difficult to rebut the claims he makes because these are void of the substantiation of names, places and documentation, but Christian silence is not an option for that would imply either apathy or acquiescence," commented Bishop Paul Tan.

"So when Hasan propounds his tall tales we have to give them short shrift for that's what they deserve though it's getting somewhat wearisome to do so every time he sheds his nonsense," he said.

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