

***FABC Papers***

***No. 144***

**"APOSTOLIC JOURNEY OF HIS HOLINESS  
POPE FRANCIS TO SRI LANKA"  
13-15 JANUARY 2015**

**Organized by  
Catholic Bishops' Conference of Sri Lanka**

**"APOSTOLIC JOURNEY OF HIS HOLINESS  
POPE FRANCIS TO THE PHILIPPINES"  
16-19 JANUARY 2015**

**Organized by  
Catholic Bishops' Conference of the Philippines**

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**I. ARRIVAL CEREMONY AT THE INTERNATIONAL AIRPORT OF COLOMBO**

*- Address of His Holiness Pope Francis*

**13 January 2015**

*Mr. President,  
Honourable Government Authorities,  
Your Eminence,  
Your Excellencies,  
Dear Friends,*

I thank you for your warm welcome. I have looked forward to this visit to Sri Lanka and these days which we will spend together. Sri Lanka is known as the Pearl of the Indian Ocean for its natural beauty. Even more importantly, this island is known

for the warmth of its people and the rich diversity of their cultural and religious traditions.

Mr. President, I extend to you my best wishes for your new responsibilities. I greet the distinguished members of the government and civil authorities who honour us by their presence. I am especially grateful for the presence of the eminent religious leaders who play so important a role in the life of this country. And of course, I would like to express my appreciation to the faithful, the members of the choir, and the many people who helped make this visit possible. I thank you all, from the heart, for your kindness and hospitality.

My visit to Sri Lanka is primarily pastoral. As the universal pastor of the Catholic Church, I have come to meet, encourage and pray with the Catholic people of this island. A highlight of this visit will be the canonization of Blessed Joseph Vaz, whose example of Christian charity and respect for all people, regardless of ethnicity or religion, continues to inspire and teach us today. But my visit is also meant to express the Church's love and concern for all Sri Lankans, and to confirm the desire of the Catholic community to be an active participant in the life of this society.

It is a continuing tragedy in our world that so many communities are at war with themselves. The inability to reconcile differences and disagreements, whether old or new, has given rise to ethnic and religious tensions, frequently accompanied by outbreaks of violence. Sri Lanka for many years knew the horrors of civil strife, and is now seeking to consolidate peace and to heal the scars of those years. It is no easy task to overcome the bitter legacy of injustices, hostility and mistrust left by the conflict. It can only be done by overcoming evil with good (cf. *Rom* 12:21) and by cultivating those virtues which foster reconciliation, solidarity and peace. The process of healing also needs to include the pursuit of truth, not for the sake of opening old wounds, but rather as a necessary means of promoting justice, healing and unity.

Dear friends, I am convinced that the followers of the various religious traditions have an essential role to play in the delicate process of reconciliation and rebuilding which is taking place in this country. For that process to succeed, all members of society must work together; all must have a voice. All must be free to express their concerns, their needs, their aspirations and their fears. Most importantly, they must be prepared to accept one another, to respect legitimate diversities, and learn to live as one family. Whenever people listen to one another humbly and openly, their shared values and aspirations become all the more apparent. Diversity is no longer seen as a threat, but as a source of enrichment. The path to justice, reconciliation and social harmony becomes all the more clearly seen.

In this sense, the great work of rebuilding must embrace improving infrastructures and meeting material needs, but also, and even more importantly, promoting human dignity, respect for human rights, and the full inclusion of each member of society. It is my hope that Sri Lanka's political, religious and cultural leaders, by measuring their every word and action by the good and the healing it will bring, will make a lasting contribution to the material and spiritual progress of the Sri Lankan people.

Mr. President, dear friends, I thank you once again for your welcome. May these days we spend together be days of friendship, dialogue and solidarity. I invoke an abundance of God's blessings upon Sri Lanka, the Pearl of the Indian Ocean, and I pray that its beauty may shine forth in the prosperity and peace of all its people.

**II. INTERRELIGIOUS AND ECUMENICAL GATHERING,  
AT BANDARANAIKE MEMORIAL INTERNATIONAL  
CONFERENCE HALL, COLOMBO**

*- Welcome Address of Most Rev. Cletus Chandrasiri Perera,  
OSB, Bishop of Ratnapura*

*13 January 2015*

In all humility, and in deepest respect for each and every one of you, I stand before you as the Chairperson of the Organizing Committee of this event to extend a very warm and cordial welcome to all those who are present, in response to our invitation, at this Interreligious and Ecumenical Gathering, held in the context of the pilgrimage of our Holy Father Pope Francis to Sri Lanka.

On behalf of all present here, it is my greatest honor and privilege to welcome Your Holiness, the Universal Shepherd of the Roman Catholic Church into this distinguished gathering, organized in your honor.

Most Holy Father, in reality, Sri Lanka is a multi-religious society, the vast majority of the people being the adherents of Buddhism. It is a singular honor and a joy, granted to all of us to welcome Your Holiness into this Interreligious and Ecumenical Gathering this evening, to greet Your Holiness and to be greeted and blessed by Your Holiness. It is no doubt a sacred and unique event which goes down in the history of Sri Lanka, and particularly in the history of the Catholic Church.

Most Holy Father, all right-thinking people clearly observe that, within the short period of your Pontificate, you have impressed the world society and have captured the hearts of many millions of people of various religious and ethnic denominations. I dare say, you have challenged us by your unassuming non-triumphalistic, simple and humble life style, emulating the example of Jesus Christ, our loving Saviour, who “did not cling to His equality with God, but emptied Himself, taking the form of a slave, being born in human likeness” (Philippians 2, 6 and 7), and of many saints, particularly of your own patron saint, St.

Francis of Assisi. It is indeed a singular grace and an enriching experience to have Your Holiness, present with us on this historical occasion.

Secondly, I wish to extend a very respectful, and warm welcome to Their Eminences the Cardinals, present here, His Excellency the Apostolic Nuncio of Sri Lanka, Their Excellencies the Archbishops and the Bishops of the catholic and Anglican Churches, the Most Reverend Heads of the Churches of the National Christian Council of Sri Lanka, and all the Clergy, Religious and the laity, present here on this occasion.

Next I wish to extend a very respectful and warm welcome to the most Venerable Mahanayake Theros of various Nikayas, the Very Reverend Anunayake Theros, the Very Reverend Sanganayake Theros, the Very Reverend Lekaka Adhikaari Theros, the Reverend members of the Maha Sangha, the Most Reverend Nallur Adhinam, the Reverend Gurukkals the Honored Leadership of the All Ceylon Hindu Congress and the other representatives of the Hindu Religion, the Honored Leadership of All Ceylon Jammiyathul Ulama and the other representatives of Islam Religion and all the other friends and well-wishers of ours, who are present here on this occasion.

We all are indeed honored and edified by your graceful presence in response to our invitation. We thank you very sincerely for your positive response and participation in this historical and unique gathering, held in honor of our Holy Father Pope Francis in the context of his pilgrimage to Sri Lanka. May God bless you all.

*- Address of His Holiness Pope Francis*

*Dear Friends,*

I am grateful for the opportunity to take part in this meeting which brings together, among others, the four largest religious communities integral to the life of Sri Lanka: Buddhism, Hinduism, Islam and Christianity. I thank you for your presence and for your warm welcome. I also thank those who have

offered prayers and blessings, and in a particular way I express my gratitude to Bishop Cletus Chandrasiri Perera and to the Venerable Vigithasiri Niyangoda Thero for their kind words.

I have come to Sri Lanka in the footsteps of my predecessors Popes Paul VI and John Paul II to demonstrate the great love and concern which the Catholic Church has for Sri Lanka. It is a particular grace for me to visit the Catholic community here, to confirm them in their Christian faith, to pray with them and to share their joys and sufferings. It is equally a grace to be with all of you, men and women of these great religious traditions, who share with us a desire for wisdom, truth and holiness.

At the Second Vatican Council, the Catholic Church declared her deep and abiding respect for other religions. She stated that she “rejects nothing of what is true and holy in these religions. She has a high regard for their manner of life and conduct, their precepts and doctrines” (*Nostra Aetate*, 2). For my part, I wish to reaffirm the Church’s sincere respect for you, your traditions and beliefs.

It is in this spirit of respect that the Catholic Church desires to cooperate with you, and with all people of good will, in seeking the welfare of all Sri Lankans. I hope that my visit will help to encourage and deepen the various forms of interreligious and ecumenical cooperation which have been undertaken in recent years.

These praiseworthy initiatives have provided opportunities for dialogue, which is essential if we are to know, understand and respect one another. But, as experience has shown, for such dialogue and encounter to be effective, it must be grounded in a full and forthright presentation of our respective convictions. Certainly, such dialogue will accentuate how varied our beliefs, traditions and practices are. But if we are honest in presenting our convictions, we will be able to see more clearly what we hold in common. New avenues will be opened for mutual esteem, cooperation and indeed friendship.

Such positive developments in interreligious and ecumenical relations take on a particular significance and urgency in Sri Lanka. For too many years the men and women of this country have been victims of civil strife and violence. What is needed now is healing and unity, not further conflict and division. Surely the fostering of healing and unity is a noble task which is incumbent upon all who have at heart the good of the nation, and indeed the whole human family. It is my hope that interreligious and ecumenical cooperation will demonstrate that men and women do not have to forsake their identity, whether ethnic or religious, in order to live in harmony with their brothers and sisters.

How many ways there are for the followers of the different religions to carry out this service! How many are the needs that must be tended to with the healing balm of fraternal solidarity! I think in particular of the material and spiritual needs of the poor, the destitute, those who yearn for a word of consolation and hope. Here I think too of the many families who continue to mourn the loss of their loved ones.

Above all, at this moment of your nation's history, how many people of good will are seeking to rebuild the moral foundations of society as a whole? May the growing spirit of cooperation between the leaders of the various religious communities find expression in a commitment to put reconciliation among all Sri Lankans at the heart of every effort to renew society and its institutions. For the sake of peace, religious beliefs must never be allowed to be abused in the cause of violence and war. We must be clear and unequivocal in challenging our communities to live fully the tenets of peace and coexistence found in each religion, and to denounce acts of violence when they are committed.

Dear friends, I thank you once again for your generous welcome and your attention. May this fraternal encounter confirm all of us in our efforts to live in harmony and to spread the blessings of peace.



### III. HOLY MASS AND CANONIZATION OF BLESSED JOSEPH VAZ, GALLE FACE GREEN, COLOMBO

*- Homily of His Holiness Pope Francis*

14 January 2015

*"All the ends of the earth will see the salvation of our God" (Is 52:10)*

This is the magnificent prophecy which we heard in today's first reading. Isaiah foretells the preaching of the Gospel of Jesus Christ to all the ends of the earth. This prophecy has a special meaning for us, as we celebrate the canonization of a great missionary of the Gospel, Saint Joseph Vaz. Like countless other missionaries in the history of the Church, he responded to the Risen Lord's command to make disciples of every nation (cf. Mt 28:19). By his words, but more importantly, by the example of his life, he led the people of this country to the faith which gives us "an inheritance among all God's holy ones" (cf. Acts 20:32).

In Saint Joseph we see a powerful sign of God's goodness and love for the people of Sri Lanka. But we also see in him a challenge to persevere in the paths of the Gospel, to grow in holiness ourselves, and to testify to the Gospel message of reconciliation to which he dedicated his life.

A priest of the Oratory in his native Goa, Saint Joseph Vaz came to this country inspired by missionary zeal and a great love of its people. Because of religious persecution, he dressed as a beggar, performing his priestly duties in secret meetings of the faithful, often at night. His efforts provided spiritual and moral strength to the beleaguered Catholic population. He had a particular desire to serve the ill and suffering. His ministry to the sick was so appreciated by the king during a smallpox epidemic in Kandy that he was allowed greater freedom to minister. From Kandy, he could reach out to other parts of the island. He spent himself in missionary work and died, exhausted, at the age of fifty-nine, revered for his holiness.

Saint Joseph Vaz continues to be an example and a teacher for many reasons, but I would like to focus on three. First, he was an exemplary priest. Here today with us are many priests and religious, both men and women, who, like Joseph Vaz, are consecrated to the service of God and neighbour. I encourage each of you to look to Saint Joseph as a sure guide. He teaches us how to go out to the peripheries, to make Jesus Christ everywhere known and loved. He is also an example of patient suffering in the cause of the Gospel, of obedience to our superiors, of loving care for the Church of God (cf. Acts 20:28). Like ourselves, Saint Joseph Vaz lived in a period of rapid and profound transformation; Catholics were a minority, and often divided within; there was occasional hostility, even persecution, from without. And yet, because he was constantly united with the crucified Lord in prayer, he could become for all people a living icon of God's mercy and reconciling love.

Second, Saint Joseph shows us the importance of transcending religious divisions in the service of peace. His undivided love for God opened him to love for his neighbour; he ministered to those in need, whoever and wherever they were. His example continues to inspire the Church in Sri Lanka today. She gladly and generously serves all members of society. She makes no distinction of race, creed, tribe, status or religion in the service she provides through her schools, hospitals, clinics, and many other charitable works. All she asks in return is the freedom to carry out this mission. Religious freedom is a fundamental human right. Each individual must be free, alone or in association with others, to seek the truth, and to openly express his or her religious convictions, free from intimidation and external compulsion. As the life of Saint Joseph Vaz teaches us, genuine worship of God bears fruit not in discrimination, hatred and violence, but in respect for the sacredness of life, respect for the dignity and freedom of others, and loving commitment to the welfare of all.

Finally, Saint Joseph gives us an example of missionary zeal. Though he came to Ceylon to minister to the Catholic community, in his evangelical charity he reached out to

everyone. Leaving behind his home, his family, the comfort of his familiar surroundings, he responded to the call to go forth, to speak of Christ wherever he was led. Saint Joseph knew how to offer the truth and the beauty of the Gospel in a multi-religious context, with respect, dedication, perseverance and humility. This is also the way for the followers of Jesus today. We are called to go forth with the same zeal, the same courage, of Saint Joseph, but also with his sensitivity, his reverence for others, his desire to share with them that word of grace (cf. Acts 20:32) which has the power to build them up. We are called to be missionary disciples.

Dear brothers and sisters, I pray that, following the example of Saint Joseph Vaz, the Christians of this country may be confirmed in faith and make an ever greater contribution to peace, justice and reconciliation in Sri Lankan society. This is what Christ asks of you. This is what Saint Joseph teaches you. This is what the Church needs of you. I commend all of you to the prayers of our new saint, so that, in union with the Church throughout the world, you may sing a new song to the Lord and declare his glory to all the ends of the earth. For great is the Lord, and greatly to be praised (cf. Ps 96: 1-4)! Amen.

*- Address of His Eminence Malcolm Cardinal Ranjith, Archbishop of Colombo, President of CBCSL*

Most Holy Father,

It is with great joy and feelings of filial affection that we the citizens of Sri Lanka and members of the Catholic Church welcome you today into our midst. I am sure that by now you have had the opportunity to experience the simple and genuine faith of our people and the loving sense of loyalty and respect with which they have surrounded you from the moment Your Holiness touched our soil. In this I must say that joining the millions of your admirers in the world, our own people, Sri Lankans of every religion, race and social colour have welcomed this pastoral visit of yours to our beautiful little island home with deep respect and love. What is more, over and above the

gift of your presence on this soil, you have given us the gift of a Saint: Saint Joseph Vaz. That gift makes us truly happy, for Sri Lanka has now its own saint, the pride of Goa and God's precious gem for Sri Lanka. We thank you for this most precious gift whose life and service here in his adoptive land, saved the faith of the Catholics during a difficult and painful period of their history and left a lasting legacy to the unending love of God for us. God truly inspired this holy man to give up his own beloved homeland and people and to launch out into the unknown, like Abraham, and to single handedly revive the faith of our ancestors. We thank the Church in Goa for this precious gift of their son to us. There are in fact many who have come to join us today from this lively Church along with their patriarch and we welcome them too with grateful hearts.

Your Holiness, Sri Lanka as you mentioned in your speech to us on the 8th February last year at St. Peter's Basilica in Rome, is "called the pearl of the Indian ocean on account of its natural beauty and its shape, the pearl being the shape of a tear". And pearls are indeed formed as you mentioned on a tear of an oyster. In the recent past we have shed many tears on account of the internal conflict that caused so many victims and drained away our resources. We are still struggling to rise up from that sad past and to usher in a time of true reconciliation, peace and progress for our people. The journey is difficult. We need your prayers and blessings as well as your paternal guidance. Indeed on that occasion you did promise us your prayers and we thank you for that. We call upon you to kindly help us in that search - for a true healing of hearts, the strength to ask pardon from each other for the senseless violence unleashed then, to forgive and forget that sad past and to arrive at a process of a give and take that will build bridges of understanding between the parties hurt in the conflict. We are still far away from reaching that goal. We hope and pray that your august figure which teaches us the sublime ways of religion to overcome such hurdles, will help us to reach out to one another. We call upon our beloved Saint Joseph Vaz to intercede for us in heaven so that Sri Lanka may be able to achieve the miracle of peace soon and may be able to

reach out to the goal of true progress and happiness for all its people irrespective of all our differences.

Holy Father, our nation blessed by the teachings of the great world religions, Buddhism, Hinduism, Islam and Christianity does possess the moral and spiritual strength and nobility needed to generate such peace but we will all need to make that leap towards each other with a genuine spirit of reconciliation, trust and a sense of reciprocity. Holy Father do bless us in this resolve. We thank you for your presence among us and call upon you to impart your paternal and apostolic blessing on Sri Lanka, our beloved and beautiful home and on all its people. Thank you.

#### **IV. MARIAN PRAYER AT THE SHRINE OF OUR LADY OF THE ROSARY, MADHU**

*-Welcome Address of Most Rev. Joseph Rayappu, Bishop of Mannar*

*14 January 2015*

Most Holy Father

We the Bishops, priests, religious and the faithful gathered here today welcome you with filial greetings. You are visiting our Country-Sri Lanka as a messenger of Peace based on Truth, Justice and Reconciliation. Thank you for your admirable love for the poor and the suffering in the footsteps of our Lord and of St. Francis of Assisi.

Mannar had been blessed by God as the place of the first Martyrdom in Asia at the very beginning of Christianity here in 1544 when more than six hundred Neophytes gave up their life for the sake of their newly received faith due to odium Fidei of the then king of Jaffna in the North of the country. The blood of the Martyrs of Mannar had become the seed of the faith in the entire North and eventually in the whole Country.

This Shrine itself in the thick jungle has 400 years of rich history and had been relocated here from its original abode in Manthai, Mannar, during the persecution in the Dutch Colonizers in our

regions. This shrine of Our Lady of the Holy Rosary had played a very significant role in fostering the faith and the devotion of our dear people from all over the Country regardless of all differences of race, religion or language for the last four centuries.

It still remains the privileged Marian Shrine of promoting priestly and religious vocations in our Dioceses. Over 500,000 devotees from all over gather here for the Major Festival of the Assumption of Our Lady on the 15th of August each year and a large number for the other monthly Festivals and weekends.

Your Holiness' presence here is an exceptional blessing to this Shrine and to all its devotees. May Your Holiness' visit and your prayers bring to our Motherland Peace and Prosperity. We all with great devotion pray daily for Your Holiness and I take this opportunity to offer you our deep sentiments of filial obedience, respect and love. May God bless you and May our Lady keep close to you in all your pastoral undertakings to inspire and lead the Church and the World at large.

*- Address of His Holiness Pope Francis*

*Dear Brothers and Sisters,*

We are in our Mother's house. Here she welcomes us into her home. At this shrine of Our Lady of Madhu, every pilgrim can feel at home, for here Mary brings us into the presence of her Son Jesus. Here Sri Lankans, Tamil and Sinhalese alike, come as members of one family. To Mary they commend their joys and sorrows, their hopes and needs. Here, in her home, they feel safe. They know that God is very near; they feel his love; they know his tender mercy, the tender mercy of God.

There are families here today which suffered greatly in the long conflict which tore open the heart of Sri Lanka. Many people, from north and south alike, were killed in the terrible violence and bloodshed of those years. No Sri Lankan can forget the tragic events associated with this very place, or the sad day

when the venerable statue of Mary, dating to the arrival of the earliest Christians in Sri Lanka, was taken away from her shrine.

But Our Lady is remaining always with you. She is the mother of every home, of every wounded family, of all who are seeking to return to a peaceful existence. Today we thank her for protecting the people of Sri Lanka from so many dangers, past and present. Mary never forgot her children on this resplendent island. Just as she never left the side of her Son on the Cross, so she never left the side of her suffering Sri Lankan children.

Today we want to thank Our Lady for that presence. In the wake of so much hatred, violence and destruction, we want to thank her for continuing to bring us Jesus, who alone has the power to heal open wounds and to restore peace to broken hearts. But we also want to ask her to implore for us the grace of God's mercy. We ask also for the grace to make reparation for our sins and for all the evil which this land has known.

It is not easy to do this. Yet only when we come to understand, in the light of the Cross, the evil we are capable of, and have even been a part of, can we experience true remorse and true repentance. Only then can we receive the grace to approach one another in true contrition, offering and seeking true forgiveness. In this difficult effort to forgive and find peace, Mary is always here to encourage us, to guide us, to lead us. Just as she forgave her Son's killers at the foot of his Cross, then held his lifeless body in her arms, so now she wants to guide Sri Lankans to greater reconciliation, so that the balm of God's pardon and mercy may bring true healing to all.

Finally, we want to ask Mother Mary to accompany with her prayers the efforts of Sri Lankans from both Tamil and Sinhalese speaking communities to rebuild the unity which was lost. Just as her statue came back to her shrine of Madhu after the war, so we pray that all her Sri Lankan sons and daughters may now come home to God in a renewed spirit of reconciliation and fellowship.

Dear brothers and sisters, I am happy to be with you in Mary's house. Let us pray for one another. Above all, let us ask that this shrine may always be a house of prayer and a haven of peace. Through the intercession of Our Lady of Madhu, may all people find here inspiration and strength to build a future of reconciliation, justice and peace for all the children of this beloved land. Amen.

**"APOSTOLIC JOURNEY OF HIS HOLINESS  
POPE FRANCIS TO THE PHILIPPINES"  
16-19 JANUARY 2015**

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I. **MEETING WITH AUTHORITIES AND THE DIPLOMATIC CORPS, RIZAL CEREMONIAL HALL OF THE MALACAÑANG PRESIDENTIAL PALACE, MANILA**

- *Address of His Holiness Pope Francis*

*16 January 2015*

*Ladies and Gentlemen,*

I thank you, Mr President, for your kind welcome and for your words of greeting in the name of the authorities and people of the Philippines, and the distinguished members of the Diplomatic Corps. I am most grateful for your invitation to visit the Philippines. My visit is above all pastoral. It comes as the Church in this country is preparing to celebrate the fifth centenary of the first proclamation of the Gospel of Jesus Christ on these shores. The Christian message has had an immense influence on Filipino culture. It is my hope that this important anniversary will point to its continuing fruitfulness and its potential to inspire a society worthy of the goodness, dignity and aspirations of the Filipino people.

In a particular way, this visit is meant to express my closeness to our brothers and sisters who endured the suffering, loss and devastation caused by Typhoon Yolanda. Together with many people throughout the world, I have admired the heroic strength, faith and resilience demonstrated by so many Filipinos in the face of this natural disaster, and so many others. Those virtues, rooted not least in the hope and solidarity instilled by

Christian faith, gave rise to an outpouring of goodness and generosity, especially on the part of so many of the young. In that moment of national crisis, countless people came to the aid of their neighbors in need. At great sacrifice, they gave of their time and resources, creating networks of mutual help and working for the common good.

This example of solidarity in the work of rebuilding teaches us an important lesson. Like a family, every society draws on its deepest resources in order to face new challenges. Today the Philippines, together with many other countries in Asia, faces the challenge of building on solid foundations a modern society – a society respectful of authentic human values, protective of our God-given human dignity and rights, and ready to confront new and complex political and ethical questions. As many voices in your nation have pointed out, it is now, more than ever, necessary that political leaders be outstanding for honesty, integrity and commitment to the common good. In this way they will help preserve the rich human and natural resources with which God has blessed this country. Thus will they be able to marshal the moral resources needed to face the demands of the present, and to pass on to coming generations a society of authentic justice, solidarity and peace.

Essential to the attainment of these national goals is the moral imperative of ensuring social justice and respect for human dignity. The great biblical tradition enjoins on all peoples the duty to hear the voice of the poor. It bids us break the bonds of injustice and oppression which give rise to glaring, and indeed scandalous, social inequalities. Reforming the social structures which perpetuate poverty and the exclusion of the poor first requires a conversion of mind and heart. The Bishops of the Philippines have asked that this year be set aside as the “Year of the Poor”. I hope that this prophetic summons will challenge everyone, at all levels of society, to reject every form of corruption which diverts resources from the poor. May it also inspire concerted efforts to ensure the inclusion of every man and woman and child in the life of the community.

A fundamental role in the renewal of society is played, of course, by the family and especially by young people. A highlight of my visit will be my meetings with families and with young people here in Manila. Families have an indispensable mission in society. It is in the family that children are trained in sound values, high ideals and genuine concern for others. But like all God's gifts, the family can also be disfigured and destroyed. It needs our support. We know how difficult it is for our democracies today to preserve and defend such basic human values as respect for the inviolable dignity of each human person, respect for the rights of conscience and religious freedom, and respect for the inalienable right to life, beginning with that of the unborn and extending to that of the elderly and infirm. For this reason, families and local communities must be encouraged and assisted in their efforts to transmit to our young the values and the vision which can help bring about a culture of integrity - one which honors goodness, truthfulness, fidelity and solidarity as the firm foundation and the moral glue which holds society together.

Mr President, distinguished authorities, dear friends:

As I begin my visit to this country, I cannot fail to mention the Philippines' important role in fostering understanding and cooperation among the countries of Asia. I would also mention the oft-neglected yet real contribution of Filipinos of the diaspora to the life and welfare of the societies in which they live. It is precisely in the light of the rich cultural and religious heritage of which your country is proud that I leave you with a challenge and a word of prayerful encouragement. May the deepest spiritual values of the Filipino people continue to find expression in your efforts to provide your fellow citizens with an integral human development. In this way, each person will be able to fulfill his or her potential, and thus contribute wisely and well to the future of this country. I am confident that the praiseworthy efforts to promote dialogue and cooperation between the followers of the different religions will prove fruitful in the pursuit of this noble goal. In a particular way, I express my trust that the progress made in bringing peace to the

south of the country will result in just solutions in accord with the nation's founding principles and respectful of the inalienable rights of all, including the indigenous peoples and religious minorities.

Upon all of you, and upon all the men, women and children of this beloved nation, I cordially invoke God's abundant blessings.

**II. HOLY MASS WITH BISHOPS, PRIESTS AND RELIGIOUS PEOPLE AT THE CATHEDRAL OF THE IMMACULATE CONCEPTION, MANILA**

*- Welcome Address of His Eminence Luis Antonio G. Cardinal Tagle, Archbishop of Manila*

**16 January 2015**

Most Holy Father,

Before you this morning are representatives of the bishops, priests, religious men and women and lay faithful of the Philippines and of Asia. In their name I welcome you to our country, to the city of Manila and to the Cathedral Basilica of the Immaculate Conception. We are filled with joy for you are with us, especially in the first Eucharistic celebration of your pastoral visit.

The Manila Cathedral was the first cathedral church in the Philippines. It can be considered a symbol of the Filipino people. Fire destroyed the first cathedral. The succeeding five cathedrals were either partially or totally damaged by earthquakes, the most massive of which struck in 1863 burying in rubble the members of the cathedral chapter, the choir and lay faithful. The seventh cathedral was mercilessly bombed along with other edifices in the Walled City of Manila (Intramuros) during the battle of liberation in 1945. We are gathered today in the eighth cathedral building that we closed three years ago for repairs. Now it warmly welcomes you. This cathedral has been razed to the ground many times, but it refuses to vanish. It boldly rises from the ruins - just like the Filipino people. Yes, Holy Father, we bishops, priests and religious men and women have seen and

lived the suffering and determination of our people. "We are afflicted in every way possible, but we are not crushed." (2 Corinthians 4:8).

What is the secret to the resilience of Filipinos? Fr. Horacio de la Costa, SJ, historian, writer, priest, religious and nationalist provided an insight. He said that the Filipino has two treasures: music and faith. Our melodies make our spirits soar above the tragedies of life. Our faith makes us stand up again and again after deadly fires, earthquakes, typhoons and wars. And now, as many of our poor people are just beginning to rise from recent natural and human-made calamities, you, Holy Father came to us. You bring fire, not to destroy but to purify. You bring an earthquake, not to shatter but to awaken. You bring weapons, not to kill but to assure. Indeed, "you are Peter, the Rock upon which Jesus builds His Church" (Matthew 16:18). You are Peter who comes "to strengthen your brothers and sisters in faith" (Luke 22:32). We welcome you, successor of Peter, to this blessed land of untiring hope, of infinite music and of joyful faith. With your visit, we know Jesus will renew and rebuild His Church in the Philippines. Mabuhay!

*- Homily of His Holiness Pope Francis*

"Do you love me? ... Tend my sheep" (Jn 21:15-17). Jesus' words to Peter in today's Gospel are the first words I speak to you, dear brother bishops and priests, men and women religious, and young seminarians. These words remind us of something essential. All pastoral ministry is born of love. All pastoral ministry is born of love! All consecrated life is a sign of Christ's reconciling love. Like Saint Therese, in the variety of our vocations, each of us is called, in some way, to be love in the heart of the Church.

I greet all of you with great affection. And I ask you to bring my affection to all your elderly and infirm brothers and sisters, and to all those who cannot join us today. As the Church in the Philippines looks to the fifth centenary of its evangelization, we feel gratitude for the legacy left by so many bishops, priests and

religious of past generations. They labored not only to preach the Gospel and build up the Church in this country, but also to forge a society inspired by the Gospel message of charity, forgiveness and solidarity in the service of the common good. Today you carry on that work of love. Like them, you are called to build bridges, to pasture Christ's flock, and to prepare fresh paths for the Gospel in Asia at the dawn of a new age.

"The love of Christ impels us" (2 Cor 5:14). In today's first reading Saint Paul tells us that the love we are called to proclaim is a reconciling love, flowing from the heart of the crucified Savior. We are called to be "ambassadors for Christ" (2 Cor 5:20). Ours is a ministry of reconciliation. We proclaim the Good News of God's infinite love, mercy and compassion. We proclaim the joy of the Gospel. For the Gospel is the promise of God's grace, which alone can bring wholeness and healing to our broken world. It can inspire the building of a truly just and redeemed social order.

To be an ambassador for Christ means above all to invite everyone to a renewed personal encounter with the Lord Jesus (*Evangelii Gaudium*, 3). Our personal encounter with Him. This invitation must be at the core of your commemoration of the evangelization of the Philippines. But the Gospel is also a summons to conversion, to an examination of our consciences, as individuals and as a people. As the Bishops of the Philippines have rightly taught, the Church in the Philippines is called to acknowledge and combat the causes of the deeply rooted inequality and injustice which mar the face of Filipino society, plainly contradicting the teaching of Christ. The Gospel calls individual Christians to live lives of honesty, integrity and concern for the common good. But it also calls Christian communities to create "circles of integrity", networks of solidarity which can expand to embrace and transform society by their prophetic witness.

The poor. The poor are at the center of the Gospel, are at heart of the Gospel, if we take away the poor from the Gospel we can't understand the whole message of Jesus Christ. As ambassadors

for Christ, we, bishops, priests and religious, ought to be the first to welcome his reconciling grace into our hearts. Saint Paul makes clear what this means. It means rejecting worldly perspectives and seeing all things anew in the light of Christ. It means being the first to examine our consciences, to acknowledge our failings and sins, and to embrace the path of constant conversion, every day conversion. How can we proclaim the newness and liberating power of the Cross to others, if we ourselves refuse to allow the word of God to shake our complacency, our fear of change, our petty compromises with the ways of this world, our “spiritual worldliness” (cf. *Evangelii Gaudium*, 93)?

For us priests and consecrated persons, conversion to the newness of the Gospel entails a daily encounter with the Lord in prayer. The saints teach us that this is the source of all apostolic zeal! For religious, living the newness of the Gospel also means finding ever anew in community life and community apostolates the incentive for an ever closer union with the Lord in perfect charity. For all of us, it means living lives that reflect the poverty of Christ, whose entire life was focused on doing the will of the Father and serving others. The great danger to this, of course, is a certain materialism which can creep into our lives and compromise the witness we offer. Only by becoming poor ourselves, by becoming poor ourselves, by stripping away our complacency, will we be able to identify with the least of our brothers and sisters. We will see things in a new light and thus respond with honesty and integrity to the challenge of proclaiming the radicalism of the Gospel in a society which has grown comfortable with social exclusion, polarization and scandalous inequality.

Here I would like to say a special word to the young priests, religious and seminarians among us. I ask you to share the joy and enthusiasm of your love for Christ and the Church with everyone, but especially with your peers. Be present to young people who may be confused and despondent, yet continue to see the Church as their friend on the journey and a source of hope. Be present to those who, living in the midst of a society

burdened by poverty and corruption, are broken in spirit, tempted to give up, to leave school and to live on the streets. Proclaim the beauty and truth of the Christian message to a society which is tempted by confusing presentations of sexuality, marriage and the family. As you know, these realities are increasingly under attack from powerful forces which threaten to disfigure God's plan for creation and betray the very values which have inspired and shaped all that is best in your culture.

Filipino culture has, in fact, been shaped by the imagination of faith. Filipinos everywhere are known for their love of God, their fervent piety and their warm devotion to Our Lady and her rosary; their love of God, their fervent piety and their warm devotion to Our Lady and her rosary! This great heritage contains a powerful missionary potential. It is the way in which your people has inculturated the Gospel and continues to embrace its message (cf. *Evangelii Gaudium*, 122). In your efforts to prepare for the fifth centenary, build on this solid foundation.

Christ died for all so that, having died in him, we might live no longer for ourselves but for him (cf. *2 Cor* 5:15). Dear brother bishops, priests and religious: I ask Mary, Mother of the Church, to obtain for all of you an outpouring of zeal, so that you may spend yourselves in selfless service to our brothers and sisters. In this way, may the reconciling love of Christ penetrate ever more fully into the fabric of Filipino society and, through you, to the farthest reaches of the world. Amen.

### **III. MEETING WITH FAMILIES AT THE MALL OF ASIA ARENA, MANILA**

*- Address of His Holiness Pope Francis*

*16 January 2015*

*Dear Families,*

*Dear Friends in Christ,*

I am grateful for your presence here this evening and for the witness of your love for Jesus and his Church. I thank Bishop Reyes, Chairman of the Bishops' Commission on Family and



Life, for his words of welcome on your behalf. And, in a special way, I thank those who have presented testimonies – thank you! – and who have shared their life of faith with us. The Church in the Philippines is blessed by the apostolate of numerous family movements and I thank them for their witness!

The Scriptures seldom speak of Saint Joseph, but when they do, we often find him resting, as an angel reveals God's will to him in his dreams. In the Gospel passage we have just heard, we find Joseph resting not once, but twice. This evening I would like to rest in the Lord with all of you. I need to rest in the Lord with families, and to remember my own family: my father, my mother, my grandfather, my grandmother... Today I am resting with you, and together with you I would like to reflect on the gift of the family.

First, however, let me say something about dreams. But my English is so poor! If you allow me, I will ask Monsignor Miles to translate and I will speak in Spanish.

I am very fond of dreams in families. For nine months every mother and father dream about their baby. Am I right? [Yes!] They dream about what kind of child he or she will be... You can't have a family without dreams. Once a family loses the ability to dream, children do not grow, love does not grow, life shrivels up and dies. So I ask you each evening, when you make your examination of conscience, to also ask yourselves this question: Today did I dream about my children's future? Today did I dream about the love of my husband, my wife? Did I dream about my parents and grandparents who have gone before me? Dreaming is very important. Especially dreaming in families. Do not lose this ability to dream!

How many difficulties in married life are resolved when we leave room for dreaming, when we stop a moment to think of our spouse, and we dream about the goodness present in the good things all around us. So it is very important to reclaim love by what we do each day. Do not ever stop being newlyweds!

Joseph's rest revealed God's will to him. In this moment of rest in the Lord, as we pause from our many daily obligations and activities, God is also speaking to us. He speaks to us in the reading we have just heard, in our prayer and witness, and in the quiet of our hearts. Let us reflect on what the Lord is saying to us, especially in this evening's Gospel. There are three aspects of this passage which I would ask you to consider: First, *resting in the Lord*. Second, *rising with Jesus and Mary*. Third, *being a prophetic voice*.

*Resting in the Lord*. Rest is so necessary for the health of our minds and bodies, and often so difficult to achieve due to the many demands placed on us. But rest is also essential for our spiritual health, so that we can hear God's voice and understand what he asks of us. Joseph was chosen by God to be the foster father of Jesus and the husband of Mary. As Christians, you too are called, like Joseph, to make a home for Jesus. To make a home for Jesus! You make a home for him in your hearts, your families, your parishes and your communities.

To hear and accept God's call, to make a home for Jesus, you must be able to rest in the Lord. You must make time each day to rest in the Lord, to pray. To pray is to rest in the Lord. But you may say to me: Holy Father, I know that; I want to pray, but there is so much work to do! I must care for my children; I have chores in the home; I am too tired even to sleep well. I know. This may be true, but if we do not pray, we will not know the most important thing of all: God's will for us. And for all our activity, our busy-ness, without prayer we will accomplish very little.

Resting in prayer is especially important for families. It is in the family that we first learn how to pray. Don't forget: the family that prays together stays together! This is important. There we come to know God, to grow into men and women of faith, to see ourselves as members of God's greater family, the Church. In the family we learn how to love, to forgive, to be generous and open, not closed and selfish. We learn to move beyond our own needs, to encounter others and share our lives with them. That is why it

is so important to pray as a family! So important! That is why families are so important in God's plan for the Church! To rest in the Lord is to pray. To pray together as a family.

I would also like to tell you something very personal. I have great love for Saint Joseph, because he is a man of silence and strength. On my table I have an image of Saint Joseph sleeping. Even when he is asleep, he is taking care of the Church! Yes! We know that he can do that. So when I have a problem, a difficulty, I write a little note and I put it underneath Saint Joseph, so that he can dream about it! In other words I tell him: pray for this problem!

Next, *rising with Jesus and Mary*. Those precious moments of repose, of resting with the Lord in prayer, are moments we might wish to prolong. But like Saint Joseph, once we have heard God's voice, we must rise from our slumber; we must get up and act (cf. *Rom 13:11*). In our families, we have to get up and act! Faith does not remove us from the world, but draws us more deeply into it. This is very important! We have to be deeply engaged with the world, but with the power of prayer. Each of us, in fact, has a special role in preparing for the coming of God's kingdom in our world.

Just as the gift of the Holy Family was entrusted to Saint Joseph, so the gift of the family and its place in God's plan is entrusted to us. Like Saint Joseph. The gift of the Holy Family was entrusted to Saint Joseph so that he could care for it. Each of you, each of us - for I too am part of a family - is charged with caring for God's plan. The angel of the Lord revealed to Joseph the dangers which threatened Jesus and Mary, forcing them to flee to Egypt and then to settle in Nazareth. So too, in our time, God calls upon us to recognize the dangers threatening our own families and to protect them from harm.

Let us be on guard against colonization by new ideologies. There are forms of ideological colonization which are out to destroy the family. They are not born of dreams, of prayers, of closeness to God or the mission which God gave us; they come from without, and for that reason I am saying that they are forms of

colonization. Let's not lose the freedom of the mission which God has given us, the mission of the family. Just as our peoples, at a certain moment of their history, were mature enough to say "no" to all forms of political colonization, so too in our families we need to be very wise, very shrewd, very strong, in order to say "no" to all attempts at an ideological colonization of our families. We need to ask Saint Joseph, the friend of the angel, to send us the inspiration to know when we can say "yes" and when we have to say "no".

The pressures on family life today are many. Here in the Philippines, countless families are still suffering from the effects of natural disasters. The economic situation has caused families to be separated by migration and the search for employment, and financial problems strain many households. While all too many people live in dire poverty, others are caught up in materialism and lifestyles which are destructive of family life and the most basic demands of Christian morality. These are forms of ideological colonization. The family is also threatened by growing efforts on the part of some to redefine the very institution of marriage, by relativism, by the culture of the ephemeral, by a lack of openness to life.

I think of Blessed Paul VI. At a time when the problem of population growth was being raised, he had the courage to defend openness to life in families. He knew the difficulties that are there in every family, and so in his Encyclical he was very merciful towards particular cases, and he asked confessors to be very merciful and understanding in dealing with particular cases. But he also had a broader vision: he looked at the peoples of the earth and he saw this threat of families being destroyed for lack of children. Paul VI was courageous; he was a good pastor and he warned his flock of the wolves who were coming. From his place in heaven, may he bless this evening!

Our world needs good and strong families to overcome these threats! The Philippines needs holy and loving families to protect the beauty and truth of the family in God's plan and to be a support and example for other families. Every threat to the

family is a threat to society itself. The future of humanity, as Saint John Paul II often said, passes through the family (cf. *Familiaris Consortio*, 85). The future passes through the family. So protect your families! Protect your families! See in them your country's greatest treasure and nourish them always by prayer and the grace of the sacraments. Families will always have their trials, but may you never add to them! Instead, be living examples of love, forgiveness and care. Be sanctuaries of respect for life, proclaiming the sacredness of every human life from conception to natural death. What a gift this would be to society, if every Christian family lived fully its noble vocation! So rise with Jesus and Mary, and set out on the path the Lord traces for each of you.

Finally, the Gospel we have heard reminds us of our Christian duty to be *prophetic voices* in the midst of our communities. Joseph listened to the angel of the Lord and responded to God's call to care for Jesus and Mary. In this way he played his part in God's plan, and became a blessing not only for the Holy Family, but a blessing for all of humanity. With Mary, Joseph served as a model for the boy Jesus as he grew in wisdom, age and grace (cf. *Lk* 2:52). When families bring children into the world, train them in faith and sound values, and teach them to contribute to society, they become a blessing in our world. Families can become a blessing for all of humanity! God's love becomes present and active by the way we love and by the good works that we do. We extend Christ's kingdom in this world. And in doing this, we prove faithful to the prophetic mission which we have received in baptism.

During this year which your bishops have set aside as the Year of the Poor, I would ask you, as families, to be especially mindful of our call to be missionary disciples of Jesus. This means being ready to go beyond your homes and to care for our brothers and sisters who are most in need. I ask you especially to show concern for those who do not have a family of their own, in particular those who are elderly and children without parents. Never let them feel isolated, alone and abandoned, but help them to know that God has not forgotten them. Today I was very

moved when, after Mass, I visited a home for children without families. How many people work in the Church to make that home a family! This is what it means, in a prophetic sense, to build a family.

You may be poor yourselves in material ways, but you have an abundance of gifts to offer when you offer Christ and the community of his Church. Do not hide your faith, do not hide Jesus, but carry him into the world and offer the witness of your family life!

Dear friends in Christ, know that I pray for you always! I pray for families! I do! I pray that the Lord may continue to deepen your love for him, and that this love may manifest itself in your love for one another and for the Church. Do not forget Jesus who sleeps! Do not forget Saint Joseph who sleeps! Jesus slept with the protection of Joseph. Do not forget: families find their rest in prayer. Don not forget to pray for families. Pray often and take the fruits of your prayer into the world, that all may know Jesus Christ and his merciful love. Please pray also for me, for I truly need your prayers and will depend on them always! Thank you very much!

#### IV. HOLY MASS AT TACLOBAN INTERNATIONAL AIRPORT

*-Homily of His Holiness Pope Francis*

*17 January 2015*

*Impromptu Homily of the Holy Father*

In the first reading, we heard that we have a great high priest who is capable of sympathizing with our weaknesses, one who in every respect has been tempted as we are... (cf. *Heb 4:15*), yet without sin. Jesus is like us.

Jesus lived like us and is the same in every respect, except sin, because he was not a sinner. But to be more like us, he assumed our condition and our sin. He made himself into sin! This is what St. Paul tells us, and he knew this very well. Jesus goes before us

always and when we experience any kind of cross, he was already there before us.

If today we are gathered here, fourteen months after the Typhoon Yolanda, it is because we have the certainty that we will not be discouraged in our faith, because Jesus has gone before us. In his passion, he assumed all of our pain, and... Let me tell you something personal – when I witnessed the disaster from Rome, I felt that I must be here. This is when I decided to come here. I wanted to come to be with you. Maybe you will tell me that I came a little late; that is true, but here I am!

I am here to tell you that Jesus is Lord; that Jesus does not disappoint. “Father”, one of you may tell me, “he disappointed me because I lost my house, I lost my family, I lost everything I had, I am ill”. What you say is true and I respect your feelings, but I see him there, nailed to the cross, and from there he does not disappoint us. He was consecrated Lord on that throne, and there he experienced all the disasters we experience. Jesus is Lord! And he is Lord from the cross, from there he reigned. That is why, as we heard in the first reading, he can understand us: he became like us in every way. So we have a Lord who is capable of crying with us and capable of walking with us in the most difficult moments of life.

So many of you have lost everything. I do not know what to say to you. But surely he knows what to say to you! Many of you have lost members of your family. I can only keep silent; I accompany you in the silence of my heart...

Many of you looked to Christ and asked: Why, Lord? To each of you the Lord responds from his heart. I have no other words to say to you. Let us look to Christ: he is the Lord, and he understands us, because he underwent all the trials that we have undergone.

And beneath the cross was his Mother. We are like that little child over there (he points to the statue of Mary holding the Child in her arms) who in times of sorrow and pain, times when we understand nothing, times when we need help, all we can do

is to reach out and cling to her and say: "Mama!" Like a little child who is frightened and says: "Mama". Perhaps that is the only word which can express all the feelings we have in those dark moments: Mother! Mama!

Let us together keep a moment of silence and let us look to the Lord. He can understand us because he endured all these things. And let us look to our Mother, and like that little child, let us reach out, cling to her and in our hearts we say: "Mother". Let us make this prayer in silence; each one say what one feels...

We are not alone; we have a Mother; we have Jesus, our older brother. We are not alone. And we also have many brothers and sisters who, when the disaster struck, came to our assistance. We too feel more like brothers and sisters helping one another, because we have helped one another.

This is the only thing that I can say to you. Forgive me if I have no other words. But be sure that Jesus never lets us down; be sure that the love and tenderness of our Mother Mary never lets us down. And clinging to her as children and with the strength that Jesus our brother gives us, we move forward. And as brothers and sisters, we walk together. Thank you very much!

### *After Communion:*

We have just finished celebrating the passion, death and resurrection of Christ.

Jesus has gone before us on this journey and he accompanies us each time we gather to pray and celebrate.

Thank you, Lord, for being with us here today. Thank you, Lord, for sharing our sorrows. Thank you, Lord, for giving us hope. Thank you, Lord, for your great mercy. Thank you, Lord, because you wanted to be like one of us. Thank you, Lord, because you are always close to us, especially in the moments of suffering. Thank you, Lord, for giving us hope. Lord, may no one rob us of hope! Thank you, Lord, because in the darkest moment of your own life, on the cross, you thought of us and



you left us a Mother, your Mother. Thank you Lord for not leaving us orphans!

*Prepared text of the Holy Father's homily*

What words of consolation we have just heard! Once again, we have been told that Jesus Christ is the Son of God, our Savior, our high priest who brings us mercy, grace and help in all our needs (cf. *Heb* 4:14-16). He heals our wounds, he forgives our sins, and he calls us, as he did Saint Matthew (cf. *Mk* 2:14), to be his disciples. Let us praise him for his love, his mercy and his compassion. Let us praise our great God!

I thank the Lord Jesus that we can be together this morning. I have come to be with you, in this city which was ravaged by Typhoon Yolanda fourteen months ago. I bring to you the love of a father, the prayers of the entire Church, the promise that you are not forgotten as you continue to rebuild. Here, the strongest storm ever recorded on earth was overcome by the strongest force in the universe: God's love. We are here this morning to bear witness to that love, to its power to transform death and destruction into life and community. Christ's resurrection, which we celebrate at this Mass, is our hope and a reality which we experience even now. We know that the resurrection comes only after the cross, the cross which you have borne with faith, dignity and God-given strength.

We come together above all to pray for those who died, those who are still missing and those who were injured. We lift up to God the souls of the dead, our mothers, fathers, sons and daughters, family, friends and neighbors. We can be confident that, in coming into the presence of God, they have encountered mercy and peace (cf. *Heb* 4:16). There remains much sadness because of their absence. For you who knew and loved them – and love them still – the pain of losing them is real. But let us look with the eyes of faith to the future. Our sadness is a seed which will one day bear fruit in the joy which our Lord has promised to those who trust in his words: “Blessed are you who mourn, for you will be comforted” (cf. *Mt* 5:4).

We have also come together this morning to give thanks to God for his help in time of need. God has been your strength in these very difficult months. There has been great loss of life, suffering, and destruction. Yet we are still able to gather and to thank him. We know that he cares for us, that in Jesus his Son, we have a high priest who is able to sympathize with us (cf. *Heb 4:15*), who suffers with us. God's com-*passion*, his suffering with us, gives eternal meaning and value to our struggles. Your desire to thank him for every grace and blessing, even when you have lost so much, is not only a triumph of the resilience and strength of the Filipino people; it is also a sign of God's goodness, his closeness, his tenderness, his saving power.

We also give thanks to Almighty God for so much that has been done to help, to rebuild, to assist in these months of unprecedented need. I think in the first place of those who welcomed and housed the great number of displaced families, elderly, and youth. How hard it is to flee one's home and livelihood! We thank those who have taken care of the homeless, the orphaned and the destitute. Priests, and men and women religious, gave as much as they could. To those of you who housed and fed people seeking safety, in churches, convents, rectories, and who continue to assist those still struggling, I thank you. You are a credit to the Church. You are the pride of your nation. I personally thank each one of you. For whatever you did for the least of Christ's brothers and sisters, you did for him (cf. *Mt 25:41*).

At this Mass we wish also to thank God for the good men and women who served as rescue and relief workers. We thank him for the many people around the world who generously gave of their time, money and goods. Countries, organizations and individuals across the globe put the needy first; it is an example that should be followed. I ask government leaders, international agencies, benefactors and people of goodwill not to give up. There is much that remains to be done. Though the headlines have changed, the needs continue.

Today's first reading, from the Letter to the Hebrews, urges us to hold fast in our confession, to persevere in our faith, to draw near with confidence to the throne of God's grace (cf. *Heb* 4:16). These words have a special resonance in this place. Amid great suffering you never ceased to confess the victory of the cross, the triumph of God's love. You have seen the power of that love revealed in the generosity of so many people and in so many small miracles of goodness. But you have also seen, in the profiteering, the looting and the failed responses to this great human drama, so many tragic signs of the evil from which Christ came to save us. Let us pray that this, too, will lead us to greater trust in the power of God's grace to overcome sin and selfishness. Let us pray in particular that it will make everyone more sensitive to the cry of our brothers and sisters in need. Let us pray that it will lead to a rejection of all forms of injustice and corruption which, by stealing from the poor, poison the very roots of society.

Dear brothers and sisters, throughout this ordeal you have felt the grace of God in a special way through the presence and loving care of the Blessed Virgin Mary, Our Lady of Perpetual Help. She is our Mother. May she help you to persevere in faith and hope, and to reach out to all in need. And with Saints Lorenzo Ruiz and Pedro Calungsod and all the saints, may she continue to implore God's mercy and loving compassion for this country, and for all the beloved Filipino people. Amen.

V. MEETING WITH PRIESTS, RELIGIOUS PEOPLE, SEMINARIANS AND FAMILIES OF SURVIVORS AT THE CATHEDRAL OF THE TRANSFIGURATION OF OUR LORD, PALO

- *Address of His Holiness Pope Francis*

*17 January 2015*

*Dear Brothers and Sisters,*

I greet all of you with great affection in the Lord. I am happy that we are able to meet in this Cathedral of the Transfiguration of the Lord. This house of prayer, along with many others, has

been repaired thanks to the remarkable generosity of many people. It stands as an eloquent sign of the immense effort of rebuilding which you and your neighbors have undertaken in the wake of the devastation caused by Typhoon Yolanda. It is also a concrete reminder to all of us that, even amid disaster and suffering, our God is constantly at work, making all things new.

Many of you have suffered greatly, not only from the destruction caused by the storm, but from the loss of family members and friends. Today let us commend to God's mercy all those who have died, and invoke his consolation and peace upon all who still grieve. May we remember in a particular way those among us whose pain makes it hard to see the way forward. At the same time, let us thank the Lord for all those who have labored in these months to clear away the rubble, to visit the sick and dying, to comfort the grieving and to bury the dead. Their goodness, and the generous aid which came from so many people throughout the world, are a real sign that God never abandons us!

Here, in a special way, I would like to thank the many priests and religious who responded with such overwhelming generosity to the desperate needs of the people of the areas hardest hit. By your presence and your charity, you bore witness to the beauty and truth of the Gospel. You made the Church present as a source of hope, healing and mercy. Together with so many of your neighbors, you also demonstrated the deep faith and the resilience of the Filipino people. The many stories of goodness and self-sacrifice which emerged from these dark days need to be remembered and passed down for future generations.

A few moments ago, I blessed the new Center for the Poor, which stands as another sign of the Church's care and concern for our brothers and sisters in need. How many they are! And how much our Lord loves them! Today, from this place which has known such profound suffering and human need, I ask that even more be done for the poor. Above all, I ask that the poor throughout this country be treated fairly - that their dignity be respected, that political and economic policies be just and

inclusive, that opportunities for employment and education be developed, and that obstacles to the delivery of social services be removed. Our treatment of the poor is the criterion on which each of us will be judged (cf. *Mt 25:40, 45*). I ask all of you, and all responsible for the good of society, to renew your commitment to social justice and the betterment of the poor, both here and in the Philippines as a whole.

Finally, I would like to say a word of sincere thanks to the young people present, including the seminarians and young religious. Many of you showed heroic generosity in the aftermath of the typhoon. I hope that you will always realize that true happiness comes from helping others, giving ourselves to them in self-sacrifice, mercy and compassion. In this way you will be a powerful force for the renewal of society, not only in the work of restoring buildings but more importantly, in building up God's kingdom of holiness, justice and peace in your native land.

Dear priests and religious, dear families and friends, in this Cathedral of the Transfiguration of the Lord let us ask that our lives continue to be sustained and transfigured by the power of his resurrection. I commend all of you to the loving protection of Mary, Mother of the Church. May she obtain for you, and for all the beloved people of these lands, the Lord's blessings of comfort, joy and peace. God bless you all!

## **VI. MEETING WITH YOUNG PEOPLE AT THE SPORTS FIELD OF SANTO TOMAS UNIVERSITY, MANILA**

*- Address of His Holiness Pope Francis*

*18 January 2015*

*Impromptu speech of the Holy Father*

*Dear Young Friends,*

When I speak spontaneously, I do it in Spanish. No? Because I don't know the English language. May I do it? Thank you very much! Here is Father Mark, a good translator!

First of all, some sad news. Yesterday, as Mass was about to begin, one of the towers fell, like that one over there, and injured a young lady working there and she died. Her name is Cristal. She was helping in the organization of that Mass. She was 27 years old. She was young like you and she was working for a group called "Catholic Relief Services". She was a volunteer. I would like all of us, together, you who are young people just like her, to pray for a moment in silence, and then to call upon our heavenly Mother. Let us pray.

(Silence ... Ave Maria)

Let us also say a prayer for her mother and father. She was their only child. Her mother is flying in from Hong Kong. Her father has come to Manila to wait for her mother.

(Our Father...)

It is a joy for me to be with you this morning. I greet each of you from the heart, and I thank all those who made this meeting possible. During my visit to the Philippines, I wanted in a particular way to meet with young people, to listen to you and to talk with you. I want to express the love and the hopes of the Church for you. And I want to encourage you, as Christian citizens of this country, to offer yourselves passionately and honestly to the great work of renewing your society and helping to build a better world.

In a special way, I thank the young people who have offered words of welcome to me: Jun, Leandro, Rikki and Glyzelle. Thank you very much.

And the small... the small representation of women. Too small! Women have much to say to us in today's society. Sometimes we are too "machista"; we don't make room for women. Women are able to see things differently than men. Women can ask questions that we men just don't get. Pay attention. She [pointing to Jun's friend Glyzelle] today asked the one question that doesn't have an answer. And she couldn't say it in words. She had to say it with tears. So that, when the next Pope comes to Manila, there should be more women.

I thank you, Jun, for being so brave in talking about your experience. As I just said, your question, deep down, is almost unanswerable. Only when we are able to weep over the things that you experienced, can we understand and give some kind of response. The great question for everybody is: "Why do children suffer?". Why do children suffer? Only when our hearts can ask this question and weep, can we begin to understand. There is a worldly compassion which is completely useless. You said something about this. A compassion which, at most, makes us reach into our pocket and take out a coin. If Christ had that kind of compassion, he would have passed by, cured three or four people, and then returned to the Father. Only when Christ wept, and he was capable of weeping, did he understand our troubles. Dear young men and women, our world today needs weeping. The marginalized weep, those who are neglected weep, the scorned weep, but those of us who have relatively comfortable life, we don't know how to weep. Certain realities of life are seen only with eyes that are cleansed by tears. I ask each one of you to ask: Can I weep? Can I weep when I see a child who is hungry, on drugs and on the street, homeless, abandoned, mistreated or exploited as a slave by society? Or is my weeping the self-centred whining of those who weep because they want to have something else? This is the first thing I would like to say to you. Let's learn to weep, the way [Glyzelle] taught us today. Let's not forget this witness. She asked the big question - why do children suffer? - by weeping; and the big answer which we can give, all of us, is to learn how to weep.

In the Gospel, Jesus wept. He wept for his dead friend. He wept in his heart for the family which lost its daughter. He wept in his heart when he saw the poor widowed mother who was burying her son. He was moved and he wept in his heart when he saw the crowds like sheep without a shepherd. If you don't learn how to weep, you are not a good Christian. And this is a challenge. Jun Chura and his friend Glyzelle who spoke today posed this challenge. When they ask us: Why do children suffer? Why does this or that tragedy occur in life?, let us respond either

by silence or with a word born of tears. Be brave. Don't be afraid to cry!

Then we heard from Leandro Santos, who was the second to speak. He asked questions about information and technology. Today, with so many kinds of media, we are informed, even over-informed. Is this a bad thing? No. It is good and useful, but we do run the risk of information overload. We have plenty of information, but maybe we don't know what to do with it all. We risk becoming "museums", storing up all sorts of things but not knowing what to do with them. We don't need young people who are storehouses, but young people who are wise.

You can ask me: Father, how can I become wise? This is another challenge: the challenge of love. What is the most important lesson which you have to learn at the University? What is the most important lesson that you have to learn in life? It is learning how to love. This is the challenge which life sets before you today. Learning how to love. Not just how to accumulate information. There comes a time when you don't know what to do with it all. It's a storehouse. Unless, through love, all this information can bear fruit.

For this to happen, the Gospel proposes to us a serene and tranquil thing to do. It is to use the three languages: the language of the mind, the language of the heart and the language of the hands. All three together, harmoniously: what you think, you feel and you do. Your information descends to the heart, moves it and gets translated into action. And all this in a harmonious way: I think what I feel and do, I feel what I think and what I do, and I do what I think and what I feel. The three languages. Are you ready to repeat these three languages? Thinking, feeling and acting. Say those words back to me. And all of this harmoniously.

True love is both loving and letting oneself be loved. It is harder to let ourselves be loved than it is to love. That is why it is so hard to achieve the perfect love of God, because we can love him but the important thing is to let ourselves be loved by him. True love is being open to that love which was there first and catches



us by surprise. If all you have is information, you are closed to surprises. Love makes you open to surprises. Love is always a surprise, because it starts with a dialogue between two persons: the one who loves and the one who is loved. We say that God is the God of surprises, because he always loved us first and he waits to take us by surprise. God surprises us. Let's allow ourselves to be surprised by God. Let's not have the psychology of a computer, thinking that we know everything. What do I mean? Think for a moment: the computer has all the answers: never a surprise. In the challenge of love, God shows up with surprises.

Think of Saint Matthew. He was a good businessman. He also betrayed his country because he collected taxes from the Jews and paid them to the Romans. He was loaded with money and he collected taxes. Then Jesus comes along, looks at him and says: "Come, follow me". Matthew couldn't believe it. If you have some time later, go look at the picture that Caravaggio painted about this scene. Jesus called him, like this (*stretching out his hand*). Those who were with Jesus were saying: "[He is calling] this man, a traitor, a scoundrel?" And Matthew hangs on to his money and doesn't want to leave. But the surprise of being loved wins him over and he follows Jesus. That morning, when Matthew was going off to work and said goodbye to his wife, he never thought that he was going to return in a hurry, without money to tell his wife to prepare a banquet. The banquet for the one who loved him first, who surprised him with something important, more important than all the money he had.

So let yourselves be surprised by God! Don't be afraid of surprises, afraid that they will shake you up. They make us insecure, but they change the direction we are going in. True love makes you "burn life", even at the risk of coming up empty-handed. Think of Saint Francis: he left everything, he died with empty hands, but with a full heart.

Do you agree? Not young people who are "museums", "storehouses", but young people who are wise. To be wise, use the three languages: think well, feel well and act well. And to be

wise, let yourselves be surprised by God's love, that will guarantee a good life!

Thank you for your contribution today!

The one who came with a good idea to help us to see how to get ahead in life was Rikki. He talked about all his activities, everything he is doing, everything that young people are doing, all the things that they can do. Thanks, Rikki, thanks for all that you and your friends are doing.

But I have a question. You and your friends are giving and giving, helping other people. But what about you? Do you let them give something to you? Ask yourselves, in your heart. In the Gospel we just heard, there is a phrase I think is the most important of all. The Gospel says that Jesus looked at that young man and loved him. When we see Rikki and his friends we like them because they do really good things, but Jesus tells us what is the most important thing. Jesus says: "Only one thing is lacking". Let's each of us listen silently to these words of Jesus: "Only one thing is lacking to you".

What is lacking to me? To all of you, whom Jesus loves so much because you give so generously to others, I ask: "Do you let people give you that other kind of wealth that you don't possess?"

The Sadducees and the teachers of the Law in Jesus' day gave much to the people: they gave the Law, they taught, but they never let the people give them anything. Jesus had to come so that he could be moved by people. How many young people - I'm not talking about you - but how many young people like you here today know how to give, but have not yet learned how to receive?

Only one thing is lacking. Become a beggar. That's what is lacking; learning to beg from those to whom we give. This is not easy to understand. Learning to beg. Learning to receive from the humility of the people we help. Learning to be evangelized by the poor. The persons we help, the poor, the sick, orphans, have much to give us. Will I become a begger and also ask this?

Or am I sufficient and will I only give? You who live by always giving, and think that you need nothing, do you realize that you are poor yourself? Do you realize that you are very poor and that you need what they can give you? Do you let yourself be evangelized by the poor, by the sick, by those you assist? This is what can help all those people who are committed like Rikki to trying to give to others: it is learning to stretch out our own hands from our poverty.

There are a couple of points which I had prepared. The first, and I have already said it, is about learning to love and to be loved. There is another challenge, the challenge of integrity. And the challenge of concern for the environment. This is not only because this country, more than many others, is likely to be seriously affected by climate change.

Finally there is the challenge of caring for the poor. Loving the poor. Your bishops want you to look at the poor in a special way this year. Do you think about the poor? Do you do anything for the poor? And do you ask the poor to give you that wisdom which they have? This is what I want to say to you. Pardon me that I read practically nothing of what I had prepared. But there is a phrase which gives me a little bit of consolation: "Realities are greater than ideas". "Realities are greater than ideas". And the reality which [the young people who spoke] described, your reality, is greater than the ideas which I had prepared. So thank you! Thank you very much! And pray for me!

### *Prepared speech of the Holy Father*

*Dear Young Friends,*

It is a joy for me to be with you this morning. I greet each of you from the heart, and I thank all those who made this meeting possible. During my visit to the Philippines, I wanted in a particular way to meet with young people, to listen to you and to talk with you. I want to express the love and the hopes of the Church for you. And I want to encourage you, as Christian citizens of this country, to offer yourselves passionately and

honestly to the great work of renewing your society and helping to build a better world.

In a special way, I thank the young people who have offered words of welcome to me. They have expressed eloquently, in your name, your concerns and worries, your faith and your hopes. They have spoken of the difficulties and the expectations of the young. Although I cannot respond to each of these issues at length, I know that, together with your pastors and among yourselves, you will prayerfully consider them and make concrete proposals for action in your lives.

Today I would like to suggest three key areas where you have a significant contribution to make to the life of your country. The first of these is *the challenge of integrity*. The word “challenge” can be understood in two ways. First, it can be understood negatively, as a temptation to act against your moral convictions, what you know to be true, good and right. Our integrity can be challenged by selfish interest, greed, dishonesty, or the willingness to use other people.

But the word “challenge” can be also understood positively. It can be seen as invitation to courage, a summons to bear prophetic witness to what you believe and hold sacred. In this sense, the challenge of integrity is something which you have to face now, at this time in your lives. It is not something you can put off until you are older or have greater responsibilities. Even now you are challenged to act with honesty and fairness in your dealings with others, young and old alike. Do not avoid the challenge! One of the greatest challenges young people face is learning to love. To love means to take a risk: the risk of rejection, the risk of being taken advantage of, or worse, of taking advantage of another. Do not be afraid to love! But in love, too, maintain your integrity! Here too, be honest and fair!

In the reading we have just heard, Paul tells Timothy: “Let no one have contempt for your youth, but set an example for those who believe, in speech, conduct, love, faith, and purity” (1 Tim 4:12). You are called, then, to set a good example, an example of integrity. Naturally, in doing this, you will encounter opposition,

negativity, discouragement, and even ridicule. But you have received a gift which enables you to rise above those difficulties. It is the gift of the Holy Spirit. If you nurture this gift by daily prayer and draw strength from sharing in the Eucharist, you will be able to achieve that moral greatness to which Jesus calls you. You will also be a compass for those of your friends who are struggling. I think especially of those young people who are tempted to lose hope, to abandon their high ideals, to drop out of school, or to live from day to day on the streets.

So it is essential not to lose your integrity! Not to compromise your ideals! Not to give in to temptations against goodness, holiness, courage and purity! Rise to the challenge! With Christ, you will be - indeed you already are! - the architects of a renewed and more just Filipino culture.

A second key area where you are called to make a contribution is in showing *concern for the environment*. This is not only because this country, more than many others, is likely to be seriously affected by climate change. You are called to care for creation not only as responsible citizens, but also as followers of Christ! Respect for the environment means more than simply using cleaner products or recycling what we use. These are important aspects, but not enough. We need to see, with the eyes of faith, the beauty of God's saving plan, the link between the natural environment and the dignity of the human person. Men and women are made in the image and likeness of God, and given dominion over creation (cf. *Gen 1:26-28*). As stewards of God's creation, we are called to make the earth a beautiful garden for the human family. When we destroy our forests, ravage our soil and pollute our seas, we betray that noble calling.

Three months ago, your Bishops addressed these issues in a prophetic Pastoral Letter. They asked everyone to think about the moral dimension of our activities and lifestyles, our consumption and our use of the earth's resources. Today I ask you to do this in the context of your own lives and your commitment to the building up of Christ's kingdom. Dear young people, the just use and stewardship of the earth's resources is

an urgent task, and you have an important contribution to make. You are the future of the Philippines. Be concerned about what is happening to your beautiful land!

A final area in which you can make a contribution is one dear to all of us. It is *care for the poor*. We are Christians. We are members of God's family. No matter how much or how little we have individually, each one of us is called to personally reach out and serve our brothers and sisters in need. There is always someone near us who is in need, materially, emotionally, spiritually. The greatest gift we can give to them is our friendship, our concern, our tenderness, our love for Jesus. To receive Jesus is to have everything; to give him is to give the greatest gift of all.

Many of you know what it is to be poor. But many of you have also experienced something of the blessedness that Jesus promised to "the poor in spirit" (cf. *Mt* 5:3). Here I would say a word of encouragement and gratitude to those of you who choose to follow our Lord in his poverty through a vocation to the priesthood and the religious life; by drawing on that poverty you will enrich many. But to all of you, especially those who can do more and give more, I ask: Please, do more! Please, give more! When you give of your time, your talents and your resources to the many people who struggle and who live on the margins, you make a difference. It is a difference that is so desperately needed, and one for which you will be richly rewarded by the Lord. For, as he has said: "you will have treasure in heaven" (*Mk* 10:21).

Twenty years ago, in this very place, Saint John Paul II said that the world needs "a new kind of young person" - one committed to the highest ideals and eager to build the civilization of love. Be those young persons! Never lose your idealism! Be joyful witnesses to God's love and the beautiful plan he has for us, for this country and for the world in which we live. Please pray for me. God bless you all!

## VII. HOLY MASS AT THE RIZAL PARK, MANILA

- *Homily of His Holiness Pope Francis*

18 January 2015

“A child is born to us, a son is given us” (*Is* 9:5). It is a special joy for me to celebrate Santo Niño Sunday with you. The image of the Holy Child Jesus accompanied the spread of the Gospel in this country from the beginning. Dressed in the robes of a king, crowned and holding the sceptre, the globe and the cross, he continues to remind us of the link between God’s Kingdom and the mystery of spiritual childhood. He tells us this in today’s Gospel: “Whoever does not accept the Kingdom of God like a child will not enter it” (*Mk* 10:15). The Santo Niño continues to proclaim to us that the light of God’s grace has shone upon a world dwelling in darkness, bringing the Good News of our freedom from slavery, and guiding us in the paths of peace, right and justice. The Santo Niño also reminds us of our call to spread the reign of Christ throughout the world.

In these days, throughout my visit, I have listened to you sing the song: “We are all God’s children”. That is what the Santo Niño tells us. He reminds us of our deepest identity. All of us are God’s children, members of God’s family. Today Saint Paul has told us that in Christ we have become God’s adopted children, brothers and sisters in Christ. This is who we are. This is our identity. We saw a beautiful expression of this when Filipinos rallied around our brothers and sisters affected by the typhoon.

The Apostle tells us that because God chose us, we have been richly blessed! God “has blessed us in Christ with every spiritual blessing in the heavens” (*Eph* 1:3). These words have a special resonance in the Philippines, for it is the foremost Catholic country in Asia; this is itself a special gift of God, a special blessing. But it is also a vocation. Filipinos are called to be outstanding missionaries of the faith in Asia.

God chose and blessed us for a purpose: to be holy and blameless in his sight (*Eph* 1:4). He chose us, each of us to be witnesses of his truth and his justice in this world. He created

the world as a beautiful garden and asked us to care for it. But through sin, man has disfigured that natural beauty; through sin, man has also destroyed the unity and beauty of our human family, creating social structures which perpetuate poverty, ignorance and corruption.

Sometimes, when we see the troubles, difficulties and wrongs all around us, we are tempted to give up. It seems that the promises of the Gospel do not apply; they are unreal. But the Bible tells us that the great threat to God's plan for us is, and always has been, the lie. The devil is the father of lies. Often he hides his snares behind the appearance of sophistication, the allure of being "modern", "like everyone else". He distracts us with the view of ephemeral pleasures, superficial pastimes. And so we squander our God-given gifts by tinkering with gadgets; we squander our money on gambling and drink; we turn in on ourselves. We forget to remain focused on the things that really matter. We forget to remain, at heart, children of God. That is sin: to forget, in one's heart, to be children of God. For children, as the Lord tells us, have their own wisdom, which is not the wisdom of the world. That is why the message of the Santo Niño is so important. He speaks powerfully to all of us. He reminds us of our deepest identity, of what we are called to be as God's family.

The Santo Niño also reminds us that this identity must be protected. The Christ Child is the protector of this great country. When he came into the world, his very life was threatened by a corrupt king. Jesus himself needed to be protected. He had an earthly protector: Saint Joseph. He had an earthly family, the Holy Family of Nazareth. So he reminds us of the importance of protecting our families, and those larger families which are the Church, God's family, and the world, our human family. Sadly, in our day, the family all too often needs to be protected against insidious attacks and programs contrary to all that we hold true and sacred, all that is most beautiful and noble in our culture.

In the Gospel, Jesus welcomes children, he embraces them and blesses them (*Mk 10:16*). We too need to protect, guide and encourage our young people, helping them to build a society



worthy of their great spiritual and cultural heritage. Specifically, we need to see each child as a gift to be welcomed, cherished and protected. And we need to care for our young people, not allowing them to be robbed of hope and condemned to life on the streets.

It was a frail child, in need of protection, who brought God's goodness, mercy and justice into the world. He resisted the dishonesty and corruption which are the legacy of sin, and he triumphed over them by the power of his cross. Now, at the end of my visit to the Philippines, I commend you to him, to Jesus who came among us as a child. May he enable all the beloved people of this country to work together, protecting one another, beginning with your families and communities, in building a world of justice, integrity and peace. May the Santo Niño continue to bless the Philippines and to sustain the Christians of this great nation in their vocation to be witnesses and missionaries of the joy of the Gospel, in Asia and in the whole world.

Please don't forget to pray for me! God bless.

*- Address of Most Rev. Socrates Villegas, Archbishop of  
Lingayen, President of CBCP*

Most Holy Father,

The sun is now setting on Manila Bay, the romantic poets among us called the Manila Bay sunset view as the most beautiful sunset in the world. The setting sun ends the day, the sunset ushers in the twilight, some of us are afraid of the sunset as we are afraid of the dark, but we are not afraid anymore, because yesterday in Tacloban, you taught us that love casts out all fear.

Your love for the Filipino people is stronger than all typhoons. Your love is typhoon proof. In the many days and months and years ahead, we will always bask in the sunrise because you have brought us awesome sunshine to last us many lifetimes.

Holy Father, you are our Sunshine! For many days since you came, last Thursday, it has been always sunrise of smiles for us Filipinos, we are not feeling the rain, you have brought us joy, you have brought us hope, you have brought us warmth and you have brought us Jesus.

Holy Father, when you give us the blessings tonight, we promise you, we will be your lights, we will be the lights of Jesus for Asia and the world. We will light the world with mercy and compassion, the mercy and compassion of Jesus, we will light the world with the joy of the Gospel.

On behalf of all the Bishops of the Philippines, Holy Father, please receive our message of gratitude for celebrating the Fiesta of Santo Nino with us today. As you can see Holy Father, we are a nation of children, beautiful children, Holy children, God-loving children. The children of the Philippines are our sunshine, too. Children are our happiness, children are our hope, children are our wealth, we are all children of our loving Father in heaven.

Holy Father, thank you for being a child of God with us, among us. You are our father. You have shown us to be our brother. You are our friend. You are our inspiration. You are our raincoat in the rain. You are our sunshine when it is cloudy. You are our joy when we are sad. Holy Father, you are our sunshine.

Pope Francis, we love you!

*- Address of His Eminence Luis Antonio G. Cardinal Tagle*

Beatissimo Padre, Most Holy Father!

In the name of the Archdiocese of Manila, of the millions of Filipinos here gathered tonight, in the name also of the people from government, the military, the police, the security people, from the mass communications, from the parishes and the many benefactors who worked tirelessly for your pastoral visit and in the name of every Filipino whom you have strengthened in faith these past days. I once again say to you, muchissimas gracias!

Tante grazie! Thank you very much! Maraming maraming salamat po!

I know many people want to say thank you to you, the street children, the orphans, the widows, the homeless, the informal settlers, the laborers, the farmers, the fisher folk , the sick, the abandoned elderly people, the families of missing persons, the victims of discrimination, violence, abuse, exploitation and human trafficking, the Filipino migrant workers and their families, the survivors of natural calamities and armed conflicts, the non-Christian Catholics, the followers of non-Christian religions, the promoters of peace especially in our beloved Mindanao and the whole of creation that groans, all of us want to say again and again, maraming salamat po Santo Padre!

You often end your meetings and encounters by saying: “Vi chiedo di pregare per me!” “I ask you to pray for me!” We, Filipinos promise, we will pray for you! But we also want to assure you, to remind you that Jesus, Jesus prays for you, Jesus himself said to Peter: “I have prayed for you, Peter that your own faith will not fail.

Your Holiness, you are blessed, Jesus prays for you, how blessed you are, Jesus prays for you and we your beloved Filipinos unite ourselves with Jesus in praying for you to God the Father. You arrived in the Philippines, three days ago, tomorrow you will go. Every Filipino wants to go with you.

Don't be afraid, every Filipino wants to go with you not to Rome but to the peripheries, we want to go with you to the shanties, to the prison cells, to hospitals, to the world of politics, finance, arts, the sciences, culture, education and social communication. We will go to those worlds with you to bring the light of Christ, Jesus is the center of your pastoral visit and the cornerstone of the Church. We will go Holy Father with you, where the light of Jesus is needed.

Here in Luneta, the Quirino Grandstand, where heroes are revered, where newly elected Presidents take office and popes meet the Filipino people, here in this place of new beginnings,

please Holy Father, send us as your missionaries of light, send us before you go Holy Father, before you go, send us your beloved Filipinos to spread the light of Jesus and wherever you see the light of Jesus shining, even in Rome, even in Santa Marta, remember the Filipino people are with you in spreading the light of Jesus.

Mabuhay ka, Santo Padre, sabihin po natin! (Let's repeat altogether) (Mabuhay, Santo Padre) Mabuhay Santo Papa! Mabuhay si Kristo (Mabuhay si Kristo) Let the light of Christ shine! (Let the light of Christ shine) Pakisindihan na po ang inyong mga kandila. (Please light up your candles)

### *Narration on the significance of the Light:*

In the beginning the universe was dark and cold, and the spirit hovered and brooded and whispered, let there be life, let there be light.

The Word was spoken and light and life came into being, God handed the light to human beings, and they handed the light on to their children, and their children handed the light on to their children.

The people who walk in darkness have seen a great light on those who live in shadows, on them God's light has shone.

In the dark of a stable in the town of Bethlehem, a new light was given to the world. The one who was there in the beginning came into the world.

In him was light, and the life was the light of peoples, the Word became flesh and lived among us. In the darkest hours just before sunrise, darkness gave way to a new dawn, an eternal dawn, eternal light shone upon the world.

The light became divided and humans try to possess it, to claim it as their own, yet the light was not defeated.

The light passed to those who love God's word, who translated it and placed it into the hands of believers.

The light passed to those who sought to understand God's creation and explored its wonders. The light passed to those who saw the dignity of human beings and fought to bring justice to the poor, freedom to those who were slaves.

The light waits. Who will keep the light burning in our day? Who will take the light into the world?

Who will carry the light, if we do not? Who will carry the light, if you do not?

### *Final Message of the Holy Father Pope Francis*

My dear brothers and sisters, we receive this light in baptism and we are entrusted to keep this light burning greatly, we have to spread this light when we were confirmed. I ask you now, keep the flame of faith alive in your hearts, alive in your hearts, walk always, walk always as children of the light, children of the light. This is the mission of every Christians, to spread the light and to tell the world of God's love.

## **VIII. DEPARTURE OF POPE FRANCIS**

*- Address of Most Rev. Socrates Villegas, Archbishop of  
Lingayen, President of CBCP*

*19 January 2015*

Gracias Señor!

Gracias Santo Padre!

Gracias!

Thank you!

Salamat!

In Tacloban, Holy Father, your voice pierced through the rains and strong winds. From your heart you intoned, Gracias!, looking up to the dark skies but clearly to heaven, and your gaze moving from the people patiently standing in the rain, to the image of the Blessed Mother tenderly holding the baby Jesus in her arms. Gracias!

You thanked the Lord for not leaving us orphans amidst desperation, loss, misery and pain. And at that moment we were one with you in your thanksgiving to God. But we were also lifting up our own gratitude to God for sending you to us. We know that you, too, will not leave us orphans. That you will be with us, suffering with us who are poor, aged, sick, disabled, deaf, crippled, abandoned and ignored.

Gracias Santo Padre for your tenderness as you comforted us and reassured us that Jesus will never abandon us.

Gracias Santo Padre for your warm smile that also came from your eyes, penetrating our heart, even our soul. How easily your smile came when you caught sight of the people jubilantly gathered to greet you in the streets, especially, unmindful of the heat, and in Tacloban and Palo, unmindful of the rain and wind. How spontaneously did your face brighten at the sight of the young people and the children whom you embraced and carried in your arms.

Gracias Santo Padre for personally showing us the face of mercy and compassion; the human face of Jesus Christ, the joy of the Good News in your words.

Gracias Santo Padre! We will never forget these five days. Our children and their children will never forget these five days, because we will tell them the stories of these five grace-filled days and they will tell them to their children. Your words in our stories will be imbedded in our and their hearts; a constant reminder of the love of Jesus; a voice pricking our conscience: love the poor, always have hope amidst trials, keep faith in the Lord, and pray, always pray. It is the voice of Jesus telling us, I am with you and I will not leave you orphans.

Gracias! Gracias! Thank you!

Salamat po, Pope Francis sa pagbisita sa amin! Mahal ka namin!  
Salamat! (Thank you, Pope Francis for visiting us! We love you!  
Thank you!)

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- 132b Word of God in the Life & Mission of the Church, 5th FABC - OE & CBF Asia-Oceania Biblical Congress and Bishops' Institute for the Biblical Apostolate (BIBA) III, by FABC Office of Evangelization in collaboration with The Catholic Biblical Federation (CBF), November 2011
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141. Climate Change, Asian Impacts and Response, Final Statement, II FABC Climate Change Seminar, by FABC Central Secretariat, June 2014
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