

**“APOSTOLIC JOURNEY OF HIS HOLINESS POPE FRANCIS
TO MYANMAR AND BANGLADESH”**

26 November - 2 December 2017

**Organized by
Catholic Bishops' Conference of Myanmar
Catholic Bishops' Conference of Bangladesh**

Edited by FABC Central Secretariat

CONTENTS

- I. Meeting with Government Authorities, the Civil Society and the Diplomatic Corps, International Convention Centre, Nay Pyi Taw, Myanmar**
- Address of His Holiness Pope Francis
- II. Holy Mass, Kyaikkasan Ground, Yangon**
- Homily of His Holiness Pope Francis
- Thanksgiving by His Eminence Charles Cardinal Bo
- III. Meeting with The Supreme Sangha Council of Buddhist Monks, Kaba Aye Centre, Yangon**
- Address of His Holiness Pope Francis
- IV. Meeting with the Bishops of Myanmar, Cathedral Complex, Yangon**
- Address of His Holiness Pope Francis
- V. Holy Mass with the Youth, St Mary's Cathedral, Yangon**
- Homily of His Holiness Pope Francis
- Thanksgiving by His Eminence Charles Cardinal Bo

- VI. Meeting with Government and Civil Authorities and the Diplomatic Corps, President House, Dhaka, Bangladesh**
- Address of His Holiness Pope Francis
- VII. Holy Mass and Priestly Ordination**
- Homily of His Holiness Pope Francis
- Words of Thanksgiving by His Eminence Patrick Cardinal D'Rozario, CSC
- VIII. Meeting with the Bishops of Bangladesh, Home for Retired Priests, Dhaka**
- Unprepared Remarks of the Holy Father before entering the Cathedral
- Address of the Holy Father
- IX. Ecumenical and Interreligious Meeting for Peace, Garden of the Archbishop's Residence, Dhaka**
- Address of the Holy Father
- Remarks of the Holy Father to the Group of Rohingya Refugees
- X. Meeting with Priests, Religious And Consecrated Men and Women, Seminarians and Novices, Holy Rosary Church, Dhaka**
- Impromptu Address of the Holy Father
- Prepared Address of the Holy Father

Appendix

Myanmar, Bangladesh: Catholics by the Numbers

I. MEETING WITH GOVERNMENT AUTHORITIES, THE CIVIL SOCIETY AND THE DIPLOMATIC CORPS, INTERNATIONAL CONVENTION CENTRE, NAY PYI TAW, MYANMAR

- *Address of His Holiness Pope Francis*

Tuesday, 28 November 2017

*Madam State Counsellor,
Honourable Government and Civil Authorities,
Your Eminence, My Brother Bishops,
Distinguished Members of the Diplomatic Corps,
Ladies and Gentlemen,*

I am grateful for the kind invitation to visit Myanmar and I thank you, Madam State Counsellor, for your kind words. I am very grateful to all who have worked so hard to make this visit possible. I have come, above all, to pray with the nation's small but fervent Catholic community, to confirm them in their faith, and to encourage them in their efforts to contribute to the good of the nation. I am most grateful that my visit comes soon after the establishment of formal diplomatic relations between Myanmar and the Holy See. I would like to see this decision as a sign of the nation's commitment to pursuing dialogue and constructive cooperation within the greater international community, even as it strives to renew the fabric of civil society.

I would also like my visit to embrace the entire population of Myanmar and to offer a word of encouragement to all those who are working to build a just, reconciled and inclusive social order. Myanmar has been blessed with great natural beauty and resources, yet its greatest treasure is its people, who have suffered greatly, and continue to suffer, from civil conflict and hostilities that have lasted all too long and created deep divisions. As the nation now works to restore peace, the healing of those wounds must be a paramount political and spiritual priority. I can only express appreciation for the efforts of the Government to take up this challenge, especially through the

Panglong Peace Conference, which brings together representatives of the various groups in an attempt to end violence, to build trust and to ensure respect for the rights of all who call this land their home.

Indeed, the arduous process of peace building and national reconciliation can only advance through a commitment to justice and respect for human rights. The wisdom of the ancients defined justice precisely as a steadfast will to give each person his due, while the prophets of old saw justice as the basis of all true and lasting peace. These insights, confirmed by the tragic experience of two world wars, led to the establishment of the United Nations and the universal declaration of human rights as the basis for the international community's efforts to promote justice, peace and human development worldwide, and to resolve conflicts through dialogue, not the use of force. In this sense, the presence of the diplomatic corps in our midst testifies not only to Myanmar's place in the concert of nations, but also to the country's commitment to uphold and pursue those foundational principles. The future of Myanmar must be peace, a peace based on respect for the dignity and rights of each member of society, respect for each ethnic group and its identity, respect for the rule of law, and respect for a democratic order that enables each individual and every group - none excluded - to offer its legitimate contribution to the common good.

In the great work of national reconciliation and integration, Myanmar's religious communities have a privileged role to play. Religious differences need not be a source of division and distrust, but rather a force for unity, forgiveness, tolerance and wise nation building. The religions can play a significant role in repairing the emotional, spiritual and psychological wounds of those who have suffered in the years of conflict. Drawing on deeply-held values, they can help to uproot the causes of conflict, build bridges of dialogue, seek justice and be a prophetic voice for all who suffer. It is a great sign of hope that leaders of the various religious traditions in this country are making efforts to work together, in a spirit of harmony and mutual respect, for

peace, for helping the poor and for educating in authentic religious and human values. In seeking to build a culture of encounter and solidarity, they contribute to the common good and to laying the indispensable moral foundations for a future of hope and prosperity for coming generations.

That future is even now in the hands of the nation's young people. The young are a gift to be cherished and encouraged, an investment that will yield a rich return if only they are given real opportunities for employment and quality education. This is an urgent requirement of intergenerational justice. The future of Myanmar in a rapidly changing and interconnected world will depend on the training of its young, not only in technical fields, but above all in the ethical values of honesty, integrity and human solidarity that can ensure the consolidation of democracy and the growth of unity and peace at every level of society. Intergenerational justice likewise demands that future generations inherit a natural environment unspoiled by human greed and depredation. It is essential that our young not be robbed of hope and of the chance to employ their idealism and talents in shaping the future of their country and, indeed, our entire human family.

Madam State Counsellor, dear friends:

In these days, I wish to encourage my Catholic brothers and sisters to persevere in their faith and to continue to express its message of reconciliation and brotherhood through charitable and humanitarian works that benefit society as a whole. It is my hope that, in respectful cooperation with the followers of other religions, and all men and women of good will, they will help to open a new era of concord and progress for the people of this beloved nation. "Long live Myanmar!" I thank you for your attention, and with prayerful good wishes for your service to the common good, I invoke upon all of you the divine blessings of wisdom, strength and peace. Thank you!

II. HOLY MASS, KYAIKKASAN GROUND, YANGON *- Homily of His Holiness Pope Francis*

Wednesday, 29 November 2017

Dear Brothers and Sisters, (greeting in Burmese language)

Before coming to this country, I very much looked forward to this moment. Many of you have come from far and remote mountainous areas, some even on foot. I have come as a fellow pilgrim to listen and to learn from you, as well as to offer you some words of hope and consolation.

Today's first reading, from the Book of Daniel, helps us to see how limited is the wisdom of King Belshazzar and his seers. They knew how to praise "gods of gold and silver, bronze, iron, wood and stone" (*Dn* 5:4), but they did not have the wisdom to praise God in whose hand is our life and breath. Daniel, on the other hand, had the wisdom of the Lord and was able to interpret his great mysteries.

The ultimate interpreter of God's mysteries is Jesus. He is the wisdom of God in person (cf. *1 Cor* 1:24). Jesus did not teach us his wisdom by long speeches or by grand demonstrations of political or earthly power but by giving his life on the cross. Sometimes we can fall into the trap of believing in our own wisdom, but the truth is we can easily lose our sense of direction. At those times we need to remember that we have a *sure compass* before us, in the crucified Lord. In the cross, we find the wisdom that can guide our life with the light that comes from God.

From the cross also comes *healing*. There, Jesus offered his wounds to the Father for us, the wounds by which we are healed (cf. *1 Pet* 2:24). May we always have the wisdom to find in the wounds of Christ the source of all healing! I know that many in Myanmar bear the wounds of violence, wounds both visible and invisible. The temptation is to respond to these injuries with a

worldly wisdom that, like that of the king in the first reading, is deeply flawed. We think that healing can come from anger and revenge. Yet the way of revenge is not the way of Jesus.

Jesus' way is radically different. When hatred and rejection led him to his passion and death, he responded with forgiveness and compassion. In today's Gospel, the Lord tells us that, like him, we too may encounter rejection and obstacles, yet he will give us a wisdom that cannot be resisted (cf. *Lk* 21:15). He is speaking of the Holy Spirit, through whom the love of God has been poured into our hearts (cf. *Rom* 5:5). By the gift of his Spirit, Jesus enables us each to be *signs* of his wisdom, which triumphs over the wisdom of this world, and his mercy, which soothes even the most painful of injuries.

On the eve of his passion, Jesus gave himself to his apostles under the signs of bread and wine. In the gift of the Eucharist, we not only recognize, with the eyes of faith, the gift of his body and blood; we also learn how to *rest in his wounds*, and there to be cleansed of all our sins and foolish ways. By taking refuge in Christ's wounds, dear brothers and sisters, may you know the healing balm of the Father's mercy and find the strength to bring it to others, to anoint every hurt and every painful memory. In this way, you will be faithful witnesses of the reconciliation and peace that God wants to reign in every human heart and in every community.

I know that the Church in Myanmar is already doing much to bring the healing balm of God's mercy to others, especially those most in need. There are clear signs that even with very limited means, many communities are proclaiming the Gospel to other tribal minorities, never forcing or coercing but always inviting and welcoming. Amid much poverty and difficulty, many of you offer practical assistance and solidarity to the poor and suffering. Through the daily ministrations of its bishops, priests, religious and catechists, and particularly through the praiseworthy work of *Catholic Karuna Myanmar* and the generous assistance provided by the Pontifical Mission Societies, the Church in this country is

helping great numbers of men, women and children, regardless of religion or ethnic background. I can see that the Church here is alive, that Christ is alive and here with you and with your brothers and sisters of other Christian communities. I encourage you to keep sharing with others the priceless wisdom that you have received, the love of God welling up in the heart of Jesus.

Jesus wants to give this wisdom in abundance. He will surely crown your efforts to sow seeds of healing and reconciliation in your families, communities and the wider society of this nation. Does he not tell us that his wisdom is irresistible (cf. *Lk 21:15*)? His message of forgiveness and mercy uses a logic that not all will want to understand, and which will encounter obstacles. Yet his love, revealed on the cross is ultimately unstoppable. It is like a *spiritual GPS* that unfailingly guides us towards the inner life of God and the heart of our neighbour.

Our Blessed Mother Mary followed her Son even to the dark mountain of Calvary and she accompanies us at every step of our earthly journey. May she obtain for us the grace always be to messengers of *true wisdom, heartfelt mercy* to those in need, and the *joy* that comes from *resting in the wounds* of Jesus, who loved us to the end.

May God bless all of you! May God bless the Church in Myanmar! May he bless this land with his peace! God bless Myanmar!

- Thanksgiving by His Eminence Charles Cardinal Bo

This is a Mount Tabor Experience.

The simple Catholics have the stirring experience.

We are today transported to a mountain of bliss.

Life will be never same to Catholics in Myanmar.

Just a year ago, the thought that this little flock will be breaking bread with our Holy Fr Francis would have been a just dream.

We are a small flock. We are like Zacchaeus. Amidst nations, we could not see our shepherd. Like Zacchaeus, we were called, come down, I want to come to your house. That is our Holy Father. Holy Father Francis: A good Shepherd goes after the small and those in the margin. You have broken the word and broken the bread.

Like the moving words of our Mother, we reecho again and again, "He has raised the lowly!" Our soul glorifies. Like the disciples at Mount Taber, we will go back. We go back with extraordinary spiritual energy, proud to be Catholics, challenged to live the Gospel.

This day would remain in every human heart that is here.

Our dearest Holy Father! Every Catholic here with a grateful heart salutes your generosity.

A miracle has been enacted today. We all go back as God's Miracle.

Thank you and this little flock pray for you

III. MEETING WITH THE SUPREME SANGHA COUNCIL OF BUDDHIST MONKS, KABA AYE CENTRE, YANGON

- Address of His Holiness Pope Francis

Wednesday, 29 November 2017

It is a great joy for me to be with you. I thank the Most Venerable Bhaddanta Dr Kumarabhivamsa, Chairman of the State Sangha Maha Nayaka Committee, for his words of welcome and for his efforts in organizing my visit here today. In greeting all of you, I express my particular appreciation for the presence of His Excellency Thura Aung Ko, Minister for Religious Affairs and Culture.

Our meeting is an important occasion to renew and strengthen the bonds of friendship and respect between Buddhists and Catholics. It is also an opportunity for us to affirm a commitment to peace, respect for human dignity and justice for every man and

woman. Not only in Myanmar, but also throughout the world, people need this common witness by religious leaders. For when we speak with one voice in affirming the timeless values of justice, peace and the fundamental dignity of each human person, we offer a word of hope. We help Buddhists, Catholics and all people to strive for greater harmony in their communities.

In every age, humanity experiences injustices, moments of conflict and inequality among peoples. In our own day these difficulties seem to be especially pronounced. Even though society has made great progress technologically, and people throughout the world are increasingly aware of their common humanity and destiny, the wounds of conflict, poverty and oppression persist, and create new divisions. In the face of these challenges, we must never grow resigned. For on the basis of our respective spiritual traditions, we know that there is a way forward, a way that leads to healing, mutual understanding and respect. A way based on compassion and loving kindness.

I express my esteem for the all those in Myanmar who live in accord with the religious traditions of Buddhism. Through the teachings of the Buddha, and the dedicated witness of so many monks and nuns, the people of this land have been formed in the values of patience, tolerance and respect for life, as well as a spirituality attentive to, and deeply respectful of, our natural environment. As we know, these values are essential to the integral development of society, starting with its smallest but most essential unit, the family, and extending through the network of relationships that bring us together – relationships rooted in culture, ethnicity and nationality, but ultimately in our common humanity. In a true culture of encounter, these values can strengthen our communities and help to bring much needed light to wider society.

The great challenge of our day is to help people be open to the transcendent. To be able to look deep within and to know themselves in such a way as to see their interconnectedness with all people. To realize that we cannot be isolated from one

another. If we are to be united, as is our purpose, we need to surmount all forms of misunderstanding, intolerance, prejudice and hatred. How can we do this? The words of the Buddha offer each of us a guide: "Overcome the angry by non-anger; overcome the wicked by goodness; overcome the miser by generosity; overcome the liar by truth" (*Dhammapada*, XVII, 223). Similar sentiments are voiced in a prayer attributed to Saint Francis of Assisi: "Lord, make me an instrument of your peace. Where there is hatred, let me sow love. Where there is injury, let me bring pardon... Where there is darkness, let me bring light, and where there is sadness, joy".

May that wisdom continue to inspire every effort to foster patience and understanding, and to heal the wounds of conflict that through the years have divided people of different cultures, ethnicities and religious convictions. Such efforts are never solely the purview of religious leaders, nor are they the competence of the state alone. Rather, it is the whole of society, all those present within the community, who must share in the work of overcoming conflict and injustice. Yet it is the particular responsibility of civil and religious leaders to ensure that every voice be heard, so that the challenges and needs of this moment may be clearly understood and confronted in a spirit of fairness and mutual solidarity. I commend the ongoing work of the Panglong Peace Conference in this regard, and I pray that those guiding this effort may continue to promote greater participation by all who live in Myanmar. This will surely assist the work of advancing peace, security and a prosperity inclusive of everyone.

Indeed, if these efforts are to bear lasting fruit, greater cooperation between religious leaders will be required. In this, I want you to know that the Catholic Church is a willing partner. Opportunities for religious leaders to encounter one another and to dialogue are proving to be a notable element in the promotion of justice and peace in Myanmar. I am aware that in April of this year the Catholic Bishops' Conference hosted a two-day peace meeting, at which leaders of the different religious communities took part, together with ambassadors and representatives of non-

governmental agencies. Such gatherings are essential if we are to deepen our understanding of one another and affirm our interconnectedness and common destiny. Authentic justice and lasting peace can only be achieved when they are guaranteed for all.

Dear friends, may Buddhists and Catholics walk together along this path of healing, and work side by side for the good of everyone who lives in this land. In the Christian Scriptures, the Apostle Paul challenges his hearers to rejoice with those who rejoice, while weeping with those who weep (cf. *Rom* 12:15), humbly bearing one another's burdens (cf. *Gal* 6:2). On behalf of my Catholic brothers and sisters, I express our readiness to continue walking with you and sowing seeds of peace and healing, compassion and hope in this land.

Once more, I thank you for inviting me to be with you today. Upon all of you I invoke the divine blessings of joy and peace.

IV. MEETING WITH THE BISHOPS OF MYANMAR, CATHEDRAL COMPLEX, YANGON

- Address of His Holiness Pope Francis

Wednesday, 29 November 2017

*Your Eminence,
My Brother Bishops,*

For all of us, this has been a busy day, but also a day of great joy! This morning we celebrated the Eucharist together with the faithful from throughout Myanmar, while this afternoon we met with leaders of the majority Buddhist community. I would like our encounter this evening to be a moment of quiet gratitude for these blessings and for peaceful reflection on the joys and challenges of your ministry as shepherds of Christ's flock in this country. I thank Bishop Felix [Lian Khen Thang] for his words of greeting in your name and I embrace all of you with great affection in the Lord.

I would like to group my own thoughts around three words: *healing, accompaniment* and *prophecy*.

First, *healing*. The Gospel we preach is above all a message of healing, reconciliation and peace. Through the blood of Christ's cross, God has reconciled the world to himself, and has sent us to be messengers of that healing grace. Here in Myanmar, that message has a particular resonance, as this country works to overcome deeply-rooted divisions and to build national unity. For you, whose flocks bear the scars of this conflict and have borne valiant witness to their faith and their ancient traditions, the preaching of the Gospel must not only be a source of consolation and strength, but also a summons to foster unity, charity and healing in the life of this nation. For the unity we share and celebrate is born of diversity. Never forget this - it is born of diversity! It values people's differences as a source of mutual enrichment and growth. It invites people to come together in a culture of encounter and solidarity.

In your episcopal ministry, may you constantly experience the Lord's guidance and help in your efforts to foster healing and communion at every level of the Church's life, so that by their example of forgiveness and reconciling love, God's holy people, your flock, can be salt and light for hearts longing for that peace the world cannot give. The Catholic community in Myanmar can be proud of its prophetic witness to love of God and neighbour, as expressed in its outreach to the poor, the disenfranchised, and above all in these days, to the many displaced persons who lie wounded, as it were, by the roadside. I ask you to offer my thanks to all who, like the Good Samaritan, work so generously to bring the balm of healing to these, their neighbours in need, without regard for religion or ethnicity.

Your ministry of healing finds particular expression in your commitment to ecumenical dialogue and interreligious cooperation. I pray that your continuing efforts to build bridges of dialogue and to join with the followers of other religions in weaving peaceful relations will bear rich fruit for reconciliation in

the life of the nation. The interfaith peace conference held in Yangon last spring was a powerful testimony before the world of the determination of the religions to live in peace and to reject every act of violence and hatred perpetrated in the name of religion.

And in this process of healing, remember that the Church is a “field hospital”. Heal, heal the wounded, heal souls, heal! This is your first mission: to heal, to heal the wounded.

My second word to you this evening is *accompaniment*. A good shepherd is constantly *present* to his flock, guiding them as he walks at their side. As I like to say, the shepherd should bear the smell of the sheep. But also, do not forget, the smell of God! In our time, we are called to be “a Church which goes forth” to bring the light of Christ to every periphery (cf. *Evangelii Gaudium*, 20). As bishops, your lives and ministry are called to model this spirit of missionary outreach, above all through your regular pastoral visitation of the parishes and communities that make up your local Churches. This is a privileged means for you, as loving fathers, to accompany your priests in the daily effort to build up the flock in holiness, fidelity and a spirit of service. I mentioned accompanying priests: stay close to your priests, do not forget that a bishop’s nearest neighbour is the priest. May each priest not only know, but also sense, that in the bishop he has a father.

By God’s grace, the Church in Myanmar has inherited a solid faith and a fervent missionary spirit from the labours of those who brought the Gospel to this land. On this firm foundation, and in a spirit of communion with your priests and religious, continue to imbue the laity with a spirit of true missionary discipleship and seek a wise inculturation of the Gospel message in the daily life and traditions of your local communities. The contribution of catechists is essential in this regard; their formation and enrichment must remain among your chief priorities. Do not forget that, in every parish, catechists are the pillars of evangelization.

Above all, I would ask you to make a special effort to accompany the young. Be concerned for their formation in the sound moral principles that will guide them in confronting the challenges of a world threatened by ideological and cultural forms of colonization. The next Synod of Bishops will not only address these issues but also directly engage young people, listening to their stories and enlisting them in our common discernment on how best to proclaim the Gospel in the years to come. One of the great blessings of the Church in Myanmar is its young people and, in particular, the number of seminarians and young religious. Let us thank God for this. In the spirit of the Synod, please engage them and support them in their journey of faith, for by their idealism and enthusiasm they are called to be joyful and convincing evangelizers of their contemporaries.

My third word to you is *prophecy*. The Church in Myanmar witnesses daily to the Gospel through its works of education and charity, its defence of human rights, its support for democratic rule. May you enable the Catholic community to continue to play a constructive part in the life of society by making your voices heard on issues of national interest, particularly by insisting on respect for the dignity and rights of all, especially the poorest and the most vulnerable. I am confident that the five-year pastoral strategy that the Church has developed within the larger context of nationbuilding will bear rich fruit for the future not only of your local communities but also of the country as a whole. Here I think in a special way of the need to protect the environment and to ensure a just use of the nation's rich natural resources for the benefit of future generations. The protection of God's gift of creation cannot be separated from a sound human and social ecology. Indeed, "genuine care for our relationship with nature is inseparable from fraternity, justice and keeping faith with others" (*Laudato Si*, 70).

Dear brother bishops, I thank God for this moment of communion and I pray that our presence together will strengthen us in our commitment to be faithful shepherds and servants of the flock that Christ has entrusted to our care. I know that your

ministry is demanding and that, together with your priests, you often labour under the heat and the burden of the day (cf. *Mt* 20:12). I urge you to maintain a balance between your spiritual and physical health, and to show paternal concern for the health of your priests.

Speaking of spiritual health, remember the first task of a bishop. When the first Christians heard the complaints of the Hellenists that their widows and orphans were being neglected, the Apostles got together and “invented” deacons. Peter announced this but he also announced the task of the bishop when he said: “We, for our part, will devote ourselves to prayer and to serving the word” (*Acts* 6:1-6). Prayer is the first task of the bishop. Each of us bishops will have to ask himself nightly in his examination of conscience: “How many hours did I pray today?”.

Dear brothers, I ask you, then, to keep a balance in your physical and spiritual health. Above all, I encourage you to grow daily in prayer and in the experience of God’s reconciling love, for that is the basis of your priestly identity, the guarantee of the soundness of your preaching, and the source of the pastoral charity by which you guide God’s people on the path of holiness and truth. With great affection I invoke the Lord’s grace upon you, the clergy and religious, and all the lay faithful of your local Churches. And I ask you, please, not to forget to pray for me.

And now let us join in prayer to Our Lady - you in your own language and I in Spanish - by reciting the “Hail Mary”. [Hail Mary]

May Almighty God bless you, the Father, and the Son, and the Holy Spirit.

V. HOLY MASS WITH THE YOUTH, ST MARY'S CATHEDRAL, YANGON

- *Homily of His Holiness Pope Francis*

Thursday, 30 November 2017

As my visit to your beautiful country draws to a close, I join you in thanking God for the many graces we have received in these days. Looking out at you, the young people of Myanmar, and all those who are united with us outside this cathedral, I want to share with you a phrase from today's first reading that resonates within me. Taken from the prophet Isaiah, it was echoed by Saint Paul in his letter to the young Christian community in Rome. Let us listen once again to those words: "*The footsteps of those who bring good news are a welcome sound*" (Rom 10:15; cf. Is 52:7).

Dear young people of Myanmar, hearing your young voices and listening to you sing today, I want to apply those words to you. Yes, *you* are "a welcome sound"; you are a beautiful and encouraging sight, for you bring us 'good news', the good news of your youth, your faith and your enthusiasm. Indeed, *you are* good news, because you are concrete signs of the Church's faith in Jesus Christ, who brings us a joy and a hope that will never die.

Some people ask how it is possible to speak of good news when so many people around us are suffering? Where is the good news when so much injustice, poverty and misery cast a shadow over us and our world? But I want a very clear message to go out from this place. I want people to know that you, the young men and women of Myanmar, are not afraid to believe in the good news of God's mercy, because it has *a name and a face: Jesus Christ*. As messengers of this good news, you are ready to bring a word of hope to the Church, to your own country, and to the wider world. You are ready to bring good news for your suffering brothers and sisters who need your prayers and your solidarity, but also your enthusiasm for human rights, for justice and for the growth of that "love and peace" which Jesus brings.

But I also have a challenge to set before you. Did you listen carefully to the first reading? There Saint Paul repeats three times the word *unless*. It is a little word, but it asks us to think about our place in God's plan. In effect, Paul asks three questions, and I want to put them to each of you personally. First, *how are people to believe* in the Lord unless they have *heard* about him? Second, *how are people to hear* about the Lord unless they have a *messenger*, someone to bring the good news? And third, *how can they have a messenger unless one is sent?*" (Rom 10:14-15).

I would like all of you to think deeply about these questions. But don't be worried! As a loving "father" (or better, a "grandfather"!), I don't want you to wrestle with these questions alone. Let me offer a few thoughts that can guide you on your journey of faith, and help you to discern what it is that the Lord is asking of you.

Saint Paul's first question is: "How are people to believe in the Lord unless they have *heard* about him?" Our world is full of many sounds, so many distractions, that can drown out God's voice. If others are to hear and believe in him, they need to find him in people who are *authentic*. People who know how to listen! That is surely what you want to be! But only the Lord can help you to be genuine, so talk to him in prayer. Learn to hear his voice, quietly speaking in the depths of your heart.

But talk also to the saints, our friends in heaven who can inspire us. Like Saint Andrew, whose feast we keep today. Andrew was a humble fisherman who became a great martyr, a witness to the love of Jesus. But before he became a martyr, he made his share of mistakes, and he needed to be patient, and to learn gradually how to be a true disciple of Christ. So do not be afraid to learn from your own mistakes! Let the saints lead you to Jesus and teach you to put your lives in his hands. You know that Jesus is full of mercy. So *share with him all that you hold in your hearts*: your fears and your worries, as well as your dreams and your hopes. Cultivate your interior life, as you would tend a garden or a

field. This takes time; it takes patience. But like a farmer who waits for the crops to grow, if you wait the Lord will make you bear much fruit, a fruit you can then share with others.

Paul's second question is: "How are they to hear about Jesus without a *messenger*?" Here is a great task entrusted in a special way to young people: to be "missionary disciples", messengers of the good news of Jesus, above all to your contemporaries and friends. Do not be afraid to make a ruckus, to ask questions that make people think! And don't worry if sometimes you feel that you are few and far between. The Gospel always grows from small beginnings. So make yourselves heard. I want you to shout! But not with your voices. No! I want you to *shout with your lives*, with your hearts, and in this way to be signs of hope to those who need encouragement, a helping hand to the sick, a welcome smile to the stranger, a kindly support to the lonely.

Paul's last question is: "How can people have a messenger unless one is *sent*?" At the end of this Mass we will all be sent forth, to take with us the gifts we have received and to share them with others. This can be a little daunting, since we don't always know where Jesus may be sending us. But he never sends us out without also walking at our side, and always just a little in front, leading us into new and wonderful parts of his kingdom.

How does our Lord send Saint Andrew and his brother Simon Peter in today's Gospel? "Follow me!", he tells them (*Mt 4:19*). That is what it means to be sent: to *follow* Christ, and not to charge ahead on our own! The Lord will invite some of you to follow him as priests, and in this way to become "fishers of men". Others he will call to become religious or consecrated men and women. And yet others he will call to the married life, to be loving fathers and mothers. Whatever your vocation, I urge you: be brave, be generous and, above all, be joyful!

Here in this beautiful cathedral dedicated to Our Lady's Immaculate Conception, I encourage you to look to Mary. When she said "yes" to the message of the angel, she was young, like

yourselves. Yet she had the courage to trust in the “good news” she had heard, and to express it in a life of faithful dedication to her vocation, total self-giving, and complete trust in God’s loving care. Like Mary, may all of you be gentle but courageous in bringing Jesus and his love to others.

Dear young people, with great affection I commend all of you, and your families, to her maternal intercession. And I ask you, please, to remember to pray for me.

God bless Myanmar!

[*Myanmar pyi ko Payarthakin Kaung gi pei pa sei*]

- *Thanksgiving by His Eminence Charles Cardinal Bo*

The Holy Father’s sacred pilgrimage of Love and Peace comes to an end today.

It does not end. Our dear Holy Father has handed over the work love and peace to the young people.

It has been very tough three days in Myanmar. But the sight of youth energizes our Holy Father in every part of the world.

He feels one with the youth of the world. His joy doubles in the company of youth. He trusts the youth. St. John Bosco trusted the youth.

Holy Father today we trust that the challenges faced by the country and the church can be faced with confidence by the youth. Today the colorful community of youth is a great hope not only for the church but for this country. Let all of you become a peace brigade, a peace army.

This mass is the culmination of a great journey by our Holy Father.

The Church’s role is to generate hope. Our Holy Father is the apostle of hope. For the last three days, Myanmar had the grace of being immersed in Christian Hope. His presence was the healing touch to this nation.

As he ends his apostolic visit, on behalf of the whole church of Myanmar, I wish to thank the Lord for this miracle of Our Holy Father amidst us. When you were elected Holy Father, you said the Fathers went to the remotest corner of the world to select the next Pope. As a Pope, you have chosen to bless the remotest Catholic communities. We are deeply moved by your paternal love for this church.

This is a blessed moment for us. We assure Your Holiness of our prayers as you start another three days of hard work.

May this nation's history be blessed from today because you have blessed this soil with your visit!

**VI. MEETING WITH GOVERNMENT AND CIVIL
AUTHORITIES AND THE DIPLOMATIC CORPS,
PRESIDENT HOUSE, DHAKA, BANGLADESH**

- Address of His Holiness Pope Francis

Thursday, 30 November 2017

*Mr. President,
Honourable State and Civil Authorities,
Your Eminence, My Brother Bishops,
Distinguished Members of the Diplomatic Corps,
Ladies and Gentlemen,*

At the beginning of my stay in Bangladesh, I would like to thank you, Mr President, for the kind invitation to visit this country and for your gracious words of welcome. I come here in the footsteps of two of my predecessors, Pope Paul VI and Pope John Paul II, to pray with my Catholic brothers and sisters, and to offer them a message of affection and encouragement. Bangladesh is a young state, yet it has always had a special place in the heart of the Popes, who from the start have expressed solidarity with its people, sought to accompany them in overcoming initial adversities, and supported them in the demanding task of nation building and development. I am grateful for the opportunity to address this assembly, which brings together men and women

with particular responsibilities for shaping the future of Bangladeshi society.

During my flight here, I was reminded that Bangladesh – “Golden Bengal” – is a country united by a vast network of rivers and waterways, great and small. That natural beauty is, I think, symbolic of your particular identity as a people. Bangladesh is a nation that strives to join unity of language and culture with respect for the different traditions and communities which, like so many streams, draw from, and return to enrich, the great current of the political and social life of the country.

In today’s world, no single community, nation or state can survive and make progress in isolation. As members of the one human family, we need one another and are dependent on one another. President Sheikh Mujibur Rahman understood and sought to embody this principle in the national Constitution. He envisioned a modern, pluralistic and inclusive society in which every person and community could live in freedom, peace and security, with respect for the innate dignity and equal rights of all. The future of this young democracy and the health of its political life are essentially linked to fidelity to that founding vision. For only through sincere dialogue and respect for legitimate diversity can a people reconcile divisions, overcome unilateral perspectives, and recognize the validity of differing viewpoints. Because true dialogue looks to the future, it builds unity in the service of the common good and is concerned for the needs of all citizens, especially the poor, the underprivileged and those who have no voice.

In recent months, the spirit of generosity and solidarity which is a distinguishing mark of Bangladeshi society has been seen most vividly in its humanitarian outreach to a massive influx of refugees from Rakhine State, providing them with temporary shelter and the basic necessities of life. This has been done at no little sacrifice. It has also been done before the eyes of the whole world. None of us can fail to be aware of the gravity of the situation, the immense toll of human suffering involved, and the

precarious living conditions of so many of our brothers and sisters, a majority of whom are women and children, crowded in the refugee camps. It is imperative that the international community take decisive measures to address this grave crisis, not only by working to resolve the political issues that have led to the mass displacement of people, but also by offering immediate material assistance to Bangladesh in its effort to respond effectively to urgent human needs.

Although my visit is primarily addressed to Bangladesh's Catholic community, a privileged moment will be my meeting tomorrow in Ramna with ecumenical and interreligious leaders. Together we will pray for peace and reaffirm our commitment to work for peace. Bangladesh is known for the harmony that has traditionally existed between followers of the various religions. This atmosphere of mutual respect, and a growing climate of interreligious dialogue, enables believers to express freely their deepest convictions about the meaning and purpose of life. In this way, they can contribute to promoting the spiritual values that are the sure basis for a just and peaceful society. In a world where religion is often – scandalously – misused to foment division, such a witness to its reconciling and unifying power is all the more necessary. This was seen in a particularly eloquent way in the common reaction of indignation that followed last year's brutal terrorist attack here in Dhaka, and in the clear message sent by the nation's religious authorities that the most holy name of God can never be invoked to justify hatred and violence against our fellow human beings.

Bangladesh's Catholics, though relatively few in number, nonetheless seek to play a constructive role in the development of the country, particularly through their schools, clinics and dispensaries. The Church appreciates the freedom to practice her faith and to pursue her charitable works, which benefit the entire nation, not least by providing young people, who represent the future of society, with a quality education and a training in sound ethical and human values. In her schools, the Church seeks to promote a culture of encounter that will enable students to take

up their responsibilities in the life of society. Indeed, the vast majority of the students and many of the teachers in these schools are not Christians, but from other religious traditions. I am confident that, in accordance with the letter and the spirit of the national Constitution, the Catholic community will continue to enjoy the freedom to carry out these good works as an expression of its commitment to the common good.

Mr. President, dear friends:

I thank you for your attention and I assure you of my prayers that in your lofty responsibilities, you will always be inspired by the high ideals of justice and service to your fellow citizens. Upon you, and upon all the people of Bangladesh, I willingly invoke the Almighty's blessings of harmony and peace.

VII. HOLY MASS AND PRIESTLY ORDINATION,
SUHRWARDY UDYAN PARK, DHAKA

- Homily of His Holiness Pope Francis

Friday, 1 December 2017

Beloved brothers and sisters: because these our sons, who are your relatives and friends, are now to be advanced to the Order of priests, consider carefully the nature of the rank in the Church to which they are about to be raised. It is true that God has made his entire holy people a royal priesthood in Christ. Nevertheless, our great Priest himself, Jesus Christ, chose certain disciples to carry out publicly in his name, and on behalf of mankind, a priestly office in the Church. For Christ was sent by the Father and he in turn sent the Apostles into the world, so that through them and their successors, the Bishops, he might continue to exercise his office of Teacher, Priest, and Shepherd. Indeed, priests are established co-workers of the Order of Bishops, with whom they are joined in the priestly office and with whom they are called to the service of the people of God.

After mature deliberation, these, our brothers, are now to be ordained to the priesthood in the Order of the presbyterate, so as to serve Christ the Teacher, Priest, and Shepherd, by whose ministry his body, that is, the Church, is built and grows into the people of God, a holy temple.

Now, dear sons, you are to be raised to the Order of the Priesthood. For your part, you will exercise the sacred duty of teaching in the name of Christ the Teacher. Impart to everyone the word of God which you have received with joy. Meditating on the law of the Lord, see that you believe what you read, that you teach what you believe, and that you practice what you teach.

In this way, let what you teach be nourishment for the people of God. Let the holiness of your lives be a delightful fragrance to Christ's faithful, so that by word and example you may build up the house which is God's Church.

Likewise you will exercise in Christ the office of sanctifying. For by your ministry the spiritual sacrifice of the faithful will be made perfect, being united to the sacrifice of Christ, which will be offered through your hands in an unbloody way on the altar, in union with the faithful, in the celebration of the sacraments. Understand, therefore, what you do and imitate what you celebrate. As celebrants of the mystery of the Lord's death and resurrection, strive to put to death whatever in your members is sinful and to walk in newness of life.

Remember, when you gather others into the people of God through Baptism, and when you forgive sins in the name of Christ and the Church in the sacrament of Penance; when you comfort the sick with holy oil and celebrate the sacred rites, when you offer prayers of praise and thanks to God throughout the hours of the day, not only for the people of God but for the world - remember then that you are taken from among men and appointed on their behalf for those things that pertain to God. Therefore, carry out the ministry of Christ the Priest with

constant joy and genuine love, attending not to your own concerns but to those of Jesus Christ.

Finally, dear sons, exercising for your part the office of Christ, Head and Shepherd, while united with the Bishop and subject to him, strive to bring the faithful together into one family, so that you may lead them to God the Father through Christ in the Holy Spirit. Keep always before your eyes the example of the Good Shepherd who came not to be served but to serve, and who came to seek out and save what was lost.

I would now like to say a word to you, my dear brothers and sisters who have come to this celebration, this great celebration of God in the ordination of these priests, our brothers. I know that many of you have come a great distance, a journey of over two days... thank you for your generosity! This is a sign of the love you have for the Church, a sign of the love you have for Jesus Christ. Thank you very much! Thank you for your generosity, thank you for your fidelity. Carry on, in the spirit of the Beatitudes.

I also encourage you, today, to keep praying for your priests, especially for these who will now receive the sacrament of Holy Orders. The people of God support their priests by prayer. It is your duty to support your priests. Some of you may ask me, "But Father, how do we go about supporting priests?" Trust in your generosity. The generosity of your heart will tell you how to support your priests. But the primary support of priests is prayer. The people of God - all of us, every one of us - support priests by our prayers. Never tire of praying for your priests. I know you will do this. Thank you! Now, let us continue with the rite of ordination of these deacons who will be your priests. Thank you.

*- Words of Thanksgiving by His Eminence Patrick Cardinal
D'Rozario, CSC*

Most Holy Father,

You love Bangladesh. You have expressed that love in many ways, your love has given joy to the People, to the "Little Flock" that we are as Christians. Your love has drawn the people from all over Bangladesh. They have come to express their love and their joy by celebrating the Eucharist in communion with you, the head of the pilgrim Church on earth. The Christian Community in Bangladesh is privileged to have this wonderful communion with you in our common pilgrimage. We are so grateful to you. Thank you, Holy Father.

The place where we have just celebrated the Holy Eucharist is historical in so many ways. On this ground the Father of the Nation, Bangabandhu Sheikh Mujibur Rahman, gave his world-famous speech of March 7, 1971, calling for the Independence of Bangladesh. On this very ground, we Christians have celebrated for the first time the Holy Eucharist, making the ground more meaningful and symbolizing the special role of the Church in this Nation.

Like your Predecessor of Holy Memory, Pope John Paul II, now a Saint, you have ordained sixteen young men to the priesthood. How happy and fortunate they are, experiencing a memorable and graceful event today, which will be lasting in their own lives and that of the Church in Bangladesh. Together with these new priests we thank you Holy Father.

The first Pope coming to this land was Pope Paul IV in November 26, 1970, especially to express his love and mercy to the victims of the unprecedented tidal deluge which took away lives of about 3 million people. You have also come to show your love and care to all those who need most. The entire Christian Community of Bangladesh and those present here, sincerely and lovingly wish

that your pastoral visit will bring an abundance of blessings to the Church and to the entire nation.

Thank you, Holy Father!

**VIII. MEETING WITH THE BISHOPS BANGLADESH,
HOME FOR RETIRED PRIESTS, DHAKA**

- *Unprepared Remarks of the Holy Father before entering the Cathedral*
- *Address of the Holy Father*

Friday, 1 December 2017

- *Unprepared Remarks of the Holy Father Before Entering the Cathedral*

Good afternoon!

I thank all of you who are here, Christian leaders and lay people who work in the service of God's kingdom. They told me I had to say a few words to you, and one word comes to mind, which I would like to share with you. The Apostle Paul said that he felt in his heart: "Woe to me if I do not proclaim the Gospel!" (1 Cor 9:16).

We want the Gospel to be lived as a grace, a treasure, which we have received freely. We need to ask the Lord to give us the grace to feel as Paul did: to feel that fire, that burning in our hearts, to evangelize. This has nothing to do with proselytizing, not at all. The Church, the Kingdom of God, does not grow by proselytizing. She grows by witness. That means showing by our words and our lives the treasure we have received. That is what it means to evangelize. I live this way, I live this word, and may others see this; but that is not to proselytize.

I thank you for all that you are doing, I thank you for your commitment, I thank you for showing forth the gift that God has given us.

And I dare to ask you a favour. Guard the treasure that God has given us in the Gospel. The best means to guard it is God's grace. So I ask you to keep praying, for his grace to come and enable you to guard this treasure.

Let us continue, then, to let others see this treasure which God freely gave us and which we must freely offer to others. And now, as brothers and sisters, all together, let us implore this grace for one another, by praying the prayer that Jesus taught us: "Our Father..."

May the Lord bless you and keep you. May he make his face shine upon you and be gracious to you. May he lift up his countenance upon you and give you peace. Amen.

Do not forget to pray for me.

- Address of the Holy Father

*Your Eminence,
Dear Brother Bishops,*

How good it is for us to be together! I thank Cardinal Patrick [D'Rozario] for his words of introduction, which presented the varied spiritual and pastoral works of the Church in Bangladesh. I particularly appreciated his reference to the farsighted Pastoral Plan of 1985, which laid out the evangelical principles and priorities that have guided the life and mission of the ecclesial community in this young nation. My own experience of Aparecida, which launched the continental mission in South America, has convinced me of the fruitfulness of such plans, which engage the entire people of God in an ongoing process of discernment and action.

I am also pleased at the long life this pastoral plan has had, since one of the "diseases" of pastoral plans is that they die young. This one has lasted since 1985: congratulations! Clearly, it was

well done, and reflects the reality of the country and its pastoral needs. It also reflects the perseverance of the bishops.

The reality of *communion* was at the heart of the Pastoral Plan, and it continues to inspire the missionary zeal that distinguishes the Church in Bangladesh. Your own episcopal leadership has traditionally been marked by a spirit of collegiality and mutual support. This is no small thing! This spirit of affective collegiality is shared by your priests, and through them, has spread to the parishes, communities and manifold apostolates of your local Churches. It finds expression in the seriousness with which you, in your dioceses, engage in pastoral visitations and demonstrate practical concern for the welfare of your people. I ask you to persevere in this *ministry of presence*. I would stress what that involves: it is not only about being seen – that you can do on television – but about being present in the way that God is present to us. He came among us, he drew near to us in the incarnation of the Word, in “condescension”, the condescension of the Father who sent his Son to become one of us. I like this expression: “ministry of presence”. The bishop is one who is present, always close and at hand. Always! Let me say it again: persevere in this ministry of presence, which can only strengthen the bonds of communion uniting you to your priests, who are your brothers, sons and co-workers in the Lord’s vineyard, and to the men and women religious who make so crucial a contribution to Catholic life in this country.

I would also make a point about men and women religious. We are used to saying that there are two paths to holiness in the Church: the priesthood and the lay vocation. But the Sisters, what are they? Laypersons? No. Please, we need to promote the idea that there is a third path to holiness: the path of consecrated life. That is not an adjective, as in “He or she is a consecrated lay person”. It is a noun: “He is a consecrated person; she is a consecrated person”. Just as we say, “He or she is a lay person”, or “He is a priest”. This is important.

At the same time, I would ask you to show ever greater pastoral closeness to the lay faithful. They need to grow. There is a need to promote their effective participation in the life of your particular Churches, not least through the canonical structures that provide for their voices to be heard and their experiences acknowledged. Recognize and value the charisms of lay men and women, and encourage them to put their gifts at the service of the Church and of society as a whole. I think here of the many dedicated catechists in this country; they are the pillars of evangelization and their apostolate is essential for the growth of the faith and for the Christian formation of the next generation. They are true missionaries and leaders of prayer, especially in the more remote areas. Be concerned for their spiritual needs and for their continuing education in the faith.

Catechists... but also the lay people who assist you at close hand as consultors: pastoral advisors, consultors in financial matters. In a meeting six months ago, I heard it said that perhaps a few more than half of the dioceses, half or a few more, have the two advisory boards called for by canon law: pastoral and financial. And the other half? It is not only a law, not only a help, it is a space for the laity.

In these months of preparation for the next assembly of the Synod of Bishops, all of us are challenged to think about how best to share with our young people the joy, the truth and the beauty of our faith. Bangladesh has been blessed with vocations to the priesthood – today we saw this! – and to the religious life; it is important to ensure that candidates be well-prepared to communicate the richness of the faith to others, particularly to their own contemporaries. In a spirit of communion that bridges the generations, help them to take up with joy and enthusiasm the work others have begun, knowing that they themselves will one day be called to pass it on in turn.

This interior sense of having received a legacy that needs to be enriched and passed on: this is the apostolic spirit of a presbyterate. Young people need to know that the world did not

begin with them, that they have to find their roots, their historical and religious roots... and to let those roots grow and bear fruit. Teach the young not to be rootless; teach them to talk with the elderly. When I came here today, the minor seminarians were here to greet me. I should have asked them two quick questions, but I only asked one, the first and most natural one: "Do you play soccer?" Everyone said, "Yes!". But the second would have been: "Do you go and visit your "grandparents", your elderly priests? To listen to the story of their lives and their apostolate?". Seminary formators should train young seminarians to listen to elderly priests: that is where their roots are; that is where the wisdom of the Church is found.

An impressive outreach of the Church in Bangladesh is directed to assisting families and, in a specific way, working for the advancement of women. The people of this country are known for their love of family, their sense of hospitality, the respect they show to parents and grandparents, and the care they give to the aged, the infirm and the vulnerable. These values are confirmed and elevated by the Gospel of Jesus Christ. A special word of gratitude is due to all those who work quietly to support Christian families in their mission of bearing daily witness to the Lord's reconciling love and in making known its redemptive power. As *Ecclesia in Asia* pointed out, "the family is not simply the object of the Church's pastoral care; it is one of the Church's most effective agents of evangelization" (No. 46).

A significant goal set out in the Pastoral Plan, and one that has indeed proved prophetic, is the *option for the poor*. The Catholic community in Bangladesh can be proud of its history of service to the poor, especially in remote areas and tribal communities; it continues this outreach daily through its educational apostolates, its hospitals, clinics and health centres, and the variety of its organized charitable works. Yet, especially in light of the present refugee crisis, we see how much more needs to be done! The inspiration for your works of assistance to the needy must always be that pastoral charity which is quick to recognize human woundedness and to respond with generosity, one person at a

time. By working to create a “culture of mercy” (cf. *Misericordia et Misera*, 20), your local Churches demonstrate their option for the poor, reinforce their proclamation of the Father’s infinite mercy, and contribute in no small measure to the integral development of their homeland.

An important part of my pastoral visit to Bangladesh is the interreligious and ecumenical encounter that will take place immediately following our meeting. Yours is a nation where ethnic diversity is mirrored in a diversity of religious traditions. The Church’s commitment to pursuing interreligious understanding through seminars and educational programmes, as well as through personal contacts and invitations, contributes to the spread of good will and harmony. Work unremittingly to build bridges and to foster dialogue, for these efforts not only facilitate communication between different religious groups, but also awaken the spiritual energies needed for the work of nationbuilding in unity, justice and peace. When religious leaders speak out with one voice against the violence that parades as religion and seek to replace the culture of conflict with the culture of encounter, they draw from the deepest spiritual roots of their various traditions. They also provide an inestimable service to the future of their countries and our world by educating the young in the way of justice, “helping them along the path to maturity, and teaching them to respond to the incendiary logic of evil by patiently working for the growth of goodness” (*Address to the International Peace Conference, Al-Azhar, Cairo, 28 April 2017*).

Dear brother bishops, I am grateful to the Lord for these moments of conversation and fraternal sharing. I am also happy that this Apostolic Journey, which has brought me to Bangladesh, has enabled me to witness the vitality and missionary fervour of the Church in this country. In offering up the joys and difficulties of your local communities to the Lord, let us together ask for a fresh outpouring of the Holy Spirit, to grant us “the courage to proclaim the newness of the Gospel with boldness – *parrhesia* – in every time and place, even when it meets with opposition”

(*Evangelii Gaudium*, 259). May the priests, religious, consecrated men and women, and the lay faithful entrusted to your pastoral care, find ever renewed strength in their efforts to be “evangelizers who proclaim the good news not only with words, but above all by a life transfigured by God’s presence” (*ibid.*). To all of you, with great affection, I give you my blessing, and I ask you, please, to pray for me. Thank you.

**IX. ECUMENICAL AND INTERRELIGIOUS MEETING FOR
PEACE, GARDEN OF THE ARCHBISHOP’ S
RESIDENCE, DHAKA**

- *Address of the Holy Father*
- *Remarks of the Holy Father to the Group of Rohingya Refugees*

Friday, 1 December 2017

- *Address of the Holy Father*

*Distinguished Guests,
Dear Friends,*

Our meeting, which brings together representatives of the various religious communities present in this country, represents a highly significant moment in my Visit to Bangladesh. For we have gathered to deepen our friendship and to express our shared desire for the gift of genuine and lasting peace.

My thanks go to Cardinal D’Rozario for his kind words of welcome, and to those who have greeted me warmly on behalf of the Muslim, Hindu, Buddhist and Christian communities, and in the name of civil society. I am grateful to the Anglican bishop of Dhaka for his presence, to the various Christian communities, and to all those who have helped to make this gathering possible.

The words we have heard, but also the songs and dances that have enlivened our assembly, have spoken to us eloquently of the

yearning for harmony, fraternity and peace embodied in the teachings of the world's religions. May our meeting this afternoon be a clear sign of the efforts of the leaders and followers of the religions present in this country to live together in mutual respect and good will. In Bangladesh, where the right to religious freedom is a founding principle, this commitment stands as a subtle yet firm rebuke to those who would seek to foment division, hatred and violence in the name of religion.

It is a particularly gratifying sign of our times that believers and all people of good will feel increasingly called to cooperate in shaping a culture of encounter, dialogue and cooperation in the service of our human family. This entails more than mere tolerance. It challenges us to reach out to others in mutual trust and understanding, and so to build a unity that sees diversity not as a threat, but as a potential source of enrichment and growth. It challenges us to cultivate an *openness of heart* that views others as an avenue, not a barrier.

Allow me to explore with you briefly some essential features of this "openness of heart" that is the condition for a culture of encounter.

First, it is a *door*. It is not an abstract theory but a lived experience. It enables us to embark on a dialogue of life, not a mere exchange of ideas. It calls for good will and acceptance, yet it is not to be confused with indifference or reticence in expressing our most deeply held convictions. To engage fruitfully with another means sharing our distinct religious and cultural identity, but always with humility, honesty and respect.

Openness of heart is also like a *ladder* that reaches up to the Absolute. By recalling this transcendent dimension of our activity, we realize the need for our hearts to be purified, so that we can see all things in their truest perspective. As with each step our vision becomes clearer, we receive the strength to persevere in the effort to understand and value others and their

point of view. In this way, we will find the wisdom and strength needed to extend the hand of friendship to all.

Openness of heart is likewise a *path* that leads to the pursuit of goodness, justice and solidarity. It leads to seeking the good of our neighbours. In his letter to the Christians in Rome, Saint Paul urged his hearers: “Do not be overcome by evil, but overcome evil with good” (*Rom 12:21*). This is a sentiment that all of us can echo. Religious concern for the welfare of our neighbour, streaming from an open heart, flows outward like a vast river, to quench the dry and parched wastelands of hatred, corruption, poverty and violence that so damage human lives, tear families apart, and disfigure the gift of creation.

Bangladesh’s different religious communities have embraced this path in a particular way by their commitment to the care of the earth, our common home, and by their response to the natural disasters that have beset the nation in recent years. I think too of the common outpouring of grief, prayer and solidarity that accompanied the tragic collapse of Rana Plaza, which remains fresh in the minds of all. In these various ways, we see how the path of goodness leads to cooperation in the service of others.

A spirit of openness, acceptance and cooperation between believers does not simply contribute to a culture of harmony and peace; it is its beating heart. How much our world needs this heart to beat strongly, to counter the virus of political corruption, destructive religious ideologies, and the temptation to turn a blind eye to the needs of the poor, refugees, persecuted minorities, and those who are most vulnerable. How much, too, is such openness needed in order to reach out to the many people in our world, especially the young, who at times feel alone and bewildered as they search for meaning in life!

Dear friends, I thank you for your efforts to promote the culture of encounter, and I pray that, by demonstrating the common commitment of believers to discerning the good and putting it into practice, they will help all believers to grow in wisdom and

holiness, and to cooperate in building an ever more humane, united and peaceful world.

I open my own heart to all of you, and I thank you once more for your welcome. Let us remember one another in our prayers.

- Remarks of the Holy Father to the Group of Rohingya Refugees

Dear brothers and sisters, all of us are close to you. There is little that we can do because your tragedy is so great. But let us make room in our heart. In the name of everyone, of those who persecute you, of those who have wronged you, above all for the indifference of the world, I ask your forgiveness. Forgiveness. So many of you have told me about the Bangladesh's big heart that has welcomed you. Now I appeal to your big heart, that it can grant us the forgiveness we seek.

Dear brothers and sisters, the Judaeo-Christian creation account says that the Lord who is God created man in his image and likeness. All of us are this image. These brothers and sisters of ours, as well. They too are an image of the living God. One of your religious traditions says that God, in the beginning, took some salt and cast it in the water that was the soul of all men and women. Each of us carries within himself a little of the divine salt. These brothers and sisters of ours carry within them the salt of God.

Dear brothers and sisters, let us only make the world see what the world's selfishness is doing with the image of God. Let us continue to do good for them, to help them. Let us continue to work actively for the recognition of their rights. Let us not close our hearts, or look the other way. The presence of God, today, is also called "Rohingya". May each of us respond in his or her own way.

X. MEETING WITH PRIESTS, RELIGIOUS AND
CONSECRATED MEN AND WOMEN, SEMINARIANS
AND NOVICES, HOLY ROSARY CHURCH (DHAKA)

- *Impromptu Address of the Holy Father*

Saturday, 2 December 2017

Dear Brothers and Sisters,

I thank Archbishop Moses Costa for his introduction and you for your talks. I have here an eight-page written address... But we came here to listen to the Pope, not to get bored! So I will give the address to the Cardinal to have it translated into Bengali, and I will talk to you from the heart. I don't know if it will be better or worse, but believe me, it will be less boring!

When I entered and was greeting all of you, I thought of an image used by the prophet Isaiah: It is the first reading that we will hear next Tuesday. In those days, a shoot shall come out from the house of Israel. That shoot will grow and be filled with the Spirit of God, the Spirit of wisdom, understanding, knowledge, piety and fear of the Lord (cf. *Is* 11:1-2). We can say that Isaiah here describes the overall life of faith, the life of service to God. And by speaking of the life of faith and of service to God, he includes you, because you are men and women of faith, men and women who serve God.

Let's begin with the shoot. A shoot still in the ground, but sprouting from the seed. The seed is neither yours nor mine: God sows the seed and God makes it grow. Each one of us can say: "I am that shoot". True, but not because of your own merits, but that of the seed which makes you grow.

What do I have to do? Water that seed! So that it can grow into that spiritual fullness. That is what you have to give as your witness.

How can we water the seed? By caring for it. By caring for the seed and caring for the shoot that begins to sprout! By caring for the vocation that we have received. As we care for a child, as we care for a sick person, as we care for an elderly person. A vocation is cared for by human tenderness. If in our communities, in our presbyterates, this dimension of human tenderness is lacking, the shoot stays small, it doesn't grow, and it can even wither. Caring tenderly. Because each brother of the presbyterate, each brother of the episcopal conference, each brother and sister of my religious community, each brother seminarian is a seed of God. And God looks upon that seed with a father's tender love.

True, at night the enemy can steal in and sow other seed, and there is the risk that the good seed will be choked by the bad. How ugly are those weeds in our presbyterates... How ugly are those weeds in our Episcopal Conferences... How ugly are those weeds in our religious communities and seminaries. We need to care for the shoot, the shoot of the good seed, and to watch how it grows. To keep seeing how it distinguishes itself from the bad seed and the weeds.

One of you - I think it was Marcellus - spoke of "discerning every day how my vocation is growing". Caring means discerning. Realizing that as the plant grows, if it goes in one direction, it grows well; if instead it goes in another direction, it grows poorly. And considering whether it is growing badly, or if there are groups or individuals or situations that threaten its growth. Discerning. We can only discern when we have a heart that prays. Praying. Caring means praying. It means asking the sower of the seed to teach me how to water it. And if I am troubled, or dozing off, asking him to water it a little for me. Praying means asking the Lord to take care of us. To give us the tender love that we must give to others. This is the first idea that I would like to share with you: the idea of *caring for the seed*, so that the shoot will grow to the fullness of the wisdom of God. To care for it attentively, with prayer, with discernment. To care for

it with tender love. Because that is how God cares for us: with a Father's care.

The second thought that comes to me is that in this garden of the kingdom of God there is more than one shoot: there are thousands and thousands of shoots. All of us are shoots. *It is not easy to be a community.* It is not easy. Human passions, faults and limitations always threaten community life. They threaten peace. The community of consecrated life, the community of the seminary, the community of the presbyterate and the community of the Episcopal Conference need to be able to defend themselves from all kinds of division. Yesterday we thanked God for the example that Bangladesh has been able to give in the area of interreligious dialogue. One of the speakers quoted a phrase of Cardinal Tauran, who said that Bangladesh is the best example of harmony in interreligious dialogue [applause]. This applause is for Cardinal Tauran. If we said that yesterday about interreligious dialogue, are we going to do otherwise within our own faith, our Catholic confession, our communities? Here too, Bangladesh must be an example of harmony!

There are many enemies of harmony, many indeed. I always like to mention one, which can suffice as an example. Maybe someone can criticize me for saying the same thing over and over, but for me it is essential. The enemy of harmony in a religious community, a presbyterate, an episcopate and a seminary is the spirit of gossip. This is not something I invented: two thousand years ago, a certain James spoke about it in a letter that he wrote to the Church. The tongue, my brothers and sisters, the tongue. What destroys a community is speaking ill of others. Dwelling on the faults of others. Not speaking to the person, but saying things to others and thus creating an environment of distrust, an environment of suspicion, an environment in which there is no peace, but division. There is one image I like to use in describing the spirit of gossip. It is terrorism. Yes, terrorism, because those who speak ill of others do not do so publicly. The terrorist does not say publicly: "I'm a terrorist". And those who speak ill others, do so in secret: they speak to someone, throw the

bomb and off they go. And the bomb wreaks havoc. And the bomb-thrower goes off serenely to throw another bomb. Dear sister, dear brother, when you want to speak ill of another person, bite your tongue! Most probably, it will swell up, but you will not wrong your brother or your sister.

The spirit of division. How many times in Saint Paul's letters do we read of the sorrow that Paul felt when this spirit entered the Church. Certainly, you can ask me: "But, Father, if I see a fault in a brother or sister, and I want to correct it, or tell them about it, but I can't throw a bomb... then what can I do?" You can do two things: do not forget them. The first, if it is possible - since it isn't always possible - is to tell that person, face-to-face. Jesus gives us this advice. True enough, someone can say to me: "No, it can't be done, Father, because he or she is a complicated person". Complicated, just like you! Well then, it can be that, for the sake of prudence, it won't help. Second principle: if you can't say it to the person, say it to someone who can do something about it, but do so privately, with charity. How many communities - and I'm not repeating hearsay, I'm talking about what I've seen - how many communities have I seen destroyed by the spirit of gossip! Please, bite your tongue in time!

The third thing I wanted to say - at least it is not so boring... You'll get the boring stuff there in the written text - is to try to have, to ask for and to have, a *spirit of joy*. Without joy, we cannot serve God. I ask each of you - but answer me silently, not out loud: "How is your joy going?" I assure you that it is truly sad to meet priests, consecrated men or women, seminarians, bishops who are bitter, gloomy. They make you want to ask: "What did you have with your breakfast this morning... vinegar?" Sourpusses. That bitterness of heart, when the bad seed comes and says: "Ah, look, look whom they made a Superior, whom they made a bishop... And they overlooked me!" There is no joy there. Saint Teresa - the big one - has a saying, and it is a curse. She says it to her nuns: "Woe to the nun who says: They did me an injustice!" When she would meet a Sister who grumbled because "They didn't give me what they

should have”, or “They didn’t promote me”, “They didn’t make me prioress”, or some such thing. Woe to that nun, she is on the wrong road.

Joy. Joy also at times of difficulty. A joy that, if it cannot be a smile because the pain is so great, is peace. I think of the scene of the other Teresa – the little one – Theresa of the Child Jesus. Every evening she had to walk to the refectory with an old, unpleasant, irritable and sick nun, poor thing, who complained about everything. And if Theresa touched her anywhere, the other nun would say: “No, that hurts!” One evening, as she was walking with her through the cloister, from a nearby house she heard the music of a party, the music of people who were having a good time, good people, as she too had done and seen her sisters doing. She imagined the people dancing and she thought: “This is my great joy, and I would not change it for any other”. Even when there are problems or difficulties in the community – having at times to put up with a Superior who is a bit odd – at those times, to be able to say: “I am happy, Lord. I am happy”. That was what Saint Alberto Hurtado used to say.

Heartfelt joy. Believe me, I am deeply touched when I meet elderly priests, bishops or sisters who have lived life to the full. Their eyes are indescribable, so full of joy and peace. Others, who have not lived their life that way, well, God is good, God will take care of them, but they lack that twinkle in the eye that you see in those whose lives were filled with joy. Try to look for this – it is particularly evident in women – try to look for this in the elderly Sisters, in those Sisters who spent their entire life in service, with great joy and peace. They have mischievous, twinkling eyes... Because they have the wisdom of the Holy Spirit.

The little shoot, in these elderly men and women, has become the fullness of the seven gifts of the Holy Spirit. Reflect on this next Tuesday, when you hear the reading of the Mass, and ask yourself: Am I caring for the shoot? Am I watering the shoot, am I caring for the shoot in others? Do I see the danger of becoming

a terrorist, and so do I make every effort never to speak ill of others and to be open to the gift of joy?

I pray for all of you that, like good wine, life will age you fully and that your eyes will shine with mischief, joy and the fullness of the Holy Spirit.

Pray for me, as I pray for you.

- *Prepared Address of the Holy Father*

Dear Brothers and Sisters,

I am very happy to be with you! I thank Archbishop Moses [Costa] for his warm greeting in your name. I especially thank those who offered testimonies and shared with us their love for God. I also express my gratitude to Father Mintu [Palma] for composing the prayer that we will shortly recite to Our Lady. As the Successor of Peter it is my task to confirm you in faith. But I want you to know that, through your words and presence here today, you also confirm me in faith and bring me great joy.

The Catholic community in Bangladesh is small. But you are like the mustard seed that God brings to fruition in his own time. I rejoice to see how this seed is growing and to witness first-hand the deep faith which God has given you (cf. *Mt* 13:31-32). I think of the dedicated and faithful missionaries who planted and tended this seed of faith for almost five hundred years. I will shortly visit the cemetery here and pray for these men and women who so generously served this local Church. As I look out among you, I see missionaries who continue this holy work. I also see many vocations born in this land; they are a sign of the graces with which God is blessing your land. I am particularly pleased by the presence, and the prayers, of the cloistered nuns among us.

It is good that our meeting takes place in this ancient Church of the Holy Rosary. The rosary is a beautiful meditation on the

mysteries of faith that are the lifeblood of the Church and a prayer that shapes our spiritual lives and our apostolic service. Whether we are priests, religious, consecrated men or women, seminarians or novices, the prayer of the rosary inspires us, in union with Mary, to give our lives completely to Christ. It invites us to share in Mary's *attentiveness* to God at the annunciation, Christ's *compassion* for all humanity as he hangs upon the cross, and the Church's *rejoicing* as she receives the Risen Lord's gift of the Holy Spirit.

Mary's attentiveness. In all of history, has there ever been anyone as attentive as Mary was at the annunciation? God prepared her for that moment and she responded in love and trust. So too the Lord has prepared us and called each of us by name. Responding to that call is a lifelong process. Every day we have to learn to be more attentive to the Lord in prayer, meditating on his word and seeking to discern his will. I know that your pastoral work and your apostolates demand much of you, and that your days are often long and leave you tired. But we cannot bear Christ's name, or share in his mission, unless we remain first and foremost men and women rooted in love, fired by love, through a personal encounter with Jesus in the Eucharist and the words of sacred Scripture. Father Abel, you reminded us of this when you spoke of the importance of fostering an intimate relationship with Jesus, for there we experience his mercy and find renewed strength for our service to others.

Attentiveness to the Lord allows us to see the world through his eyes and thus to become more sensitive to the needs of those whom we serve. We begin to understand their hopes and joys, fears and burdens, we see more clearly the many talents, charisms and gifts they bring to the building up of the Church in faith and holiness. Brother Lawrence, when you spoke of your ashram, you helped us to see the importance of assisting people to satisfy their spiritual thirst. May all of you, in the great variety of your apostolates, be a source of spiritual refreshment and inspiration to those you serve, and enable them to share their

gifts ever more fully with one another in advancing the mission of the Church.

Christ's compassion. The rosary draws us into a meditation on the passion and death of Jesus. By entering more deeply into these sorrowful mysteries, we come to know their saving power and are confirmed in our call to share it by our lives of compassion and self-giving. Priesthood and religious life are not a career. They are not a vehicle for personal advancement. They are a service, a share in Christ's own sacrificial love for his flock. By conforming ourselves daily to that we love, we come to appreciate that our lives are not our own. It is no longer we who live, but Christ who lives in us (cf. *Gal 2:20*).

We embody this compassion by accompanying people, especially in their moments of suffering and trial, helping them to find Jesus. Father Franco, thank you for drawing this to the fore – each of us is called to be a missionary, bringing Christ's mercy and love to all, especially those on the peripheries of our society. I am especially grateful for the many ways in which so many of you are engaged in the areas of social outreach, health care and education, serving the needs of your local communities and of the many migrants and refugees coming to your country. Your service to the wider community, in particular to those most in need, is a precious service to the building of a culture of encounter and solidarity.

The Church's rejoicing. Lastly, the rosary fills us with joy in Christ's triumph over death, his ascension to the right hand of the Father and the outpouring of the Holy Spirit upon our world. The whole of our ministry is directed to proclaiming the joy of the Gospel. In our lives and apostolates, we are all too aware of the problems of the world and the sufferings of humanity, but we never lose confidence in the power of Christ's love to prevail over evil and the Prince of Lies who tries to deceive us. Never be discouraged by your own failures or by the challenges of ministry. If you remain attentive to the Lord in prayer and persevere in offering Christ's compassion to your brothers and

sisters, then the Lord will surely fill your hearts with the comforting joy of his Holy Spirit.

Sister Mary Chandra, you shared with us the joy that flows from your religious vocation and the charism of your religious congregation. Marcellus, you too spoke of the love you and your fellow seminarians have for your vocation to be priests. Both of you reminded us that we are all asked daily to renew and deepen our joy in the Lord by striving to imitate him ever more fully. In the beginning, this may seem daunting, but it fills our hearts with spiritual joy. For each day becomes an opportunity to begin again, to respond anew to the Lord. Never lose heart, for the Lord's patience is for our salvation (cf. *2 Pet 3:15*)! Rejoice in the Lord always!

Dear brothers and sisters, I thank you for your fidelity in serving Christ and his Church through the gift of your lives. I assure all of you of my prayers, as I ask you to pray for me. Let us now turn to Our Lady, Queen of the Most Holy Rosary, asking that she may obtain for all of us the grace to grow in holiness and to be ever more joyful witnesses of the power of the Gospel to bring healing, reconciliation and peace to our world.

APPENDIX

Myanmar, Bangladesh: Catholics by the Numbers

Statistics of the Catholic Church in Myanmar and Bangladesh as of 31 December 2015 (from the Central Office for Church Statistics)

Table 1 – Population and ecclesiastical structure

Table 2 – People engaged in activities of the apostolate

Table 3 – Indicators of pastoral workload

Table 4 – Priestly Vocations

Table 5 – Educational centers owned/managed by ecclesiastics or religious

Table 6 – Charitable and social centers owned/managed by ecclesiastics or religious

The following are some statistical data relating to the situation of the Catholic Church in Myanmar and Bangladesh as of 31 December 2015:

Table 1 – Population and ecclesiastical structure

	Myanmar	Bangladesh
Area (km ²)	676,578	143,998
Population (in thousands)	51,790	153,998
Density (inhabitants/km ²)	77	1,104
Catholics (in thousands)	659	375
Catholics per 100 inhabitants	1.27	0.24
Ecclesiastical circumscriptions	16	8

Parishes	384	106
Other pastoral centres	43	374
Catholics per pastoral centre	1,544	781

Table 2 - People engaged in activities of the apostolate

	Myanmar	Bangladesh
Bishops (<i>situation on 31.10.2017</i>)	22	12
Diocesan priests	777	189
Religious priests	111	183
Total priests	888	372
Permanent deacons	2	-
Men religious (other than priests)	128	111
Professed women religious	1,961	1,269
Members of secular Institutes	1	1
Lay missionaries	601	1,210
Catechists	3,056	1,427

Table 3 - Indicators of pastoral workload

	Myanmar	Bangladesh
Catholics per priest	742	1,007
Catholics per pastoral worker	99	85
Priests per pastoral centre	2.1	0.78
Priests per 100 people engaged in activities of the apostolate	13.7	8.7

Table 4 - Priestly Vocations

	Myanmar	Bangladesh
Minor seminarians	698	671
Major seminarians	394	122
Major seminarians per 100,000 inhabitants	0.76	0.1
Major seminarians per 100,000 Catholics	59.79	32.5
Major seminarians per 100 priests	44.37	32.8

Table 5 - Educational centers owned/managed by ecclesiastics or religious

	Myanmar	Bangladesh
Schools:		
Pre-school and primary	369	647
Lower middle and secondary	4	84
Higher and university	2	14
Students in:		
Pre-school and primary schools	13,327	74,224
Lower middle and secondary schools	386	49,720
Higher and university institutes	128	12,014

Table 6 - Charitable and social centers owned/managed by ecclesiastics

	Myanmar	Bangladesh
Hospitals	6	10
Clinics	65	74
Leper colonies	3	9
Homes for the elderly and	13	14

disabled		
Orphanages and nurseries	390	89
Family consultation centres	2	25
Special centres of social education or rehabilitation	70	8
Other institutions	19	124

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149. "Give Me A Drink (Jn 4:7): The Challenges of New Evangelisation and Creative Pastoral Responses", Fifth Bishops' Institution for Theological Animation [BITA-V], Edited by Fr. Clarence

- Devadass, Executive Secretary, FABC Office of Theological Concerns, December 2016
150. FABC Papers Periodic Index (Papers 126-150), James H. Kroeger M.M., 2017
 151. "The Catholic Family in Asia: Domestic Church of the Poor on a Mission of Mercy", XI FABC Plenary Assembly, Colombo, Sri Lanka, FABC Central Secretariat, March 2017
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