

CBCB Newsletter

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Editorial

*The historical visit of the Holy Father, Pope Francis to Bangladesh, without any doubt was remarkable. The theme for the visit of the Holy Father was: “Harmony and Peace”. The objectives of his visit were both pastoral and the state. The Holy Father Pope Francis came to make a **pilgrimage** to the hearts of the people of Bangladesh. He expressed his deep love and concern for the poor, the sick and disabled, people affected by natural calamities due to climate changes and all the people of the country irrespective of caste and creed. He also confirmed the **Christian faith and witnessing** of the “little flock” who are living, and serving as “salt” and “lamp” of the nation.*

In his message, Pope Francis said that he was coming as the ‘minister of the Gospel, to proclaim the message of Jesus Christ, the message of reconciliation, forgiveness and peace.’ This was evident in all the papal events, especially in the interreligious gathering, which he described as a ‘celebration of harmony’ peace and reconciliation that was particularly felt in the encounter with the Rohingya refugees. The event was also a moment of prayer in which representatives of all religions participated. The second goal was to confirm the faith of the Catholic Church. More than 80,000 people who came together could see and hear him at Suhrawardy Udyan. He could go around so that people could touch him. The People were happy that they could see him from very close, could pray with him and be united with him. His few spontaneous words to the selected Christian leaders and the faithful in the Cathedral were very inspiring, to live according to the Gospel values and become evangelizers. His meeting with the local Bishops expressed his fraternal love and concern and he reminded them of their pastoral priorities and prophetic roles in the world today. The gathering of the Bishops, Priests, Religious, Seminarians and Novices at Holy Rosary Church, Tejgaon was remarkable. The spontaneous speech of the Holy Father was very significant, relevant and very much inspiring. He spoke about taking care of their own vocations, daily discernment, life of prayer and the spirit of joy, in serving God and the people. His message to the youth at Notre Dame College showed how much he loves the youth and he awakened in them a deep sense of moving in the right direction in their lives, he encouraged them to gain knowledge and wisdom from the elders and not to waste their time and talents going around, rather to make good use of their time, talents and youthfulness for the good of others and the society at large.

The Holy Father, Pope Francis has sown in our hearts seeds of harmony, peace, hope, love and joy. We must restore hope to young people, help the old, be open to the future and spread love, harmony, peace and joy everywhere. We are called to be poor among the poor. We need to include the excluded and preach harmony and peace as he does. The Holy Father wanted to come to Bangladesh, and he came and left a big impression on us. Thank you Holy Father! Long live the Pope!

It is time for Christmas. Christmas is a feast of love and peace. Christmas is a time of giving and receiving gifts. Christmas is giving without a thought of getting back. It is happiness because we see joy in people. It is forgetting self and finding time for others. It is discarding the meaningless and stressing true values. God wants that we love and serve Him by loving and serving the poor, the needy and all the people, irrespective of caste and creed.

As we are going to say goodbye to the year 2017, let us remain grateful to God for all His blessings He showered upon us all. Let us prepare ourselves for Christmas with loving hearts of harmony and peace and allow Jesus to be born in our hearts during Christmas. Wishing all of you, our valued readers of the CBCB Newsletter a Merry Christmas and a Prosperous New Year 2018.

Meeting with Government and Civil Authorities and the Diplomatic corps

President House (Dhaka) - Thursday, 30 November 2017

Mr President, Honorable 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.

Homily of Pope at Holy Mass

Suhrawardy Udyan Friday, 1 Dec. 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.

In being configured to Christ the eternal High Priest and joined to the priesthood of the Bishops, they will be consecrated as true priests of the New Testament, to preach the Gospel, to shepherd God's people, and to celebrate the sacred Liturgy, especially the Lord's sacrifice.

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 get tired 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 Pope Francis in the Cathedral (1st Dec.2017)

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 witnessing. 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 Pope Francis to Bishops in Bangladesh

Home for retired priests (Dhaka) – 1st Dec. 2017

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 consultants: pastoral advisors, consultants 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 their 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 the 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 nation building 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 – parrhesía – 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.*

Ecumenical and Interreligious meeting for peace

Address of Pope Francis
Garden of the Archbishop’s Residence
(Dhaka) - Friday, 1 December 2017

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 whose help has made 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**
(December 1st 2017)

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.

**Speech of Pope Francis to Priests,
Religious, Seminarians and Novices of
Bangladesh**

*Holy Rosary Church, Tejgaon – Dhaka
(December 2nd 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.

Address of Pope to Young People

Notre Dame College (Saturday, 2 Dec. 2017)

Dear Young Friends, good evening!

Here we are together at last! I am grateful to all of you for your warm welcome. I thank Bishop Gervas Rozario for his kind words, and Upasana and Anthony for their testimonies. There is something unique about young people: you are always full of enthusiasm, and I feel rejuvenated whenever I meet with you. Upasana, you spoke about this in your testimony; you said you are all “very enthusiastic” and I can see and feel this. This youthful enthusiasm is linked to a spirit of adventure. One of your national poets, Kazi Nazrul Islam, expressed this by referring to the youth of the country as “fearless”, “used to snatching light out of the womb of darkness”. Young people are always ready to move forward, to make things happen and to take risks. I encourage you to keep moving with this enthusiasm in the good times and the bad times. *Keep moving*, especially in those moments when you feel weighed down by problems and sadness, and when you look out and God seems to be nowhere on the horizon.

But as you move forward, make sure that you choose the right path. What does this mean? It means “journeying” through life, and not “wandering aimlessly”. Our life is not without direction, it has a purpose given to us by God. He guides and directs us with his grace. It is

as if he placed within us a computer *software*, which helps us to discern his divine programme and, in freedom, to respond. But like all software, it too needs constantly to be updated. *Keep updating your programme*, by listening to God and accepting the challenge of doing his will.

Anthony, you referred to this challenge in your testimony when you said that you are young men and women who are “growing up in a fragile world that cries out for wisdom.” You used the word “wisdom” and in doing so you gave us the key. Once you move from “journeying” to “wandering aimlessly”, all wisdom is lost! The one thing that directs and guides us on to the right path is wisdom, *the wisdom born of faith*. It is not the false wisdom of this world. It is the wisdom we see in the eyes of our parents and grandparents who put their trust in God. As Christians, we can see the light of God’s presence in their eyes, the light that they have discovered in Jesus, who is the very wisdom of God (cf. *1 Cor 1:24*). To receive this wisdom we have to look at the world, our situations, our problems, everything, with the eyes of God. We receive that wisdom when we start to see things with God’s eyes, listen to others with God’s ears, to love with God’s heart, and to judge things by God’s values.

This wisdom helps us to recognize and *reject false promises of happiness*. A culture that makes these false promises cannot deliver; it only leads to a self-centredness that fills the heart with darkness and bitterness. The wisdom of God helps us to know how to welcome and accept those who act and think differently than ourselves. It is sad when we start to shut ourselves up in our little world and become inward-looking. We use the “my way or the highway” principle, and we become trapped, self-enclosed. When a people, a religion or a society turns into a “little world”, they lose the best that they have and plunge into a self-righteous mentality of “I am good and you are bad”. Upasana, you

highlighted the consequences of this way of thinking: “We lose direction and get lost” and “life becomes meaningless to us”. The wisdom of God opens us up to others. It helps us to look beyond our personal comforts and the false securities which blind us to those grand ideals which make life more beautiful and worthwhile.

I am happy that, together with Catholics, we also have with us many young Muslim friends and those from other religious backgrounds. In gathering here today you show your determination to foster an environment of harmony, of reaching out to others, regardless of your religious differences. This reminds me of an experience I had in Buenos Aires, in a new parish located in an extremely poor area. A group of students were building some rooms for the parish and the priest had invited me to visit them. So I went, and when I arrived the parish priest introduced them to me one after the other, saying: “This is the architect. He’s Jewish. This one is Communist. This one is a practicing Catholic” (cf. *Address to Students*, Havana, 20 September 2015). Those students were all different, yet they were all working for the common good. They were open to *social friendship* and were determined to say no to anything that would detract from their ability to come together and to help one another.

God’s wisdom also helps us to look beyond ourselves to see the goodness in our cultural heritage. Your culture teaches you to respect *the elderly*. As I said earlier, the elderly help us to appreciate the continuity of the generations. They bring with them memory and the wisdom of experience, which help us

to avoid the repetition of past mistakes. The elderly have the “charism of bridging the gap”, in that they ensure that the most important values are passed down to their children and grandchildren. Through their words, love, affection and presence, we realize that history did not begin with us, but that we are part of an age-old “journeying” and that reality is bigger than we are. Keep talking to your parents and grandparents. Do not spend the whole day playing with your phone and ignoring the world around you!

Upasana and Anthony, you ended your testimonies with expressions of *hope*. The wisdom of God reinforces the hope in us and helps us to face the future with courage. We Christians find this wisdom in our personal encounter with Jesus in prayer and in the sacraments, and in our concrete encounter with him in the poor, the sick, the suffering and the abandoned. In Jesus we discover the solidarity of God, who constantly walks by our side.

Dear young friends, when I look at your faces I am filled with joy and hope: joy and hope for you, for your country, for the Church and for your communities. May God’s wisdom continue to inspire your efforts to grow in love, fraternity and goodness. As I leave your country today, I assure you of my prayers that all of you may continue to grow in love of God and neighbour. And please, do not forget to pray for me!

God bless Bangladesh! [*Isshór Bangladeshké ashirbád korún!*]



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