

Editorial

If there is a message of the Gospel that is so vital and simply cannot be ignored, it is the good news of the resurrection of Jesus Christ. We know and believe that Christ has been raised from the dead. He has destroyed death, and death has no power, for Christ is risen from the dead to save humanity.

We know and believe that the Bible verses recorded the facts of the Lord Jesus' resurrection three days after His crucifixion. It is because He was crucified and redeemed humankind, that humankind is no longer condemned by the law and freed from the bondage of the decrees and regulations. Thanks be to the Lord! His resurrection is very important and significant for every one of us as followers of Jesus Christ, for it is through His resurrection that we are made certain that He is God Himself and is the One that we should truly trust. The Bible says, "And if Christ has not been raised, your faith is vain; you are still in your sins" (1 Corinthians 15:17). Without the Lord Jesus' resurrection, even if we have faith in Him, we would not be saved. Without His redemption, we sinners would still be bound by the law. Just because of His resurrection, we have a hope of salvation.

The Resurrection of Jesus Christ is the foundation of our Christian faith. We, as Christians need to be risen with Christ through Baptism, with the gift of faith, to an imperishable inheritance, which leads us to increasingly search for the things of God, to think of Him more and to pray more. Christianity is not simply a matter of following commandments; it is about living a new life, being in Christ, thinking and acting like Christ, and being transformed by the love of Christ, it is allowing Him to take possession of our lives and change, transform and free them from the darkness of evil and sin.

The Lord Jesus' resurrection for humankind is undoubtedly very important. How could we not be excited about it? In joy and excitement, let us calm down and think and contemplate about the resurrection of Jesus and our own resurrection after death. The very life of Jesus and his resurrection should always be the guiding principles of every Christian to follow Jesus more closely and sincerely in our day to day lives. The Resurrection involves us to be personally united with Christ. He claims our hearts when we look up to his cross. Going from the Christ on the cross to the Christ of the resurrection encompasses our lifetime. We envision this Christ of the resurrection at the end of our lives as someone we are going to meet, see and touch. If the resurrection is going to motivate our lives, then our hope in the resurrection should be expressed every day of our lives. Christ was filled with joy when he returned to his Apostles with his gift of peace. Touched by Christ's resurrection his joy becomes our joy. The resurrection, source of hope, in its promise of new life, offers us the treasure for living well in this world.

May the Risen Christ shower upon us all his gifts of love, hope, peace and joy so that we can bring His love, hope, joy and peace to the people we meet in our daily lives.

Wishing you all a Happy Easter and may the joy and peace of Easter remain in our hearts!

FABC- OHD: Seminar on GLOBAL SOCIAL ECONOMY AND IMPACT OF CLIMATE CHANGE ON THE FAMILY (*Specific reference to Amoris Laetitia in Asian context*)

Bishop Shorot F. Gomes, Fr. Jyoti F. Costa and Mr. Benedict Murmu from Rajshahi attended this program in Bangkok from January 8-13, 2018. There were 45 participants from 14 Asian countries. The program emphasized the global social economy and the impact of Climate Change on the Family in the light of *Amoris Laetitia*. The program included exposure programs, presentations on social economy, climate change and its impacts on families, creative solutions to injustices, sustainable development and sharing on ecologically responsible communities that live out the principles of solidarity, subsidiarity and participatory democracy. They show us that the transformation of the liquid economy or market economy to a social economy is possible as envisioned by Pope Francis. The respective countries were called to reflect and take necessary steps to implement the learning of the seminar.

Workshops and Training Program for the YCS Members and Animators- 2018

On 20 – 21 January, 2018 the Diocesan Youth Commission of Rajshahi arranged a Workshop for the members of the YCS (Young Christian Students) and a Training Program for the new Animators at the Pastoral Center, Rajshahi. From the National Youth Commission, Bro Ujjal Placid Pereira, CSC the National Chaplain of YCS and Mr Probir Costa, the member of the Central Committee of the YCS conducted a half-day session based on “How to conduct a Cell Meeting?” and “The Role of an Innovative Animator and Accompaniment with the Students.” Some 70 students participated in that program and made it successful.

Moving School Program

The Asian Lay Leaders (ALL) Forum organized a Moving School program from 3rd - 8th February 2018 at Social Formation Center, Mymensingh Diocese on the theme “Youth Working for inter-religious/Intercultural Dialogue and Cooperation, Ecological Sustainability and Peace”. The Diocesan Youth Commission of Mymensingh and Bangladesh Catholic Students’ Movement (BCSM) jointly hosted the program in Bangladesh for the first time.

Bishop Lawrence Subrato Howlader, CSC, the Chairman of Episcopal Commission for Youth offered the opening Mass. Bro. Ujjal Placid Pereira CSC, Secretary, EC- Youth and the National Chaplain of BCSM, Fr. Torun Bonowary, the Director of Social Formation Center of Mymensingh Diocese, Fr. Bijon Kubi, the Diocesan Youth Coordinator of Mymensingh Diocesan and Diocesan Chaplain of BCSM, Mr. Paul Hwang (from south Korea) Director of ALL Forum, Ms. Felicia Pereira (from Indonesia) Coordinator of ALL Forum, William Nokrek, the President of BCSM were present in the opening ceremony of the program. Fr. Niphot Thainwihan from Thailand joined from next day.

The whole program was designed with a half day exposure, sessions on different important issues, group discussion & work, daily Mass & prayer, action plan, animations and cultural programs. Some 30 students from 7 different dioceses participated in this 5 days Moving School program. The closing Mass was offered by Most Rev. Paul Ponen Kubi, CSC the Bishop of Mymensingh diocese. He said, “You are now recharged, go and switch yourselves on”.

Seminar for Priest-Formators

The Episcopal Seminary Commission arranged a seminar on “*Ratio Fundamentalis Institutionis Sacerdotalis*” (the gift of priestly vocation) and Sharing Session among formators on Monday, 12 February 2018 from 8:30 am to 12:30 noon. In the first session, after the welcoming speech of Most Rev. Shorot Francis Gomes, the Chairman of the Episcopal Commission for Seminary, Fr. Emmanuel K. Rozario gave an input on the salient points of the “*Ratio Fundamentalis Institutionis Sacerdotalis*” (the gift of priestly vocation) which was followed by open discussion. In the second session, there was sharing among the formators and in this session the formators of different seminaries and formation houses shared their experiences in formation, mentioned their methods of formation, success and challenges they face in formation. This session was really encouraging and enlightening. Twenty five priest-formators participated in this seminar.

Annual Gathering and workshop of PMS Animators- 2018

The Annual Gathering and National Workshop for PMS Animators was held at Pastoral Center, Dinajpur Diocese from February 21 to February 23, 2018. The main Theme for this National workshop was, *“Responsibilities of PMS Animators for integral Formation and Spiritual growth of the Children in the Digital World”*. From 8 Dioceses of Bangladesh, 180 participants were present at this National workshop. Bishop Sebastian Tudu, Chairman of PMS, Fr. Rodon Hadima, National Director of PMS, National Office staffs and 8 Diocesan Directors were also present. The annual gathering and national workshop started with a Eucharistic celebration presided by Most Rev. Sebastian Tudu, Bishop of Dinajpur Diocese. In his Homily, he invited all the PMS Animators to cooperate and promote the work of Evangelization in Bangladesh which is a great challenge as the present realities of this age, considered a Digital age.



In the second day, Fr. Patrick Simon Gomes shared on the *“Responsibilities of PMS Animators for integral Formation and Spiritual growth of the Children in the Digital World”*. He pointed out the Papal concern for the children and their right for protection in this digital age. He explained the advantages and disadvantages of the Digital equipment and how they affect the Christian families as well as the entire human society. After this session, there was a group work where each group wrote down five positive and five negative aspects of the digital world that affect our children as well as whole human society. Fr. Rodon Hadima, National Director of PMS, Bangladesh shared on the theme, *“The role of PMS Animators for the priestly and religious vocation”*. A good number of animators shared their experiences and success in helping the boys and girls to seek their vocation in the priestly or religious life. Some Priests and Nuns acknowledged the great role of their PMS Animators who guided them to discover their vocation. In the afternoon session, there was a Stall Exhibition where each diocese presented their works of creativity and cultural glance followed by a competition of handicrafts where the participants had to prove their competency and creativity in making something. In the evening there was a very joyful and creative cultural function performed by the animators, all enjoyed the program.

The 33rd National Youth Day 2018

The 33rd National Youth Day 2018 was held in Nagori Parish (St. Nicholas School Campus), Archdiocese of Dhaka, from 21 – 25 February 2018 on the theme: *“Young People, the Faith and Vocational Discernment.”* and the Bible Verse: *“Do not be afraid, Mary, for you have found favor with God. (Lk. 1:30).* Bishop Shorot Francis Gomes, the Auxiliary Bishop of Dhaka Archdiocese, celebrated the opening Mass. Bishop Lawrence Subrato Howlader, CSC the Chairman, EC- for Youth, National and the diocesan Youth Coordinators, about 15 Priests, 30 Religious Brothers & Sisters from different Congregations, a good number of Animators, Secretaries, Members of the National and Diocesan Youth Commission and some 400 youths from 8 different Dioceses participated in this program.

On February 22, 2018 there was a grand Inauguration Ceremony with a Youth Rally with many banners, posters and placards. In the Inauguration program, the Chief Guest was Md. Khandakar M. Mushfiqur Rahaman, Upazila Nirbahi Officer (UNO), Kaligang, Gazipur. The National Youth Day 2018 included various programs: opening and welcoming programs, Sessions and Workshops on different topics, inauguration, Cultural Rally, half a day Exposure, Heritage Corner, daily prayer and Mass, way of the Cross, Veneration of the Cross, drama on Jesus’ passion, penitential Service, a quiz, animations, group



discussions, evaluations, action plans, cultural show and the closing program.

The themes of the sessions and workshops were on: (a) “The Youths are the core of the family and the Church; Responsibilities and Expectations.” by Bishop Shorot Francis Gomes. (b) “Mother Mary is the model for the Youth to Discern Vocation and to fulfill God’s Plan” by Bishop Lawrence Subrato Howlader, CSC (c) “Young People, the Faith and Vocational Discernment.” by Brother Ujjal Placid Pereira, CSC (d) “Social Media: Threat or Opportunity.” by Fr. Joyanto Sylvester Gomes. (e) “Youth Creativity in Proclaiming the Gospel.” by Fr. Patrick Simon Gomes. (f) “Youth & Social Problem: Suicide, Addiction & Abortion.” by Dr. Edward Pallab Rozario. (g) “Nurturing the Trafficked Mother Earth.” by Fr. George Ponodath, Sj.

National Youth day is a very special event for the Youths of the Catholic Church in Bangladesh arranged by EC- for Youth as the Youth are the heart of the Church and Family. The students of the College and University level gathered together from different areas, cultures and traditions from all over the Country. They got different sessions on Christian, Social and Moral teachings and exchanged their views.

His Eminence Cardinal Patrick D’Rozario, CSC the Archbishop of Dhaka joined in the closing day of the National Youth Day celebration. The organizing committee prepared a Gas Balloons Rosary as the symbol of Youths’ faith in Mother Mary. Cardinal Patrick D’Rozario, CSC has released the Rosary balloons saying that the Rosary is the symbol of youth’s faith, hoping it will reach Rome during the 15th Bishops’ Synod for the Youth. He offered the Concluding Mass of the 33rd National Youth Day 2018. Finally the Bro. Ujjal Placid Pereira, CSC the Secretary of Episcopal Commission for Youth delivered his Vote of thanks and announced the name of the next host diocese for the 34th National Youth Day 2019. Afterwards, His Eminence Cardinal Patrick D’Rozario, CSC handed over the ‘Youth Cross’ to the Bishop, Youth Coordinator and youths of that host Diocese. The 34th NYD will be held in Barisal in 2019.

The CBCB Meeting

The first meeting of the Catholic Bishops' Conference of Bangladesh (CBCB) in 2018 was held on February 28 to March 2 at the CBCB Centre, Dhaka. His Eminence Cardinal Patrick D’ Rozario, CSC and all other Bishops were present at the meeting. As usual, the CBCB meeting began with the Holy Eucharistic celebration presided over by Bishop Gervas Rozario, the Vice-President of the CBCB. The main discussions of the meeting were as follows: Ad Limina Visit- 2018, 100th Anniversary of the Apostolic Letter *Maximun Illud*, Bishop delegate to serve as the liaison between the World Apostolic Congress on Mercy (WACOM) and Bishops’ Conference, Apostolic Constitution, *Veritatis Gaudium*, On Ecclesiastical Universities and Faculties by Pope Francis, Election of the Office Bearers of the CBCB, Sharing on Papal Visit 2017: Visit and its Impact, Pope’s Messages and Church’s Response, Memorial of Pope Francis - National Church Museum and Other Actions, National Workshop on Local Church in Bangladesh -2018, Tribunal Matters, United Forum of Churches: All Christian Program – 2018, Sharing on Concerns of the Church in Bangladesh: Education and Minority, A brief sharing on FABC- OHD: Seminar on GLOBAL SOCIAL ECONOMY AND IMPACT OF CLIMATE CHANGE ON THE FAMILY, Some Communications from the FABC Central Secretariat, HSMS Governing Body meeting, HSMS vacant land Matters, Review of the Chairmanship and Secretaries of the Episcopal Commissions and some matters pertaining to Youth Synod, Interreligious dialogue and ecumenism and SSVp matters.

Most Rev. George Kocherry and Msgr. Luca Marabese met the Bishops during the CBCB meeting. The Nuncio shared some important issues with the Bishops, regarding the Ad Limina Visit -2018, and thanked the CBCB for the successful visit of the Holy Father. Fr. Emmanuel K. Rozario, Fr. Joyanto J. Raksam and Fr. Louis S. Pereira were present for the governing body meeting of the Holy Spirit Major Seminary. The Priests shared with the Bishops matters concerning the seminary and some immediate needs of the seminary including more personnel in the seminary formation, teaching staff members and they also reported about the construction works of the Major Seminary. The Bishops gave them a patient hearing.

Fr. Emmanuel also presented the accounts of the seminary for the year 2017 and the budget for the year 2018. The Nuncio invited the Bishops to dinner on February 28 at the Nunciature. Bishop Theotonijs Gomes CSC, Bishop Emeritus also joined the other Bishops.

Annual Assembly of the Episcopal Bodies - 2018

As in other years, the Catholic Bishops' Conference of Bangladesh had an Annual Assembly with the Episcopal Bodies on March 2, 2018 at the CBCB Centre. His Eminence Cardinal Patrick D' Rozario, CSC, all other Bishops, secretary/director of Episcopal Bodies and one representative of the affiliated desk or one member of each Episcopal Body (altogether 35 members) were present in the assembly. There are 14 Episcopal Bodies of the Catholic Bishops' Conference working in various fields in the country. All fourteen Episcopal bodies read out the summary reports of the yearly activities and plans of action. These Bodies are divided as related to Apostolate, related to Persons and related to Evangelization.

There was not much time for elaborate discussions. The house took some time to discuss the great need of pastoral care and ministries in cities, prison ministry and ministry for the youth in cities. Then the following points were mentioned by the Secretary General for further reflection; we need to give more emphasis to education, faith formation and catechesis at various levels (Holy Childhood, YCS, Youth, Family, Laity), ways to disseminate the Church's teachings on Marriage and family, especially the teachings of *Amoris Laetitia* to more people, Strengthen communication between Caritas Regional Offices and Parishes, local resource mobilization and integrating Caritas at parish level, our role in bringing more unity and communion among the Christian Associations and Organizations, involvement of laity with cultural and political life, formation of lay organizations and associations in the Christian Spirit and Gospel values. The house felt the need and agreed to have more unity and communion among the Christian Organizations and Associations. We need to take more initiatives to bring about a Christ centered unity and communion in our Christian society. The CBCB Coordinating Committee will take necessary preparations for the plenary assembly to be held in August 2018. In order to have participation of more people at the grass-root level and to have better preparation at the diocesan level the Coordinating Committee asked the dioceses to have programs, discussions, evaluations and send the diocesan report to the CBCB.

Appointment of Inter diocesan Institution

The CBCB appointed Fr. Cherubim Bakla as Spiritual director of St. Joseph's Seminary, Ramna, Dhaka, Fr. Shitol T. Costa as the Director of Special Spiritual Program at Bulakipur, Fr. Terence Rodrigues of Chittagong Archdiocese as Assistant Spiritual director of Holy Spirit Major Seminary, Banani, Dhaka, Fr. Anol Terence Costa, CSC as Executive Secretary of EC- Clergy and Religious.

Animators Training Program 2018

The Diocesan Youth Commission of Dhaka Archdiocese arranged a three days Animators Training Program from 2 – 4 March, 2018 at Bhadun Centre to train the existing Youth Animators and to recruit new Animators for the Diocese. Some 40 Animators joined the program. From the National Youth Commission Bro Ujjal Placid Pereira, the National Youth Coordinator went to facilitate a session on "How to be an Innovative Animator and Accompany the Students."

The Second IYCS ICAFE

The 2nd ICAFE International Chaplain Animator Formation Exchange program of IYCS International Young Christian Students' Movement was held in Thailand from 7-13 March 2018 on the theme "Rekindling the Joy of the Gospel in the student milieu." There were 30 Chaplains and Animators from various parts of the world, especially from Asia who participated in this program. From Bangladesh Brother Ujjal Placid Pereira, CSC the National Chaplain of YCS attended this training program. The session had objectives of providing ongoing formation for YCS chaplains and animators and especially formation, for the newly appointed ones, where they were enabled to share experiences and best practices and find ways of addressing some of the challenges that each of them face in the accompaniment of young people. YCS Thailand cordially invited the participants of ICAFE to witness the celebration of the 60th anniversary of YCS THAILAND which was held at Saint Gabriel's College, Bangkok, Thailand.

Pre-Synodal Meeting in Rome 2018

The Pre-Synodal Meeting was held in Rome from 19 - 24 March 2018 at which some 300 young people from various parts of the world participated in preparation for the XV General Ordinary Assembly of the Synod of Bishops, scheduled for October 2018, to treat the topic: “Young People; the Faith and Vocational Discernment.” As the youth delegate from Bangladesh, Mr William Nokrek was sent by the Catholic Bishops’ Conference of Bangladesh (CBCB) to attend this pre-synodal meeting. Youth were divided into 20 different languages groups, in which they reflected on several questions throughout the week-long meeting.

According to the final document of the pre-synodal meeting, the young people from around the world have urged the Church to be more authentic, modern and creative in the way it interacts with young people, and in addressing controversial contemporary issues. Moreover, they asked the hierarchy of the Church, to be transparent, welcoming, honest, inviting, communicative, accessible, joyful.”

The document, released on March 24, is the product of a week-long discussion with some 300 young people from different on cultural and religious backgrounds, who gathered in Rome for a pre-synod meeting, which is a precursor to the October Synod of Bishops on “Young People, the Faith and the Discernment of Vocation.” His Holiness Pope Francis paid a visit and listened to the young people in the pre-synodal meeting.



International Women Day Celebration- 2018

Women Desk under the Episcopal Commission for the Laity (EC-L) organized a half-day Program to celebrate International Women's Day on March 24, 2018 at CBCB Center. The program started at 4:00 p.m. with an opening prayer and a video clip on women which was led by Sister Bashona, CSC and Sister Mary Mitali, SMRA. Representatives participated from eight different parishes from Dhaka Metropolitan City such as Tejgaon, Luxmibazar, Mohakhali, Kafrul, Mirpur, Nayanagar, Ramna and Mohammadpur. Sisters from the Congregations of SMRA, CSC, PIME, SC, RNDM, and representatives from Banani Major Seminarians, Dhaka Credit Union, Housing Society, World Vision, Caritas Dhaka, BCSM, Mohammadpur Boys’ hostel, RNDM Girls’ hostels and the SSVF Society. There were 70 women and 20 man participants. The convener of Women Desk, Ms. Rita Roseline Costa welcomed all whilst Miss Renu Baule was the main speaker. She spoke on the theme for International Women’s Day, “Time is Now: Rural and Urban activists transforming women’s lives”.

Mr. Chayon Rebeiro, Secretary of EC-Laity led the second session and his theme was “Our role to prevent violence against women”. There was a group discussion on the theme. Shikha Rani Halsona, Secretary of Women Desk moderated the program. The program also included thanksgiving words by the Convener of DLAO, Ms. Rebecca Quiah and holy Mass celebrated by Fr. Francis Marandy, TOR.

MEETING OF THE MISSIONARIES OF MERCY in ROME

For the third anniversary of the pope’s creation of “Missionaries of Mercy,” a meeting had been organized in Rome by the Pontifical Council for Promoting New Evangelization from April 7 to 11, 2018. The missionaries of mercy are priests who receive this special designation for their work hearing confessions.

The program included Prayer Vigil for Divine Mercy Sunday, with the Missionaries of Mercy serving as Confessors, Papal Holy Mass concelebrated by the Missionaries of Mercy on April 8, the Divine Mercy Sunday, Lecture on *Reconciliation: Sacrament of Mercy*, Witness by some Missionaries of Mercy, Confession for the Missionaries of Mercy, Catechesis on *Sin and Mercy in the Life of the Priest*, Lecture:

The Missionary of Mercy According to Pope Francis (H.E. Archbishop Rino Fisichella, President of the Pontifical Council for the Promotion of the New Evangelization), Lecture: *Pastoral Indications on the Sacrament of Reconciliation* (H.E. Archbishop Octavio Ruiz Arenas, Secretary of the Pontifical Council for the Promotion of the New Evangelization), Holy Mass and Farewell.

Rev. Fr. Gabriel Corraya and Rev. Fr. Jyoti Francis Costa from the Archdiocese of Dhaka, Bangladesh participated in this great spiritual program. There were more than 600 priests from all over the world who went to Rome to take part in this great event. The Holy Father gave a very meaningful reflection on the need and importance of missionaries of mercy in today's world and he personally allowed all of them to either kiss his ring or shake hands with him after his reflection on April 10, 2018. Then, he concelebrated Holy Eucharist only with the Missionaries of Mercy inside St. Peter's Basilica. The missionaries of Mercy were all inspired and encouraged by the very presence and reflection of the Holy Father, Pope Francis to continue their special ministry with loving mercy of God.



Post SSC Christian Formation and Training Program 2018

All the Diocesan Youth Commissions of each Diocese have successfully accomplished the Post SSC Christian Formation and Training Course from the 1st week of March to the 3rd week of April 2018 for the students, who have finished their Matriculation Examinations. There were 16 groups from all 8 dioceses and about 2000 students for these programs. The duration of the program for each group was 7 to 9 days and scheduled with various types of activities, such as, opening & welcoming ceremonies, ice-breaking, formation and awareness sessions on different topics, workshops, team building activities, exposure, different types of competitions and quiz, daily prayer and Mass, way of the Cross, veneration of the Cross, penitential service, group discussion, evaluation, counselling, action plan and cultural show. The members of the National Youth Commission have visited almost all the groups in the 8 dioceses and conducted session on the XV General Ordinary Assembly of the Synod of Bishops, scheduled for October 2018, to treat the topic: “Young People; the Faith and Vocational Discernment.” and the activities of Episcopal Commission for Youth.

Training Workshop for the Leaders of Christians Association and Organizations

The Desk for Lay Associations and Organizations organized training workshop for Dhaka Archdiocese based Christian associations and organizations leaders at the CBCB centre on April 21, 2018 under EC for Laity. The specific objectives were: to Share the DLAO Goal and objectives and expectation from the leaders as Christian associations and organizations. The main theme of the training workshop was: “You are the body of Christ and individually members of it” (1 Corinthians 12: 27). A total of 75 participants from Associations, Credit Unions and youth clubs participated in this workshop.



Mr. Theophil Nokrek and His Eminence Archbishop Patrick D' Rozario, CSC were the main facilitators of the training

workshop while Bishop Shorot Francis Gomes, President of Laity Commission, Ms Rebecca Quiah, Convener of the desk and other commission members were present.

The participants opined that this type of training workshop helped them to gain knowledge in the field of Christian leadership, roles and responsibilities. This will be very much helpful for them in future for guiding and conducting their organizations in the light of Christian values. It is noteworthy that this is the first time DLAO organized sort of training workshop for the Dhaka Archdiocese based Christian lay associations and organizations.

All Christian Conference- 2018

The United Forum of Churches, Bangladesh (UFCB), that is, UFCB, NCCB and CBCB jointly organized an All Christian Conference on April 27, 2018, 2018 at the CBCB Centre. The Theme of the Conference was “Witness of the Little Flock: Harmony and Peace”. The program started with a very devotional liturgy on behalf of the CBCB, guided by Sr. Mary Dipti, SMRA and Fr. Jyoti F. Costa and their team. His Eminence, Cardinal Patrick D’ Rozario, CSC welcomed all and also shared in brief, the aims and objectives of UFCB and what UFCB has been doing for the past 6 years. He also gave some insights on the theme of the past years and the main theme of this year.

Rev. Judith Milita Das, a Senior Pastor of Gethsemane Baptist Church, Mirpur, Dr. Fr. Jyoti Francis Costa, Assistant Secretary of the Bishops’ Conference of Bangladesh (CBCB) and Professor of Holy Spirit Major Seminary, Banani, Dhaka and Rev. Bishop Sourav Folia (Bishop of the Church of Bangladesh, Barisal) were the main speakers. Rev. Das spoke on witness of the little flock, the local Church in Bangladesh. She explained what little flock means from Biblical perspective and the mandate of proclamation of the Gospel by Jesus Christ. We witness and proclaim Christ as little flock by our dedicated services and we have to suffer for the sake of the Gospel if required. We should never be afraid of various worldly forces as Jesus assured us saying: “Do not be afraid, little flock, for your Father has been pleased to give you the kingdom” (Luke 12:32).



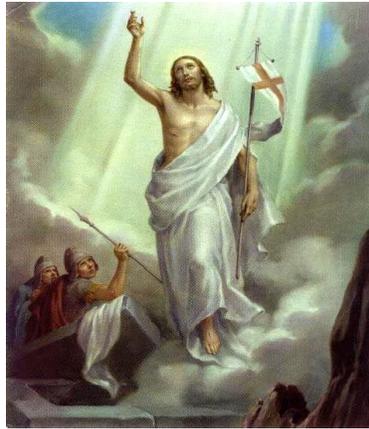
Fr. Costa shared on the visit, especially the messages of the Holy Father, Pope Francis about harmony and peace. The theme for the visit of the Holy Father was: “Harmony and Peace”. He shared that the objectives of his visit were both pastoral and the state related. The Holy Father Pope Francis came 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. The Pope said, “I come as a minister of the Gospel of Jesus Christ, to proclaim his message of reconciliation, forgiveness and peace”. Fr. Costa gave a powerpoint presentation and highlighted the messages, Holy Father, Pope Francis delivered at the Premise of Archbishop’s House, Ramna in the Interreligious and ecumenical gathering and the message Pope Francis gave to the Bishops, Priests and Religious and Seminarians and Novices at Holy Rosary Church Tejgaon. Pope Francis invited us all and insisted that we come out of our boundaries with our hearts open and accompany the people of all faiths and accept them as brothers and sisters. The Pope while meeting a delegation of Rohingyas said that God was present in them and we should see and feel the presence of God in all human beings to be able to accept and love them.

Rev. Bishop Folia shared on our witness: past, present and the future. He tried to share in brief, how we, as little flock have been giving witness in various ways in the country. He said that the missionaries came to our country in the past and they evangelized our forefathers. Although the communication was not so

good, yet they preached the Word of God in many places. Now the communication and all other aspects in human life have developed and changed positively, but what about our preaching and the works of evangelization today. He also emphasized that we need to preach not only in cities but to the peripheries by quoting Archbishop Welby, ... “to take the saving message of the Gospel particularly to those on the margins and the peripheries of our societies... The world must see us witnessing to this common faith in Jesus by acting together ...We can, and must, work together to protect and preserve our common home... We can and must, be united in a common cause to uphold and defend the dignity of all people.”

After these three presentations, there was an open discussion on these presentations, questions and answers session where some important and relevant issues were discussed and shared openly. All the participants highly appreciated all the presentations of the day and thanked them for their deep reflective, thoughtful and insightful papers and presentation as well. Cardinal Patrick D’ Rozario, CSC the Archbishop of Dhaka and President of the CBCB and UCFB expressed his thankfulness and gratitude to all participants for their positive responses to the conference and for being part of the program. He expected that this program would continue and more and more communication would be possible through this conference and a better relationship would grow among us. Rev. David A. Das shared some of the updates of the United Forum of Churches, Bangladesh (UCFB) and gave a short report on the activities of the UFCB. Rev. Martha Das, the new Secretary of UFCB moderated the program and especially the open discussion. Bishop Paul Shishir Sarker thanked all on behalf of UFCB and thanked the organizers, especially the speakers and all the participants for joining and actively participating in the conference. He also expressed his gratitude to the CBCB Centre authority and the staff who shoulder the burden of physical arrangement, food for the program. There were 90 participants at the conference.

Wishing you all a Happy Easter!



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