

Editorial:

The CBCB Newsletter is BACK! After the severe havoc of COVID-19, which brought the world to a halt, lives gradually normalized. In the meantime, there have been various changes in the psycho-physical and spiritual lives of people, and the world has moved forward with an unprecedented experience that left an indelible mark in the memories of people. In the post-Covid period, the upheaval of the market economy affected the everyday lives of common people. Still, the turmoil of the war and natural calamities scarred the already tormented world.

Amid these sufferings and hardships, the rays of hope for the world reached the hearts of millions of people with the call for Synod by our Holy Father Pope Francis, a joint venture of all the people of goodwill to listen to one another and walk together hand in hand with the spirit of communion, mission, and participation. The Church in Bangladesh joined this journey with 'joy and hope' complying with the call and directions of the Synod, disseminating the spirit of synod to all the local Churches and with people of all walks of life. This 'walking together' has greatly vibrated the Church with more awareness and eagerness among the faithful to more actively participate in the life of the Church. The CBCB is at the service of this growth of the Church, both in quantity and quality, with both the diocesan activities and the endeavors of the Episcopal Bodies, i.e., the commissions that are employed for the growth and formation of the Local Churches.

It is a joy to notice this growth of the Church in Bangladesh in age and in members, as well as with the formation programs that lead the faithful to live the faith and witness to it in the multi-cultural and multi-faith fabric of the country. This issue of the CBCB Newsletter wishes to present a glimpse of the journey of the Church together with the universal Church and expresses its hope to continue its journey as well in the following issues of the year and in the following years too!

The new Auxiliary Bishop and the new member of the CBCB



What a joy and blessing for the Archdiocese of Dhaka as well as the Catholic Church in Bangladesh to welcome Bishop Subroto Boniface Gomes as the new Auxiliary Bishop of Dhaka! On 3rd May 2024, in a solemn ceremony at St. Mary's Cathedral, Ramna Fr. Subroto B. Gomes was ordained by His Grace Bejoy N. D' Cruze, OMI, the Archbishop of Dhaka, His Excellency Kevin Randall, the Apostolic Nuncio to Bangladesh, and His Excellency Gervas Rozario, the Bishop of Rajshahi. The auspicious moment was also graced by the presence of all the bishops of Bangladesh, the Major Superiors, numerous priests and religious, and more than one had a half thousand faithful.

After the solemn Eucharist, Bishop Gomes expressed his profound dedication to spreading the Word of God and stressed the importance of unity and support within the Catholic community. He also asked the community's prayers for him and the Church in Bangladesh, envisioning a society bound together by beauty and solidarity. Congratulating his Auxiliary, Archbishop Bejoy N. D'Cruze, OMI of Dhaka, highlighted Bishop Gomes's exemplary service as a priest, highlighting his administrative and pastoral skills.

Bishop Subroto Gomes has already participated in the last CBCB meeting held on 28-29 Feb. 2024 and all the members of the CBCB wholeheartedly welcomed the Bishop-elect in the conference.

Bishop Gomes was born on November 19, 1962, at Sacred Heart Parish, Rangamatia. After receiving his ordination in 1989, Bishop Gomes served in various significant ministries, including the Assistant Secretary General of the CBCB for 7 years, the professor, administrative staff, and Dean of Studies at the Holy Spirit Major Seminary, the secretary and counselor of the Archdiocese of Dhaka, and the parish priest of the Holy Rosary Church, the largest parish of the Dhaka Archdiocese.

The Catholic Church welcomes the new Apostolic Nuncio to Bangladesh:



The arrival of Archbishop Kevin Randall in Dhaka on 23rd of November 2023 as the New Apostolic Nuncio to Bangladesh has brought immense joy to the Church in Bangladesh. The CBCB President and Sec. General, as well as Bishop Romen James Boiragi, some priests, Religious, and other representatives, welcomed the new Nuncio at the airport with bouquets of flowers and cordial greetings. After a short exchange of words at the VIP Lounge of the airport, Archbishop Randall was escorted to the

Nunciature, where a formal reception was given to the Nuncio with a welcome song and dance performed by the students of the Bottomley Homes. Archbishop Bejoy N. D'Cruze, OMI, conveyed his greetings as the president of the CBCB and on behalf of the Catholic Church in Bangladesh. He expressed the excitement of the Catholics in Bangladesh at the announcement of the name of the new Nuncio for Bangladesh after waiting for more than one year. He also noted that the Apostolic Nuncio plays an important pastoral role in the lives of the faithful, besides representing the Holy See to the government and the Church. The Archbishop welcomed the Nuncio to visit the dioceses and the faithful, as all eagerly await the Papal Blessing through his presence. Archbishop Kevin Randall expressed his joy for the welcome and his opportunity to serve in Bangladesh, acting as a link between the Universal Church and the local Churches. He expressed his gratitude to all for the warm welcome and the prayers.



On 29th February, His Excellency Kevin Randall again met the bishops in the CBCB Meeting at the CBCB Centre where he delivered his speech and exchanged views. Later that day, he welcomed all the bishops to his residence for a fraternal meal.

Archbishop Kevin Randall has already shown his great interest in visiting different dioceses to shepherd the faithful and bringing joy to them. The dioceses joyfully welcomed the Nuncio and introduced the real situation of the Local Churches and the people.

CBCB Meeting held on 28-29 Feb. 2024

The first CBCB meeting of the year took place at the CBCB Centre on 28th and 29th Feb. 2024, with the arrival of all the bishops on the eve of the meeting. The Bishops cordially welcomed Bishop-elect Subroto B. Gomes as the new member of the CBCB.

Some of the important issues discussed in the meeting were: response to the Synthesis Report of the Synod to be prepared and sent to the General Secretariat in Rome; Participation in the International Youth Ministry Congress to be held from 22 to 26 May 2024 in Rome by two delegates from Bangladesh; a year-long program for the Jubilee Year 2025 proposed by the Dicastery for Evangelization for various groups such as: Jubilee of the sick and health-Care workers, poor, children, youth, priests, bishops, consecrated life, workers, catechists, etc; the first World Children Day to be organized by the Dicastery for Culture and Education scheduled on 25-26 May 2024 with the theme "I will make things new" (Rev. 21:5); the Pastoral Literature Translation Workshop to be organized by the FABC- OSC in Bangkok scheduled from June 4 to 10, 2024 where three priests from Bangladesh is going to attend.

His Excellency Kevin Randall, the Apostolic Nuncio met the Bishops on the second day of the meeting, and he was greeted with flowers as it was his first official meeting with the CBCB. The Nuncio thanked everyone for the warm welcome in the country and shared about his experience in recent visits to different dioceses. The Apostolic Nuncio offered two brief reflections on "Communal Discernment and "Synodality for the Episcopal Conference". Referring to the recent book Pope Francis as Moral Leader by Thomas Massaro, SJ, His Excellency suggested a "Communal Discernment" for the Conference by nurturing 'horizontal relationships'.

The Meeting with the Governing Body of the Holy Spirit Major Seminary (HSMS): On the second day of the CBCB Meeting, Bp. Emmanuel K. Rozario, the Chairman of the Governing Body, presided over a meeting that included Fr. Paul Gomes, the Rector, Fr. Rodon Hadima, the Vice-Rector, and Fr. Anthony Hasdak, the Prefect of Studies. The meeting presented the following reports: a) the minutes from the previous GB meeting; b) the financial report and the budget for 2024; and c) other seminary issues. The GB approved the budget for 2024 and gave guidance on other seminary matters. All of these details will be available at the next GB meeting with the CBCB.

Annual Assembly of the Episcopal Bodies 2024:



The annual assembly took place on 1st March 2024, at the CBCB Centre with the participation of all the bishops and the secretaries and representatives of each episcopal commission and desk; altogether, 32 participants attended. The Assembly commenced with a prayer and words of welcome by the President of the CBCB and welcoming of the newly elected Bishop

Subroto B. Gomes along with the new members of the Episcopal Bodies. There are 16 episcopal commissions, as well as a number of desks belonging to the episcopal conference. Each commission presented their annual activities and plan for the new year, outlining the challenges they faced and the solutions they envisioned. After the presentations of the reports, there were discussions on some important and general issues. A special emphasis was given on the Synodal Journey in various sectors of the lives of the faithful guided by the Episcopal Commissions. All the participants expressed their commitment to strengthening the communion, participation, and mission of the commissions, thus serving the cause of the CBCB for the good of the Church in Bangladesh.

The Synodal Journey of the Church in Bangladesh:



The Catholic Church in Bangladesh has joyfully welcomed the outcome of the "Synthesis Report" of the first session of the 16th General Assembly of the Synod of the Bishops". The Catholic Bishops' Conference of Bangladesh (CBCB) took the immediate initiative of translating the Synthesis Report into Bengali, the national language. Despite the presence of several tribal

languages in Bangladesh and the Catholic population belonging to nearly all these tribes, Bengali remains a widely spoken and understood language. Therefore, it was very significant and effective for Christians all over the country. The CBCB widely disseminated the translated documents among the dioceses, who then distributed them to Christians in all areas. Members of the clergy, religious leaders, laypeople, professionals, community members, and others gathered for a series of study sessions and roundtable discussions. The diocesan pastoral assemblies adapted many of the subjects from the synthesis report. Catholic journals have published a series of articles, and various print and electronic media have published interviews with individuals from different levels of society. The witnesses, thoughts, and proposals of the faithful have been gathered, and many discussions at various levels have taken place.

On 4th May 2024, all the bishops of the CBCB met at the CBCB Centre along with the diocesan representatives with the aim of preparing the response to the Synthesis Report. Archbishop Bejoy N. D'Curze, OMI, who attended the first session of the Synod of the Bishops in October 2023 in Rome, representing Bangladesh, shared his experience and the spirit of the Synod that he felt attending it. Each diocese presented their report on the process and progress of the deepening and consultation at the diocesan level. Afterwards, the participants worked together to finalize a response on behalf of the Episcopal Conference. Finally, the response to the synthesis report was prepared, and after the approval of the CBCB, the response has been sent to both the FABC and the General Secretariat of the Synod. It is worth mentioning that the CBCB had already prepared and submitted the Country Report and the Response on the DCS (Document for Continental Stage) of the Synod in the same manner.

The Catholic Directory of Bangladesh 2023

The 14th Edition of *The Catholic Directory of Bangladesh* has finally been published in August 2023. The latest version contains all the updated information of all the dioceses and religious institutes, as well as the priests and religious serving there, along with the details of the CBCB, the Episcopal Body, and the Dicasteries of the Holy See. The directory is very handy and much needed for any information regarding the Church-run institutes and is widely used in the Catholic Church in Bangladesh.

Seminar on FABC at the CBCB Center



On 18th Aug. 2023 the CBCB organized the seminar titled "FABC and Bangladesh: Journeying Together" at the national level, involving all eight dioceses, bishops, major superiors, and other representatives. The objectives of the seminar were to become familiar with the FABC: vision, mission, structure, and methodology; to highlight the

milestones of the Church's journey with the FABC in Bangladesh; and to search for new paths of the journey together in the emerging realities of Asia. The seminar followed the "Conversation in Spirit" methodology, which involves silence, prayer, and listening. In the seminar, there were two key presentations: A) FABC: its Vision, Mission, Structure, and Plenary Assemblies by Bp. Emmanuel K. Rozario; and B) Journeying Together on New Pathways (Final Document FABC-50) by Bp. Gervas Rozario. The seminar included group discussions, group presentations, and later, a plenary session. To conclude the seminar, the Most Rev. Bejoy N. D'Cruze, OMI, the Archbishop of Dhaka and the president of the CBCB, offered the Eucharistic Celebration. In the homily, he explained that "the family is a clear example of walking together." And this unity is most evident in married life. "The unity between Jesus and the Church, reminds the prelate, is "what He has given us in our lives. That is, the love of Jesus is an excellent example of love in earthly life." The archbishop then added that there is charity and love in the lives of priests and consecrated women. But true love lies in unity, which, while requiring "self-sacrifice," at the same time makes family life "stronger." "If it's not strong, then we lack true love," he warns. "The family is the place of true love."

All Christian Conference:



The United Forum of Churches, Bangladesh (UFCB) organized the All Christian Conference on 5th of December, 2023, at the CBCB Centre attended by representatives of the three groups of Churches namely the Catholic Church (50), the NCCB (25), and the NCFB (25). The day-long program included morning

worship, presentations on "Care of God's Creation," "Church Issues and Communication with Government," "Proposed Amendments to Christian Personal (Family) Law," open discussions, and closing prayer. Archbishop Bejoy N. D'Cruze, OMI, the President of the UFCB, chaired the conference and thanked everyone for their active participation, which symbolized a sign of communion in a common journey.



Seminar on Wildlife Protection: The seminar was organized by the US Embassy Department of Justice for the Christian Leaders of Bangladesh held at the CBCB Centre on 4th Nov. 2023. Archbishop Bejoy N. D'Curze, OMI, chaired the seminar, which aimed to raise awareness about the protection of wild life and prevent wildlife trafficking. Among the participants were the leaders of different Christian Churches such as 40 Catholics and 10 representatives from each family of the NCCB and NCFB.

Translation of the Apostolic Letter *DESIDERIO DESIDERAVI*

The CBCB felt the need to translate the Apostolic Letter *Desiderio Desideravi* (On the Liturgical Formation of the People of God) in Bangla and accordingly requested H. E. Cardinal Patrick D' Rozario, CSC, to translate the document. His Eminence generously translated the document into Bangla and published it as a booklet. The booklet has been widely distributed to the dioceses and to the major seminarians for the formation of liturgy.

The ministries of Acolyteship and Lectorship of the Laity



The CBCB considered introducing the acolyteship and lectorship of the laity in an effort to create more active and enthusiastic participation among the faithful and thus enhance synodality in prayer and worship. Accordingly, the CBCB requested the EC-Liturgy and Prayer (EC-LP) to draft a guideline. The EC-LP later presented the proposed guidelines for the institutions of acolyteship, lectorship, and the Ministers of the Holy Communion. The bishops discussed the

contents and made some comments, such as the dress codes distinguishing different ministries and that these should differ from priestly dresses. The CBCB approved the guideline and instructed the EC-LP to organize a training program, enabling the ministers to prepare and the ministries to gradually implement it in specific parishes within the dioceses where it is suitable. Later, the EC-LP arranged week-long training programs separately for the candidates of the acolyteship (July 6–9, 2023) and those of the lectorship (July 27–29, 2023) held at the Holy Spirit Major Seminary, where each diocese had sent their selective candidates. The candidates expressed their excitement and enthusiasm, as well as their reverential fear of being able to join in such an honorable and pious ministry of the Church. It is a great joy to inform that the Diocese of Rajshahi and the Archdiocese of Chattogram have already officially instituted these ministries in their respective dioceses, and the other dioceses are also on the verge of opening this scope for the laity.



National Youth Day (NYD)-2024



The Episcopal Commission for Youth (EC-Y) organized the National Youth Day (NYD) 2024 along with the Silver Jubilee of the Commission at Immaculate Conception Parish at Lokhipur, Kulaura, Moulvibazar under the Diocese of Sylhet from February 23 to 27, 2024, with the theme “Rejoicing in Hope” (Rom. 12:12). With the spirit of communion, participation, and youth pilgrimage of faith sharing, celebration, formation, transformation, and mission of the youth, the NYD 2024 witnessed the

gathering of hundreds of youth full of vim and vigor. The presence of His Excellency Archbishop Kevin Randall as the chief guest amplified the joy of the participants. Some 420 youth, 38 priests, 42 religious brothers and sisters from different congregations, and a good number of volunteers, animators, committee members, and secretaries of the National and Diocesan Youth Commission from 8 different dioceses—together, around 540 participants joined the NYD this year. A warm reception, cultural dance and songs, the installation of the youth cross, the opening mass, sessions and workshops on various topics, a cultural rally, a half-day exposure, a heritage corner, the way of the cross, the venerating of the youth cross, a park of forgiveness, meditation, daily prayer and mass, quizzes, aaminations, group discussion, evaluation, action plan, a cultural show, a closing ceremony, and the mission oath adorned the four-day-long program. These programs inspired the youth to be an effective catalyst and outlet for their desire to serve by offering mission trips, projects, and other approaches as instruments for learning the broader aspects and having a personal and living encounter with Jesus Christ. These programs provoked young people to view their lives and lifestyles as a response to God, who calls each individual by name.

Congratulations to Anima Mukti Gomes, MP



The newly nominated MP, in a courtesy visit with the bishops, came to the CBCB Secretariat on 29th of February 2024, and met the bishops in a tea session. She expressed her gratitude to God and the Church in Bangladesh for supporting and greeting her in this nomination, as well as her wholehearted desire to serve

and support the Church's cause as much as possible in her capacity as a Christian MP. The bishops congratulated her with a bouquet of flowers and wished her a fruitful service to the government and country.

Earthquake fund sent to Syria: The CBCB felt the need to stand by the victims of the devastating earthquake that shook Turkey and Syria in February 2023, and took the initiative to raise a solidarity fund. As a result, the dioceses and religious institutes were asked to contribute for the fund. Finally, the Apostolic Nunciature of Bangladesh sent the collected fund, totaling 21,000 (twenty-one thousand) USD, to the Dicastery for the Eastern Churches. Mario Cardinal Zacari, the Apostolic Nunico of Syria, in an official letter dated 9th October 2023, thanked the CBCB for this generous gesture.



International Conference on Synod

Bp. Emmanuel Rozario, Bp. Theotonius Gomes, CSC, Fr. Paul Gomes, and Fr. Tushar Gomes participated in the international conference with the theme "Towards a Synodal Church: Moving Forward," which was held in Bangalore from January 12 to 15, 2023. The conference was Organized by Dharmaram Vidya Kshetram and there

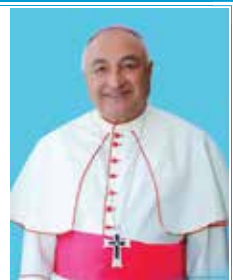
were approximately 250 participants from around the world.

Construction of the CBCB Centre entrance passage and pathways

The long-awaited construction work on the CBCB Centre internal passage has finally been completed. The dilapidated brick-soling entrance passage had been a cause of trouble for passersby for a long time. In addition, the low pathways in between the two buildings along with the drainage system of the Centre had to be developed as the rainwater used to submerge the surroundings. Finally, with the approval of the project by the CBCB, the RCC construction of the internal passage as well as the development of the pathways and drainage system have been completed at a cost of seventeen lac taka. Now all can enjoy the smooth movement in the CBCB Centre without a hassle. There are further repair works that are still to be undertaken.

Our Gratitude to Archbishop George Kocherry

The CBCB expresses its sincere gratitude to **Achbishop George Kocherry** for his dedicated service and great contributions to the Church in Bangladesh between 2013 and 2022. We are indebted to our beloved Nuncio for his pastoral love and care, and we pray for his sound physical and mental health.



In loving memory



The CBCB expresses its profound grief over the sudden demise of **Mr. Sukleash George Costa**, the DP of Caritas Bangladesh, who unfortunately breathed his last on August 20, 2023. At the meeting of the CBCB on Nov. 8-9, 2023, the bishops unanimously moved a motion of condolence, recalling his great contributions in the various sectors of the Church including in recent times in the process of synodal journey, and expressing cordial and prayerful compassion for the bereaved members of his family.

The CBCB is deeply saddened by the untimely demise of **Fr. Anol Terence D'Costa, CSC** who shocked everyone with his sudden departure from this world on March 16, 2024. He had been serving as the Secretary of the Episcopal Commission for Clergy and Religious and had attended the Annual General Assembly of the Episcopal Bodies held on 1st March, 2024. All members of the Episcopal Body remember his generous service and pray for his eternal rest.



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