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Audience with a delegation of the Buddhist Authority in Mongolia

This morning, the Holy Father Francis received in audience a delegation from the Buddhist Authority of Mongolia, on the occasion of the commemoration of thirty years of the presence of the Catholic Church in the Asian country, and the thirtieth anniversary of the establishment of diplomatic relations between the Holy See and Mongolia.

The following are the Pope's words of greeting to those present at the meeting:

Greeting of the Holy Father

Distinguished Gentlemen!

With great cordiality and esteem I welcome you, Buddhist leaders from Mongolia, and Archbishop Giorgio Marengo, apostolic prefect of Ulaanbaatar, who is accompanying you. I express my gratitude for your first visit to the Vatican as official representatives of Mongolian Buddhism. It is intended to deepen your friendly relations with the Catholic Church, to promote mutual understanding and cooperation in order to build a peaceful society. The occasion is particularly significant as this year marks the thirtieth anniversary of the Apostolic Prefecture in your beautiful country, as well as of diplomatic relations between the Holy See and Mongolia.

Peace is today the ardent yearning of humanity. Therefore, through dialogue at all levels, it is urgent to promote a culture of peace and non-violence and to work to this end. This dialogue must invite everyone to reject violence in all its forms, including violence against the environment. Unfortunately, there are those who continue to abuse religion by using it to justify acts of violence and hatred.

Jesus and Buddha were peacemakers and promoters of nonviolence. "Jesus himself lived in violent times. Yet he taught that the true battlefield, where violence and peace meet, is the human heart. ... He unfailingly preached God's unconditional love, which welcomes and forgives. He taught his disciples to love their enemies (cf. *Mt* 5: 44) and to turn the other cheek (cf. *Mt* 5: 39). ... Jesus marked out the path of nonviolence. He walked

that path to the very end, to the cross, whereby he became our peace and put an end to hostility (cf. *Eph 2: 14-16*). Therefore, “to be true followers of Jesus today also includes embracing his teaching about nonviolence” (*Message for World Day of Peace*, 1 January 2017, 3).

The Buddha's central message was non-violence and peace. He taught that “victory leaves behind a trail of hatred, because the vanquished suffer. Abandon all thoughts of victory and defeat and live in peace and joy” (*Dhammapada*, XV, 5 [201]). He also emphasized that conquering oneself is greater than conquering others: “Better to win yourself than to win a thousand battles against a thousand men” (*ibid.*, VIII, 4 [103]).

In a world ravaged by conflict and war, as religious leaders, deeply rooted in our respective religious doctrines, we have a duty to inspire in humanity the will to renounce violence and build a culture of peace.

Although the presence of more formal communities of Catholic faithful in your country is fairly recent, and their number small but significant, the Church is fully committed to promoting a culture of encounter, following her Master and Founder who said: “Love one another as I have loved you” (cf. *Jn 15:12*). Let us strengthen our friendship for the good of all. Mongolia has a long tradition of peaceful co-existence of different religions. My hope is that this ancient history of harmony in diversity may continue today, through the effective implementation of religious freedom and the promotion of joint initiatives for the common good. Your presence here today is in itself a sign of hope. With these sentiments, I invite you to continue your fraternal dialogue and good relations with the Catholic Church in your country, for the cause of peace and harmony.

Thank you again for your welcome visit; and I hope that your stay in Rome will be rich in joy and interesting experiences. I am also sure that your meeting with members of the Pontifical Council for Interreligious Dialogue will give you the opportunity to explore ways to further promote Buddhist-Christian dialogue in Mongolia and throughout the region.

I wish you and those you represent, in the various Buddhist monasteries in Mongolia, an abundance of peace and prosperity.
