



SALA STAMPA DELLA SANTA SEDE  
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**Apostolic Journey of His Holiness Francis in Indonesia, Papua New Guinea, Timor-Leste, and Singapore (2 to 13 September 2024) – Meeting with bishops, priests, deacons, consecrated men and women, seminarians and catechists**

This morning, the Holy Father left the Apostolic Nunciature and transferred to the Cathedral of Our Lady of the Assumption for the meeting with bishops, priests, deacons, consecrated men and women, seminarians and catechists.

Upon arrival in the Cathedral, the Pope was received at the entrance by His Eminence Cardinal Ignatius Suharyo Hardjoatmodjo, archbishop of Jakarta, Bishop Antonius Subianto Bunyamin, O.S.C., president of the Episcopal Conference, and by the parish priest, who brought him the cross and the holy water for aspersion. Finally, two children gave the Pope a floral tribute.

The Holy Father then proceeded along the central nave up to the altar, while the choir sang a hymn. The president of the Episcopal Conference addressed a greeting to Pope Francis, which was followed by testimonies from a priest, a religious sister, and two catechists. The Pope then delivered his address.

At the end, after the blessing, the group photograph with the bishop, and the final hymn, the Pope proceeded to Mary Square, at the side exit of the Cathedral, to bless the faithful gathered there.

The following is the address delivered by the Holy Father during the meeting with bishops, priests, deacons, consecrated men and women, seminarians and catechists:

***The Holy Father takes the floor after listening to some testimonies, and he asks the catechist who has just concluded to stay by his side for a moment.***

With you standing here in front of everyone, I would like to say something.

The catechists carry the Church forward. They are the ones who move forward first, followed by the nuns, then the priests and the bishop. But, the catechists are at the front, they are the driving force of the Church.

On one of my trips to Africa, the President of a country told me that he had been baptized by his father who was a catechist. Faith is transmitted at home and in dialect. The catechists, together with the mothers and grandmothers, pass on the faith. I am very grateful to all the catechists: they are good, very good! Thank you!

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*Dear brothers and sisters, good morning!*

There are cardinals, bishops, priests, nuns, lay people, and children, but we are all brothers and sisters. The titles of the pope, the cardinal, and the bishop are not as important, we are all brothers and sisters. Everyone has his own task to grow God's people.

I greet all present, the Cardinal, Bishops, priests, deacons, consecrated men and women, seminarians and catechists. I thank the President of the Bishops' Conference for his words, as well as our brothers and sisters who shared their testimonies with us.

As you know, the motto chosen for this Apostolic Visit is *Faith, Fraternity, Compassion*. I think these are three virtues that express well both your journey as a Church and your character as a people, who are ethnically and culturally diverse. At the same time, you are characterized by an innate striving for unity and peaceful coexistence, as witnessed by the traditional principles of the *Pancasila*. I would now like to reflect with you on these three words.

The first is *faith*. Indonesia is a large country, with many natural riches, in terms of plants and wildlife, energy sources, raw materials and so on. If viewed superficially, such great wealth could be a reason for pride or arrogance, but when considered with an open mind and heart, this wealth can instead be a reminder of God, of his presence in the cosmos and in our lives, as Sacred Scripture teaches us (cf. *Gen* 1; *Sir* 42:15; 43:33). Indeed, it is the Lord who gives all this. There is not an inch of the marvelous Indonesian territory, nor a moment in the lives of its millions of inhabitants that is not a gift from God, a sign of his gratuitous and everlasting love as Father. Looking at all we have been given with the humble eyes of children helps us to believe, to recognize ourselves as small and beloved (cf. *Ps* 8), and to cultivate feelings of gratitude and responsibility.

Agnes talked about this when inviting us to live our relationship with creation and with our brothers and sisters, especially the most needy, through a personal and communal lifestyle marked by respect, civility and humanity, together with sobriety and Franciscan charity.

After faith, the second word in the motto is *fraternity*. A twentieth-century poet used a very beautiful expression to describe this attitude. She wrote that being brothers and sisters means loving each other by recognizing each other "as different as two drops of water" (W. Szyborska, "Nulla due volte accade", in *La gioia di scrivere. Tutte le poesie (1945-2009)*, Milano 2009, 45). How beautiful! That expression captures it perfectly. No two drops of water are alike, nor are two brothers or sisters, not even twins are completely identical. Living out fraternity, then, means welcoming each other, recognizing each other as equal in diversity.

This, too, is a value dear to the Indonesian Church and is made manifest through the openness with which you address the various internal and external realities encountered on a cultural, ethnic, social and religious level. In particular, your local Church values the contribution of all and generously offers assistance in every setting. This, brothers and sisters, is important, because proclaiming the Gospel does not mean imposing our faith, placing it in opposition to that of others, or proselytizing, it means giving and sharing the joy of encountering Christ (cf. *1 Pet* 3:15-17), always with great respect and fraternal affection for everyone. I invite you always to keep yourselves open and friendly to all – I like the expression "hand-in-hand" as Father Maxi said – prophets of communion, in a world where the tendency to divide, impose and provoke each other seems to be constantly

increasing (cf. Apostolic Exhortation *Evangelii Gaudium*, 67). On this point, I want to tell you something: do you know who is the most divisive person in the world? The great divider, who always divides, but it is Jesus who unites. It is the devil who divides, so be careful!

As Sister Rina reminded us, it is important to try to reach everyone. In this regard, it is hoped that not only the texts of the word of God but also the teachings of the Church will be translated into *Bahasa Indonesia* in order to make them accessible to as many people as possible. Nicholas also pointed out the need to reach everyone, describing the mission of the catechist with the image of a “bridge” that unites. This struck me, and made me think of a wonderful vision in the great Indonesian archipelago of thousands of “bridges of the heart” uniting all the islands, and even more so of millions of such “bridges” uniting all the people who live there! Another beautiful image of fraternity would be an immense tapestry of threads of love that cross the sea, overcome barriers and embrace all diversity, making everyone “one heart and soul” (cf. *Acts* 4:32). It is the language of the heart, don’t forget this!

We come now to the third word: *compassion*, which is very closely related to fraternity. Compassion means to suffer with the other, to share feelings: it is a beautiful word! We know that compassion does not consist in giving alms to needy brothers and sisters, looking down on them from our own security and success. On the contrary, compassion consists in drawing close to one another, removing everything that can prevent us from stooping down to touch those on the ground and thus giving them hope (cf. *Fratelli Tutti*, 70). This is essential: to touch poverty. When I hear confessions, I always ask adults, “Do you give alms?” and they generally say, “Yes” because they are good people. But the second question is, “Do you, when you give alms, touch the hand of the beggar? Do you look into his eyes? Or do you throw the coin at him from a distance so as not to touch him?” This is something we all have to learn: compassion means to suffer, to walk with those who are suffering in their feelings and to embrace them, to accompany them. Moreover, it means embracing their dreams and desires for freedom and justice, taking care of them, supporting them while also involving others, widening the “net” and the boundaries to create a great expansive dynamism of charity (cf. *ibid.*, 203). This does not mean being a communist, rather it means charity, it means love.

There are people who are afraid of compassion because they consider it a weakness, they think suffering with the other is a weakness. Instead, they champion, as if it were a virtue, the shrewdness of those who serve their own interests by keeping their distance from everyone, by not letting themselves be “touched” by anything or anyone, thus thinking they are more lucid and free in achieving their goals.

I sadly remember a very rich person in Buenos Aires, who had a habit of taking, and taking, more and more money. He died and left a huge inheritance. People joked around saying, “Poor guy, they couldn’t close the coffin!” He wanted to take everything but he took nothing. It might make us laugh, but don’t forget that the devil comes in through the pockets, always! Holding onto riches as security is an incorrect way of looking at reality. What keeps the world going is not the calculations of self-interest, which generally end up destroying creation and dividing communities, but offering charity to others. This is what moves us forward: charity that gives of itself. Compassion does not cloud the true vision of life. On the contrary, it makes us see things better, in the light of love, and we things more clearly with the eyes of the heart. I would like to repeat, please be careful, and don’t forget that the devil enters through the pockets!

The architecture of this Cathedral’s main entrance, with its Marian focus, sums up very well what we have said. At the centre of the pointed arch is a pillar on which there is a statue of the Virgin Mary. It thus shows us that the Mother of God is above all a model of *faith*, but she also symbolically supports the entire edifice of the Church through her humble “yes” to God’s plan (cf. *Lk* 1:38). Yet the pillar represents Christ and the humble woman standing on that pillar seemingly bears with him the weight of the whole building, as if to say in the end that human labour and ingenuity cannot support itself. Mary, then, appears as an image of *fraternity*, a gesture of welcome in the middle of the main entrance to all those who wish to enter. She is the mother who receives us. Finally, she is also an icon of *compassion*, watching over and protecting God’s people who, with their joys and sorrows, labours and hopes, gather in the Father’s house. She is the mother of compassion.

Dear brothers and sisters, I would like to conclude these reflections by repeating what Saint John Paul II said

when addressing Bishops, clergy and consecrated persons during his Visit here several decades ago. Quoting the following verse from the Psalms, “*Laetentur insulae multae* – Let the many islands rejoice” (Ps 96:1), he invited those listening to put it into practice by “bearing witness to the joy of the Resurrection and in giving your life so that even the most distant islands may ‘rejoice’ at hearing the Gospel, of which you are authentic preachers, teachers and witnesses” (*Meeting with the Bishops, Clergy and Religious of Indonesia*, Jakarta, 10 October 1989).

I too renew this exhortation, and I encourage you to continue your mission by being strong in *faith*, open to all in *fraternity* and close to one another in *compassion*. Strong, open and close, with the fortitude of faith. Openness to welcome everyone! I am so struck by that parable in the Gospel, when the wedding guests did not want to come, what did the Lord do? Did he become bitter? No, he sent his servants and told them to go to the crossroads of the streets and to bring everyone inside. With this very beautiful style in mind, go forth with brotherhood, with compassion and with unity. I think of the many islands here, so many islands, and the Lord says to the good people, to you, “everybody, everybody”. Indeed, the Lord says, “good and bad,” everyone! I, too, renew this exhortation and encourage you to continue your mission, strong in faith, open to all in fraternity and close to others in compassion. Faith, fraternity and compassion. I leave you these three words, and you can think about them later. Faith, fraternity and compassion. I bless you, and thank you for the many good things you do each day on all these beautiful islands! I will pray for you and I ask you, please, to pray for me. Be careful about one thing: pray for, not against! Thank you.

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