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Alle ore 11.45 di questa mattina, nella Sala del Concistoro del Palazzo Apostolico Vaticano, il Santo Padre Benedetto XVI incontra gli Ecc.mi Presuli della Conferenza Episcopale dell'Indonesia, ricevuti in questi giorni, in separate udienze, in occasione della Visita "ad Limina Apostolorum" e rivolge loro il discorso che pubblichiamo di seguito:

● DISCORSO DEL SANTO PADRE

Dear Brother Bishops,

I am pleased to offer you a warm fraternal welcome on the occasion of your visit *ad Limina Apostolorum*, a privileged opportunity to give thanks to God for the gift of communion that exists in the one Church of Christ, and a moment to deepen our bonds of unity in the apostolic faith. I wish to thank Bishop Situmorang for his kind words offered on your behalf and in the name of those entrusted to your pastoral care. My cordial greetings also go to the priests, the men and women religious, and laity whom you shepherd. Please assure them of my prayers for their sanctification and well-being.

Christ's message of salvation, forgiveness and love has been preached in your country for centuries. Indeed, the missionary impulse remains essential to the Church's life, and finds expression not only in the preaching of the Gospel, but also in the witness of Christian charity (cf. *Ad Gentes*, 2). In this regard, I appreciate the intense

efforts made by numerous individuals and agencies in the name of the Church to bring the tender compassion of God to many members of Indonesian society. This is the hallmark of every movement, action and expression of the Church, in all of her sacramental, charitable, educational and social endeavors, so that in everything her members may strive to make the Triune God known and loved through Jesus Christ. This will not only contribute to the spiritual vitality of the Church as she grows in confidence through humble yet courageous witness; it will also strengthen Indonesian society by promoting those values that your fellow citizens hold dear: tolerance, unity and justice for all citizens. Appropriately, Indonesia's constitution guarantees the fundamental human right of freedom to practice one's religion. The freedom to live and preach the Gospel can never be taken for granted and must always be justly and patiently upheld. Nor is religious freedom merely a right to be free from outside constraints. It is also a right to be authentically and fully Catholic, to practice the faith, to build up the Church and to contribute to the common good, proclaiming the Gospel as Good News for all, and inviting everyone to intimacy with the God of mercy and compassion made manifest in Jesus Christ

A significant amount of the charitable and educational work within your Dioceses is done under the aegis of religious men and women. Their consecration to Christ and their lives of deep prayer and genuine sacrifice continue to enrich the Church and to render God's presence visible and active in your nation. I wish to express my gratitude to the many priests and men and women religious who offer glory to the Lord through countless good works which benefit their Indonesian brothers and sisters. Their labors are an indispensable expression of the Church's commitment to humanity, and in particular to the most needy. For this reason, I ask you, dear Brother Bishops, to continue to ensure that the formation and education that seminarians and men and women religious receive will always be adequate to the mission entrusted to them. Amid the growing complexities of our world and the rapid transformation of Indonesian society, the need for well-prepared religious men and women is all the more urgent. In concert with their local Superiors, ascertain that they have received what is necessary for them to live lives filled with spiritual wisdom and understanding, and to bear fruit in every good work (*cf. Col 1:9,10*). I can only encourage you in your continuing efforts to promote and sustain interreligious dialogue in your nation. Your country, so rich in its cultural diversity and possessed of a large population, is home to significant numbers of followers of various religious traditions. Thus, the people of Indonesia are well-placed to make important contributions to the quest for peace and understanding among the peoples of the world. Your participation in this great enterprise is decisive, and so I urge you, dear brothers, to ensure that those whom you shepherd know that they, as Christians, are to be agents of peace, perseverance and charity. The Church is called to follow her Divine Master, who unites all things in himself, and to witness to that peace which only he can give. This is the precious fruit of charity in him who, suffering unjustly, gave us his life and taught us to respond in all situations with forgiveness, mercy and love in truth. Believers in Christ, rooted in charity, ought to be committed to dialogue with other religions, respecting mutual differences. Common endeavors for the upbuilding of society will be of great value when they strengthen friendships and overcome misunderstanding or distrust. I have confidence that you and the priests, religious and laity of your Dioceses will continue to bear witness to the image and likeness of God in each man, woman and child, regardless of their faith, by encouraging everyone to be open to dialogue in the service of peace and harmony. By doing everything possible to ensure that the rights of minorities in your country are respected, you further the cause of tolerance and mutual harmony in your country and beyond.

With these thoughts, dear Brother Bishops, I renew to you my sentiments of affection and esteem. Your country is composed of thousands of islands; so too the Church in Indonesia is made up of thousands of Christian communities, "islands of Christ's presence". May you always be united in faith, hope and love among yourselves and with the Successor of Peter. I commend all of you to the intercession of Mary, Mother of the Church. Assuring you of my prayers for you and for those entrusted to your pastoral care, I am pleased to impart my Apostolic Blessing as a pledge of grace and peace in the Lord.

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