



# CATHOLIC BISHOPS' CONFERENCE

Address: The Islamic Foundation, Dhaka, Bangladesh  
*Cardinal Cormac Murphy-O'Connor*

7 NOVEMBER 2012

**I greet you warmly in the name of Pope Benedict XVI and I thank you for the gracious invitation to meet with you today. I had the privilege of accompanying Pope Benedict during his visit to the United Kingdom two years ago. During that historic visit representatives of all the religious communities present in our countries were invited to gather to discuss matters of mutual concern with each other and in the presence of the Pope. One of the speakers was a Muslim. Joining in the discussion, the Holy Father spoke to us eloquently of the importance of religious belief in the contemporary world:**

“Genuine religious belief” he said, “points us beyond present utility towards the transcendent. It reminds us of the possibility and the imperative of moral conversion, of the duty to live peaceably with our neighbour, of the importance of living a life of integrity.”

That duty to live in peace with your neighbour is one that - even in the short time I have been here - I have seen present in Bangladesh and for this I am profoundly grateful. It is the work of all religious leaders to work for peace, harmony and conviviality, and I know that the Islamic Foundation plays such a constructive role in that regard.

One cannot meet with men and women of religious belief without recalling the great gathering of representatives of world religions in Assisi in Italy in 1986 to offer their own prayers for peace. In fact, I know that Dr. Afzal, the Director of this Foundation, was invited by the Vatican to participate in the 25th Anniversary of that gathering and so to share with others from around the world your positive experience in Bangladesh.

When reflecting on peace, at that first Assisi meeting, Pope John Paul said:

“The challenge of peace, as posed to every human conscience, is the problem of a reasonable quality of life for all, the problem of survival for humanity, the problem of life and death.”

And he reminded the world and all people of religious belief of two things that we share in common:

Firstly, “the inner imperative of the moral conscience, which enjoins us to respect, protect and promote human life, from the womb to the deathbed, for individuals and peoples, but especially for the weak, the destitute, the derelict: the imperative to overcome selfishness, greed and the spirit of vengeance.”

And then secondly, “the conviction that peace goes much beyond human efforts... and therefore that its source and realization is to be sought in that Reality beyond all of us.”

This is why each of us prays in our own way for peace and people of religious belief work ceaselessly, and wherever possible together, for the good of others – it is our God-given duty.

Within a month of speaking those words, Pope John Paul visited this country of Bangladesh and this city of Dhaka; and if I may I would like to conclude by making his hope and his prayer then, my own for you today:

“...That your country may go steadily forward:

- in respect for the dignity of every individual;
- in the health and happiness of your families;
- in the strengthening of the country’s wholesome institutions and social structures;
- in the commitment of all its citizens to the common good;
- and in the worship of the all merciful God in spirit and in truth, in freedom and love.

May the Almighty and Merciful God bless Bangladesh!”

Thank you.

**Cardinal Cormac Murphy-O’Connor**  
*Archbishop Emeritus of Westminster*