



# CATHOLIC BISHOPS' CONFERENCE

Homily: Seminary, Dhaka

*Cardinal Cormac Murphy-O'Connor*

5 NOVEMBER 2012

**In Britain, tonight is celebrated as Bonfire Night and there are fireworks and bonfires: rather like New Year is commemorated in some places.**

It marks a moment in our history when in 1605 –over four hundred years ago - a group of young catholic noblemen, led by Guy Fawkes attempted to assassinate King James I by blowing up Parliament while he was there. The plot failed. Guy Fawkes and his conspirators were executed the following year for High Treason. Even today, when Queen Elizabeth goes to Parliament for the State Opening, there is a symbolic search for explosives.

The people of London were encouraged to light bonfires to show their joy that the King had been saved. Until 150 years ago bonfires and fireworks were used partly to celebrate the fact that Britain was a place where Catholicism had been overturned. Sometimes even an effigy of the Pope was burned.

It is remarkable to think that two years ago, however, Pope Benedict stood in the very place that Guy Fawkes had tried to blow up. He spoke as an honoured and welcomed guest, to members of the British Parliament and a cross section of important people in our land and addressed them on the importance of faith and of caring for the common good of each other.

I tell you this because as you prepare to become priests I want you to always have before you hope. And to be sure that by remaining faithful to Jesus and growing to know him every day in prayer, in the Eucharist and in study, you can change and you can become a better person. What is more as a priest you can make change happen for others – just as change has been needed by us in our land.

This morning we have listened to St Paul writing eloquently to the Church in Philippi, and I hope you - young men of the Church in Bangladesh - will hear what has been read as being addressed to you.

Being the Rector of a seminary myself once, many years ago now, I know there are limits to what students can remember! So there are only four things from St Paul which I ask you to consider:

Firstly, St Paul reminds the people of Philippi that they are in Christ. For us as for them, when Christ becomes the centre of our lives, there will not be room for serious division among us – so make Christ the centre of your life;

Secondly, he writes of love (*agape*): For you preparing for priestly ministry that love is twofold. First of all, it is the love that God has shown you in Christ, especially by his suffering and dying on the cross, and which you will celebrate day in and day out in the Eucharist. Secondly, love is the law which embraces all other laws:

So it is in love that we judge the words and actions of those to whom we minister;

It is with love that we meet any other human being;

And as we saw in the Gospel, it is in love that Jesus exhorts us to extend an invitation to all.

St Paul writes also of the Spirit we have in common. The Spirit is God communicating to us the Gospel message we have received from Christ and uniting us. If we are filled with that same Spirit, then we are going to speak and act in harmony.

Finally, Paul reminds those to whom he is writing to look to the interests of others and not to their own. A priest is privileged to show care and concern for others. I tell you never be afraid of doing so, especially when it means forgetting yourself and your status.

Believe me, status means nothing, compared with the love and care you receive from the people to whom you minister.

I am very pleased that my first opportunity to meet formally with the Church in Bangladesh is with you. You are the bridge between what you have received from the past and what you will pass on faithfully in the future.

I have every confidence in you, and I bring to you the blessing of the Holy Father – with my prayer that you will generously respond to God's call, and that the love of Christ may be always your strength, comfort and hope.

**Cardinal Cormac Murphy-O'Connor**

*Archbishop Emeritus of Westminster*