



CATHOLIC BISHOPS' CONFERENCE

Homily: Bangladesh Conference of Religious
Cardinal Cormac Murphy-O'Connor

6 NOVEMBER 2012

His Excellency the Nuncio has told me that you are gathered to reflect on the theme “Thinking with the Church”. I am very pleased that your thoughts included coming here to celebrate the Eucharist and I thank the Nuncio warmly for his initiative in inviting you here today.

My first thought - if I may presume to think along with you - is that when you think, then the Church herself thinks. And I would just remind us briefly of the teaching of the Second Vatican Council:

“Christ ... continually fulfils His prophetic office ... He does this not only through the hierarchy who teach in His name and with His authority, but also through the laity whom He made His witnesses and to whom He gave **understanding of the faith and an attractiveness in speech** so that the power of the Gospel might shine forth in their daily, social and family life.” (LG 35)

This is the teaching of *Lumen Gentium* on the *sensus fidei* – *understanding of the faith*. It is precisely in understanding faith and attractively speaking of faith that we all think with the Church. So it is only right and good that as Religious you are beginning this Year of Faith reflecting in this way.

It is appropriate too that we should hear today the words of St Paul to the Philippians, “In your minds you must be the same as Christ Jesus”. Paul then goes on to speak of what being the same as Christ means. It is in the emptying of oneself. Paul in the hymn reflects on Christ both as God and as a human being emptying himself - *kenosis*: emptying himself by not clinging to his equality with God and becoming incarnate; and emptying himself by accepting death on a cross.

So how do you in your minds be the same as Christ? How are you those prophets the Church and the world needs?

I am reminded of the simple and yet profound phrase of Pope Paul VI when he wrote that “the Gospel must be proclaimed by witness”. And he continued: “may the world of our time, which is searching, sometimes with anguish, sometimes with hope, be enabled to receive the Good News not from evangelizers who are dejected, discouraged, impatient or anxious, but from ministers of the Gospel whose lives glow with fervour, who have first received the joy of Christ, and who are willing to risk their lives so that the kingdom may be proclaimed and the Church established in the midst of the world.”

Religious life is present in Bangladesh because in past years those who have been called in other parts of the world to follow the Gospel counsels have come here and have lived that emptying of self which is given in the charism of their particular calling and in the profession of poverty, chastity and obedience. They did so and were attractive in their speech and in their lives; they were joyful in their response and they have been courageous in their witness.

Their witness to the Gospel was so attractive that in a brief period of time countless Bengalis and Tribals responded joyfully to the call to the priesthood, and as Religious sisters and brothers. With this in mind, I ask you to ensure that those who today are seeking religious life are given correct and complete formation. These young women and men who then go into the vineyard of the Lord will be properly prepared to offer deep and selfless witness to the Gospel.

I would encourage you with all my heart, like your predecessors, to live an understanding of the faith and to offer attractiveness in speech within the Church of today. I do not doubt that there is much about which to be anxious or sometimes discouraged, but there is so much more about which to be joyful.

In your thinking, therefore, reflect and pray sincerely for a deeper understanding, so that you may become the same as Christ. And in living your different charisms, be attractive in your joyful witness of the Kingdom to all God's people in this land.

Cardinal Cormac Murphy-O'Connor

Archbishop Emeritus of Westminster