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**PASTORAL VISIT TO BANGLADESH**

**9-13 SEPTEMBER 2015**

**Pontifical Mass Dhaka Archdiocese**

***12th September 2015, Saturday, 17:30***

*Homily*

First reading: **Isaiah 50, 5-9a**

Second reading: **James 2, 14-18**

Gospel: **Mark 8, 27-35**

1. I warmly greet Archbishop Patrick D’Rozario, the Apostolic Nuncio Archbishop George Kocherry, the Bishops, the clergy, the religious, and all the faithful, dear Brothers and Sisters.
2. I am so grateful to your Archbishop for letting me have this occasion to celebrate this solemn Mass in this church dedicated to Our Lady of the Holy Rosary, which falls on the Memorial of the Holy Name of Mary and marks the beginning of the twenty-fourth (24th) Sunday in Ordinary Time. I love this moment of prayer in which we all together lift up to the Most High, by listening to the Word of God, which is always beautiful, and the Eucharist which is the source of our spiritual life and memorial of the Sacrifice and of the Resurrection of our Lord, our praise to God.

This ecclesial Community has its roots that go back to the sixteenth (16th) century, even though this land was made a Mission territory only in the year eighteen fifty-two (1852). It was first entrusted to the Congregation of the Holy Cross (C.S.C.) and then to the Benedictine Order (O.S.B.), and became a Diocese on the first (1st) day of September in the year eighteen eighty-six (1886). It was raised to a Metropolitan Archdiocese on the fifteenth (15th) day of July in the year nineteen fifty (1950).

I briefly mention these historical landmarks, but I do not have enough time to speak about the larger and more detailed stages of the history of this local Church: the missionary development of the area, the beautiful witnessing to the faith within this immense Islamic country, the valuable services given through the educational and social systems. You are a relatively small community, but an absolutely beautiful and extraordinary one in the eyes of Christ. Therefore it is right to ask yourselves: What kind of Church do we want to be within the context of the Universal Church? What is our role in the context of our country? What kind of a Local Church do we want to be?

1. The beautiful Gospel today according to Saint Mark provides the answer when it speaks about following Christ, about discipleship. “*Whoever will come after me*”: these words imply the necessity to know the identity of the Master, as a pre-requisite in order for the disciple to follow Him effectively. St. Peter’s profession of faith helps us to identify “Jesus as the Christ”, the Savior. This is true – Jesus says it – but He also explains His identity which, at first, may have scandalized his disciples because Jesus revealed that the Messiah must suffer and be rejected by the elders. The Christian concept of Jesus cannot be separated from the reality of suffering and death because that is the way for humanity to be saved. Our task then, knowing the Lord, is to profess our faith in Him without hesitation.

In this context, let me say that the first among the faithful that believed and followed Christ was Mary, who was present in the most significant moments of His public ministry up until she stood at the foot of the Cross. She was the first disciple to say “yes”, even before her Master and Lord was conceived.

On this day, the twelfth (12th) of September, we remember the Holy Name of Mary. Why does the Church celebrates this feast of the “Holy Name of Mary”? We know that the name distinguishes a person from another person, that a name gives the person an identity; that the name specifies a person and draws him or her out from anonymity. How many times does the Sacred Scriptures remind us that the first gesture regarding a newly born life is that of giving a name? On the day of a child’s Baptism, the priest also asks: “what name shall we give to your child?” Now, with the name of “Mary”, God confided an identity and a mission to this young woman. It is for this reason that the Church celebrates the feast of the “Name of Mary,” to remind us of her identity as the Mother of the Savior and the mission of the first among believers.

1. I would like to conclude this homily, after having indicated that our faith is founded in Christ and that Mary was the first disciple and faithful follower of our Lord Jesus, by exhorting each one of you to walk in their footsteps. I particularly exhort families to follow Christ. May every family here in Bangladesh live up with the dignity of the family of God, by reflecting the unity in diversity of the mystery of the Blessed Trinity and the Holy Family of Nazareth, bonded in love and always at the service of Mother Church and of the whole of humanity!

This is my prayer, as I convey the blessing of the Holy Father to all of you, and at the same time I encourage the Priests and Religious who provide a valuable service to this people of God. I implore God’s abundant blessings through the intercession of the Holy Name of our Blessed Mother so that all of us could become zealous disciples of Jesus, enthusiastic in knowing and following Him whatever it may cost.