



Homily

The Long March Towards the Synodality of Hope, Peace and Justice

EMBARGO UNTIL SPEECH DELIVERED

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My Beloved Friends,

May the Peace of Christ be with you all.

In the scriptures, we trace the ancient journey of our forebears, Adam and Eve, who chose to leave behind the comfort and grace they once knew, opting for a path shrouded in darkness. Since then, humanity has been on an unceasing, spiritual quest, an odyssey marked by an unwavering search for meaning. One Journey from the Book of Exodus portrays God as the liberator of an oppressed people, employing a shepherd named Moses to confront the pride of Pharaoh. In this moment, God initiated the Paschal Mystery, offering His accompaniment to a broken humanity—a recurring theme in the Bible. The message is candid clear : God never abandons his people.

Abraham, the father of our faith, was called to step into the unknown, and St. Paul, in the first reading from the Letter to the Romans, presents Abraham as an exemplar. As we embark on various journeys in life and faith, we often find ourselves uncertain of our destination, yet we are called to venture into the unknown, guided by our unwavering faith. Just as Abraham's faith justified him, we too are justified by our faith, believing that God always fulfils His promises. Our synodal journey is not a pre-programmed space odyssey with fixed mathematical equations. Rather, when God calls us, He becomes our guide, our roadmap, and our companion.

Faith shines a light on the path through life's darkest and most tumultuous moments, allowing us to see God's grace penetrating the shadows. Like Abraham, the Church is called to be righteous, to embody a synodal journey of faith with the conviction that God never fails. Despite the doubts and anxieties that may accompany us on this long march, we can draw inspiration from figures like Moses, chosen by God to be a liberator and a model for us all. While we may not reach our intended destination, participating in the journey is a blessing in itself. We understand that this synodal journey is intergenerational, initiated by the Church and ushering in a long march of hope for all humanity, even amid global turmoil, as witnessed in recent events in West Asia and other regions around the world.

Today's Gospel confronts the insatiable greed that dwells within the human heart, leading to self-centred egoism—the original sin that underlies much of human suffering and conflict. Jesus presents a parable of a greedy landowner whose desires lead to self-destruction. God has a plan for each one of us and for our Church, and our journeys and plans must align with His will. The parable of the wealthy landowner and his excessive storage facilities serves as a metaphor for today's world, where wars and the arms industry amass great wealth at the

expense of the suffering of millions. St. Paul provides a simple antidote in the first reading: "Believe in a God who desires a human journey of hope and healing. Align your dreams with God's plan for you." This message resonates with today's Gospel.

Human greed has already inflicted deep wounds upon our planet and stripped millions of their dignity, as Pope Francis emphasized in his recent significant documents. These documents call for a threefold reconciliation to save humanity and the planet: Reconciliation with God (Evangelii Gaudium), Reconciliation with nature (Laudato Si), and Reconciliation with one another in Fratelli Tutti. Our synodal journey is about healing and reconciling the world in justice and peace. The only way to save humanity and create a world of hope, peace, and justice is through the global synodality of all people.

The Gospel parable was provoked by a man seeking Jesus' help to resolve an inheritance dispute with his brother. Amidst this Synod, one of our grave concerns is the legacy we will leave for the next generation. The environment has been borrowed from the young, and the inheritance due to them, a more peaceful world with the integrity of creation intact, is in jeopardy. Global warming has devastated communities and the livelihoods of millions, threatening to slip away from the next generation. Pope Francis has drawn attention to the concept of intergenerational justice.

As bishops of Asia, we are acutely aware of the environmental damage inflicted upon our region due to climate-driven disasters. We have a significant population of indigenous Christian communities, particularly in the South China Sea, central India, Vietnam, and Myanmar. These communities have been protectors of nature, but they have also suffered from modern ideologies, colonization, and resource exploitation. As FABC celebrates its fifty years, we draw the world's attention to the destruction of huge swathes of forests, the lungs of our planet in these regions and the increased violence against these indigenous peoples.

Asia is the birthplace of the world's major religions, and it was in this region that Jesus' message first took root. The Asian Church has faced various challenges throughout history but remains vibrant and young. Our faith journey in Asia is not without difficulties, but this Synodal gathering has energized us to return to the great days of evangelization by the Apostles. We embrace the call for Asia to become the 21st Century for Christ with optimism, inspired by the global Church's synodal journey.

Nowhere in Asia is the Christian faith journey more challenged than in Myanmar. Our small flock is currently scattered due to both natural disasters and man-made crises, causing multidimensional crises and immense suffering. Our people are on an Exodus. Homes have vanished, and churches have borne the brunt of cruelty, and the Way of the Cross is a painful reality in many parts of Asia.

However, like the faithful women who followed Jesus along the Way of the Cross, the Church in Myanmar and Asia invests in the hope of reconciliation. We continue our tear-filled Synodal journey, believing that, like those women, we will see all wounds healed, and a new dawn of hope, peace, and justice will shine upon every long-suffering nation. We pray that the Catholic Church, under the leadership of Pope Francis, will bring the entire human family into the long march of healing our world and our planet, ultimately leading us to a new heaven and a new earth.

On behalf of the People of Asia, we wish each and every one of you a blessed and inspiring journey ahead.