



The Holy See

MESSAGE OF THE HOLY FATHER TO PARTICIPANTS IN THE INTERRELIGIOUS MEETING IN BANGLADESH

[6-12 September 2025]

I am pleased to offer greetings of friendship to the participants in the interreligious meeting in Bangladesh. Above all, I wish you the peace that can only come from God — one that is “unarmed and disarming, humble and persevering,” and “always seeks charity, that always seeks to be close, above all, to those who are suffering” (*Urbi et Orbi*, 8 May 2025).

I commend the organizers of this gathering for choosing the theme “Promoting a Culture of Harmony between Brothers and Sisters.” Indeed, this theme reflects the spirit of fraternal openness that people of goodwill seek to foster with members of other religious traditions. It arises, moreover, from the conviction that our human community is truly one — in origin and in destiny under God (cf. Second Vatican Council, *Declaration on the Relation of the Church to Non-Christian Religions Nostra Aetate*, 28 October 1965, 1). We are all his children and thus brothers and sisters. As one family, we share the opportunity and the responsibility to continue nurturing a culture of harmony and peace.

In this regard, we may rightly speak of “culture” in two senses. Culture can mean the rich heritage of arts, ideas and social institutions that characterize each people. At the same time, culture can be understood as a nurturing environment that sustains growth. Just as a healthy ecosystem allows diverse plants to flourish side by side, so too a healthy social culture allows diverse communities to thrive in harmony. Such a culture must be carefully cultivated. It requires the sunlight of truth, the water of charity and the soil of freedom and justice. We know from painful moments in history that when the culture of harmony is neglected, weeds can choke out peace. Suspicions take root; stereotypes harden; extremists exploit fears to sow division. Together, as companions in interreligious dialogue, we are like gardeners tending this field of fraternity, helping to keep dialogue fertile and to clear away the weeds of prejudice.

Indeed, this very occasion that you share today is a beautiful witness. It affirms that differences of creed or background need not divide us. On the contrary, in the act of encountering one other in friendship and dialogue, we stand together against the forces of division, hatred and violence that have too often plagued humanity. Where others have sown distrust, we choose trust; where others might foster fear, we strive for understanding; where others view differences as barriers, we recognize them as avenues of mutual enrichment (cf. Francis, *Ecumenical and Interreligious Meeting for Peace*, 1 December 2017).

Truly, building a culture of harmony means sharing not only ideas but also concrete experiences. As Saint James reminds us, “religion that is pure and undefiled before God ... is this: to visit orphans and widows in their affliction” (*Jas* 1:27). From this perspective, we can say that a genuine measure of interreligious friendship is our willingness to stand together in service to society’s most vulnerable. Bangladesh has already witnessed inspiring examples of this unity in recent years, when people of different faiths joined in solidarity and prayer in times of natural disaster or tragedy. Such gestures build bridges — between faiths, between theory and practice, between communities — so that all Bangladeshis, and indeed all humanity, may pass from suspicion to trust, from isolation to collaboration. They also strengthen the resilience of communities against voices of division. Cooperating in every good work is a most effective antidote to forces that would draw us into hostility and aggression. When our dialogue is lived out in actions, a powerful message resounds: that peace, not conflict, is our most cherished dream, and that building this peace is a task we undertake together.

With these sentiments, I wish to reaffirm the Catholic Church’s commitment to walking this path alongside you. At times, misunderstandings or past wounds may slow our steps. Yet let us encourage one another to persevere. Every group discussion, every joint service project or shared meal, every courtesy shown to a neighbor of another religion — these are bricks of what Saint John Paul II called “a civilization of love” (*Message for the Celebration of the World Day of Peace*, 1 January 2001).

I assure you of my fraternal love and prayers. May the Most High bless each of you, your families and communities. May he bless your country with ever-deepening harmony and peace. And may he bless our world, which so urgently needs the light of fraternity.

From the Vatican, 28 August 2025

LEO PP. XIV