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Apostolic Trip of the Holy Father Francis to Myanmar and Bangladesh (26 November – 2 December 2017) – Meeting with religious leaders in the Archbishopric

The following is the Holy Father Francis' off-the-cuff address during the meeting with religious leaders this morning at 10.00 local time (4.30 Rome time), in the refectory of the archbishopric.

Words of the Holy Father

First of all, many thanks for coming. Perhaps I should have come to visit each one of you, but you have been generous and spared me the work. While you were speaking to me, a prayer came to my mind; a prayer we often recite, from the Book of Psalms: "how good and pleasant it is when brothers dwell in unity". United does not mean the same. Unity is not uniformity, everyone in the same confession. Each person has his own values, his own riches, and also his own shortcomings. We are all different, and each confession has its own riches, its traditions, its riches to give and to share. And this is only if we live in peace. And peace is built in a chorus of differences. Unity is always made with differences. Three times one of you used to word "harmony". This is peace: harmony. In this time in which we must live, we experience a global tendency towards uniformity, to making everything the same. This destroys humanity. It is a cultural colonization. And we must understand the wealth of our differences – ethnic, religious, popular – and from these differences, engage in dialogue. And from these differences, one opens up to the other, like a brother. ... Like brothers who are helping to build this country, which geographically includes many riches and differences. Nature in Myanmar has always been very rich in diversity. We must not be afraid of differences. Our Father is one, we are all brothers. Let us love each other like brothers. And if we argue between ourselves, let us do so like brothers, who are then reconciled. They always return to being brothers. I think that only in this way can peace be built. I thank you for coming to visit me. But it is I who am coming to visit you, and I would like at least spiritually to make that visit, that of one more brother.

Thank you. Build peace. Do not let yourselves be levelled by cultural colonization. True divine harmony is made through differences. Differences are a wealth for peace.

Thank you very much. And if I may, a prayer, from brother to brothers, an ancient blessing that includes all of us: "The Lord bless you and keep you; the Lord make His face shine upon you, and be gracious to you; the Lord lift up His countenance upon you, and give you peace".

Thank you very much!
