

Let the holy Doors Close – let the Human hearts remain open with mercy by Cardinal Charles Bo

The Extra ordinary Jubilee of Mercy comes to an end today.

20 November 2016, Yangon, Myanmar.

Declared on the 50th Year of the year of Vatican Council, this year saw the canonization of the Angel of Mercy – Mother Teresa. Today in various big churches including St. Peter's Basilica in Rome after the ceremonies, the Holy Doors will be closed. Last year they were opened. In his Bull of indiction *Misericordis Vultus* (MV 3) Pope Francis said this symbolic opening of the door shows God's readiness to welcome each one of us into his mercy. The holy door became a door of Mercy through which anyone who entered experiences the love of God who consoles, pardons and instills hope.

These wooden doors will be closed today. But doors of our hearts need to be kept opened. Churches built by human hands will have their holy doors closed. But each human being says that St Paul is the temple of the Holy Spirit. That temple's doors need to be kept open. Our hearts should be so large to welcome and accommodate as many people as possible. We have the sacred heart of Jesus and Mary opened for the world always. Our Hearts need to be generously welcoming the broken hearted, the wounded and the poor. Open your hearts today – God in the form of suffering people is waiting at those doors (Mt 25:31-40).

In this extra ordinary year of Jubilee, Pope would like us to have the attitude of Mercy cultivated in our daily life. The Bible says: Be merciful as your heavenly father is merciful (Lk 6:36). The Pope asked for Joy in his exhortation on Joy of the Gospel. In this year he is asking for the attitude of Mercy. Attitude the Pope says is the beatitude for the Christian.

It is fitting that the Angel of Mercy Mother Teresa was canonized this year. The power of mercy made this fragile woman a great witness to the Good News. Just look at the facts: for 2000 years missionaries tried to convert India. But at the end of the 20th century India was less than 2 percent Christian. Millions did not know Jesus. But that was to change with Mother Teresa. The saint of the gutters showed extra ordinary witness to mercy by caring for those who are thrown out by society. Millions were inspired by her work all over the world. She showed that even in the most neglected human being, God's image stays and human dignity needs to accorded to all through mercy. Today every child in India knows that Mother Teresa is a Christian and her God is Jesus. Mercy was the means through which Mother Teresa brought Jesus to India.

We live among Buddhists. Compassion (Karuna) and mercy (Metta) are the two eyes of their faith. Mercy is our door through which we invite our Buddhist brothers and sisters for a meaningful and peacemaking dialogue in this country. When the Pope called for the Year of Mercy, Christians were being killed in hundreds in the Middle East. The cradle of Christianity in the East, Syria and Iraq saw flames of hatred burning the innocent Christians. Some were even crucified.

At that juncture, Pope called for compassion even to those who are committing those crimes. Pope asked the millions of Christians not to repay hatred with hatred but meet the fire of hatred with the breeze of mercy. He showed this through actions in visiting the refugees

fleeing Iraq, supporting their welcome in Europe. He has been meeting homeless people, stranded migrants celebrating Mass with them.

In our lives in Myanmar what is this year of Mercy means?

I see at four levels

Mercy towards Ourselves. A pure and generous love of oneself

Mercy towards others

Mercy towards those forgotten and neglected

Mercy as the bridge to Peace in Myanmar.

Mercy towards Ourselves. A pure and generous love of oneself

Love others as you love yourself says the great commandment. A healthy self appreciation and self-esteem is of immense value to every Myanmar Catholic. God did not send us a carbon copy. We are original. We are so unique. God loves us every minute: Can a mother forget the child, God Asks in Isaiah 49:15 even if the mother forgets I do not forget you. God is Immanuel (Mathew 1:23). No one was like us before us, no one will be like us after us. God creates each one of us as his sons and daughters. Steve Jobs the founder of Apple was abandoned as an orphan by his own mother. His adopted parents gave him a great sense of worth as a boy. He grew into one of the great inventor in history. We are adopted as Sons. We are sons of the heavenly Father. We need to be merciful to ourselves. We need to forgive ourselves, forgive our past. Pope Francis wants us to be healed of our past.

Some of us have committed crimes and sins that are horrible. But the Pope says: God's mercy is bigger than all your crimes. Repent and go to Confession and be healed. Often we suffer by self inflicted wounds.

2.Mercy towards others :

Are we born to love one another or hate one another? Bible has the sad story of Cain and Abel, just two brothers. Cain hatred spilled the blood of his brother. Human beings are jealous, afraid of one another and fast to judge others. Judge not you will not be judged (Luke 6:37). Last century alone, 70 million people were killed in wars because of hatred among human beings. Pope finds mercy as the only antidote to the human nature that cries for vengeance.

Some of us have come here who have lived years without reconciling with our family members and neighbors. We are called upon to forgive seventy times seven. (Mathew 18:22). Some of us have approached the altar for communion without forgiveness. Remember Jesus saying: When you come to the altar and find you have grudge against your brother, leave your offering and go to your brother and reconcile (Mt 5:24). As we close the year of mercy, please reconcile at least with your family members. Get your anger out: do not let the sun go down on your anger, (Eph: 4: 26-27). For 60 years groups in this country have been angry with one another. It is time for mercy to one another and forgiveness.

3.Mercy towards those forgotten and neglected

If we go to home for the aged, there are very graceful old people. You also know some of them are no longer visited by their loved ones. As old people they are not considered useful. If you go to prisons you see very poor prisoners held up for years because there is no one to defend them. Catholic Church looks after three major leper colonies. Sisters do great work of mercy there accompanying these people with great love. People with this sickness are abandoned by their families. I am glad in the year of mercy many of us visited these places.

I call upon all of us to continue visit them. Those who are abandoned by the families they must find in us a Good Samaritan who heals them and looks after them. As the country opens up more and more people are left out of the economic system, more and more youngsters are vulnerable to human trafficking, dangerous diseases. They need us as brothers and sisters. Let not closing the doors of Mercy in the Church, close our hearts to these less fortunate sons and daughters of this nation.

4. Mercy as the bridge to Peace in Myanmar :

As a citizen of this country the greatest mercy to us is to bring peace to this land. We have suffered six decades. How many of our people were crucified to poverty, unsafe migration and hopelessness. “Blessed are the peace makers”, says Jesus. Church mission is mercy and peace. My dear people – you have suffered enough. You need the mercy of peace now - people of Myanmar.

In a glorious document “Gaudium et Spes” of Vatican II the Church speaks of peace education for all – the rulers and the ruled, the armed and the unharmed. Papal documents on ‘*Pacem in terris*’ acknowledged peace as a goal and necessity that transcended all denominational and national boundaries, and it appealed to all on the level of common humanity. Tell me which community as not suffered last sixty years? Except a handful of army men and armed groups, the whole nation suffered. We buried two generation of our people who knew no rights, no prosperity. Three Kachin dioceses are under war now, more displacement now. This nation needs mercy.

Time to say enough is enough my dear leaders of the nation, army commanders, armed groups. Show mercy to common men and women. Move from the mentality of solving conflicts through war. In this year of Jubilee of Mercy I appeal to you, cultivate the mental attitude of peace. In the past some extremist people were allowed to play wreck the harmony of our people with narratives of hatred. At least for now those voices are muted. I urge the leaders to go further. Bring Peace education into school curriculum and instill in Myanmar citizens a culture of peace.

Burmese and non Burmese were pitted against one another. Brother against brother. That hatred, stories of mutual hatred made our nation a nation of Exodus. Two to three million of our people are not here. Buddhist ‘sila’ exhorts that men live without verbal violence and thought violence. Time has come to make peace and justice the common religion of this land.

I wish to end once again with Pope Francis. Peace is the only way. Peace comes from Mercy. As a Christian community we close the holy doors of mercy. But we pledge to open the hearts of people to mercy that leads this nation to peace and prosperity, not only to the nation, my dear brothers and sisters. Let Mercy flow like a river in our hearts, in our families, in our villages and in our IDP camps. Let us go out as the messengers of Mercy making this world a better place to live. God bless you all.