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Pastoral Letter of the Archbishop of Calcutta

Dear Brothers and Sisters in Christ,

Peace of Christ be with you!

On this first day of my ministry as the tenth Archbishop of this great and historic Archdiocese of Calcutta, I extend to you my greetings of peace and my apostolic blessing.

The Archdiocese, being vast in territory, will take me several months to visit in its entirety. For now, I wish to reach you through this letter. It also gives me the opportunity to introduce myself to those who do not yet know me.

I first came to Calcutta in 1979, as a teenager. I grew up here, completed my studies here, and Bengal became my home. My coming to Bengal was not of my own choosing, but a response to a “personal call” I heard within me in May 1979. It was not my wish to come to Bengal, but my submission to a divine command.

As a priest, I have spent most of my years – while in India – working among the Santal community, and I have become one with them at heart. As a student, I began learning Bangla and soon fell in love with the language, becoming a true *Bangla premi*. In 1993, I was ordained a priest at Our Lady of Happy Voyage Church, Howrah, because I desired to be ordained within the Archdiocese, even though I could have been ordained in my native place.

The Church is not only an assembly gathered in the name of Christ, but also the Body of Christ, with Him as its Head (Col. 1:18). He is the source of unity for all its members (*Lumen Gentium*, n. 7). Writing to the Corinthians, St. Paul says: “*As the body is one, though it has many members, and all the members, though many, are one body, so it is with Christ. For in one Spirit we were all baptized into one body – Jews or Greeks, slaves or free – and all were made to drink of one Spirit*” (1 Cor. 12:12–13). The more we grow in unity of spirit, the more we build up the Church.

The Archdiocese is blessed with many parishes and religious institutions. Kolkata is also the capital of the State of Bengal. These two realities call for the Archbishop's presence in many places and his intervention in many situations. Yet, it is not physically possible, nor spiritually beneficial, for the Archbishop to respond to every single request. For the greater good of the Archdiocese, I will need to make choices – what to accept and what to decline, where to go and where not to go.

For the present, my priority will be to visit parishes and to come to know the priests and people. During these parish visits, I also intend to visit the Religious institutions.

The diocesan Vicar General (VG) and the Deans are my immediate collaborators. The VG will oversee the administration of the Archdiocese. For any administrative matter, I kindly ask you to approach him. The Deans will represent me in liturgical and other functions where the presence of the Archbishop is not essential.

At this moment, I wish to thank Archbishop Emeritus Thomas D'Souza, as well as all who have welcomed me, visited me at the Archbishop's House, and supported me with their prayers.

Finally, I request the priests to read this letter during Sunday announcements and to circulate it among the faithful.

May the Lord bless you and keep you always in His peace.

Yours in Christ,



+Elias Frank
Archbishop of Calcutta
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