

**HOMILY BY HIS EMINENCE CARDINAL CHRISTOPHE PIERRE
APOSTOLIC NUNCIO TO THE UNITED STATES OF AMERICA
EPISCOPAL ORDINATION OF THE MOST REVEREND KEVIN S. RANDALL
TITULAR ARCHBISHOP OF GLENNDÁLOCHA
APOSTOLIC NUNCIO TO BANGLADESH
CATHEDRAL OF SAINT PATRICK – NORWICH, CONNECTICUT
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To my brother bishops; all of the clergy, religious, and lay faithful; and in a special way to Msgr. Randall's family members and friends: greetings in Christ! As the Holy Father's representative to this country, I am pleased to convey to all of you the spiritual closeness and affection of Pope Francis on this joyful day.

I also want to say how happy I am to see Msgr. Randall at this stage of his vocation, preparing to be a Nuncio. It is a little like Saint Paul speaking to Timothy in today's second reading. Just as Paul had known Timothy from early on, so I have known Msgr. Randall for many years. I still remember the days when, at the beginning of your diplomatic service in the Church, while you were working in Rwanda, you and your Nuncio would make visits to Uganda, where I was Nuncio at the time. Some twenty years have gone, and now it's up to you! And like St. Paul said to Timothy, I encourage you "to stir into flame the gift of God" – the gift of your Baptism and your priesthood, as well as the gift of episcopal ordination that you will soon receive.

Monsignor Randall: as you become a bishop today, entering into the college of bishops in order to assist the Pope as his Nuncio, you experience a new calling. It is a call to share the responsibility of the Pope – the responsibility first given to Peter when Jesus told him, "Feed my lambs. ... Tend my sheep" (*JN* 21:15,16). To do this faithfully as a Nuncio, you are called in a special way to *listen* to the Pope. And what do we hear from him? Let's go back to the basics. In *Evangelii Gaudium*, his first Apostolic Exhortation, Pope Francis said:

"I dream of a 'missionary option', that is, a missionary impulse capable of transforming everything [...]. The renewal of structures demanded by pastoral conversion can only be understood in this light: as part of an effort to make them more mission-oriented, to make ordinary pastoral activity on every level more inclusive and open, to inspire in pastoral workers a constant desire to go forth and in this way to elicit a positive response from all those whom Jesus summons to friendship with himself. As John Paul II once said to the Bishops of Oceania: 'All renewal in the Church must have mission as its goal if it is not to fall prey to a kind of ecclesial introversion.'"¹

The Pope dreams of a Church that is not closed in on itself. Not "self-referential", but missionary. A Church that looks at a complex reality with the eyes of faith in order to read the signs of the times and see where the Spirit is moving. Not a Church that presents a pre-determined and rigid "idea" to which everything must conform.² The Pope dreams of a truly synodal Church – not to make of the Church a kind

of “parliament”, but to allow the Church to be what it is meant to be: a listening, discerning, and evangelizing Church for today’s world.³ These are aspects which at times are not well-understood. Precisely for that reason, Monsignor, you are called, while listening to the Pope yourself, also to help people listen to the Pope, recognizing that he is the one whom the Spirit has given to the Church for this time in history.

While we as Nuncios share in the Pope’s responsibility in a universal sense – after all, he is the shepherd of all God’s people – each of us exercises this responsibility in a particular place to which we are sent, each place having its own distinct people and culture. You are being sent to Bangladesh: a country which achieved its independence a little more than 50 years ago, a densely populated country in which Christians are still a small minority, a place with a history of much poverty but which has also enjoyed significant economic progress. It is a place which needs the mission of Christ and his Church in order to make meaning of its history and its progress, and to orient it to its highest goal. What you need, as a missionary to that place, is to be a *listener* to the people. I wish that when people see you they see the Pope. And what qualities are required of a papal representative? The same qualities that are needed in the Church as a whole: the capacity of dialogue. Kindness. Flexibility. Availability. Openness. The capacity to understand the complexity of the world, in a world which is indeed very complex! To see what are the real challenges of the Church in a changing time, and how those changes manifest themselves in the place where you are.

I personally think a lot is required of us Nuncios in this changing world. A big challenge, as we all know, is the difficulty in transmitting the faith in a time when the mindset of people has changed to such a degree that previous structures and methods do not always work so well. This challenge requires a capacity for analysis. Not merely at the technological or even psychological level, but at the spiritual level. We need to be able to recognize the depth of the separation that people are perceiving between their human reality and God. Our mission – your mission as Nuncio – is essentially the same mission that Jesus gave to Peter: to reconcile God and humanity. Salvation means: to reconcile man with God. In other words, to help people rediscover the meaning of their lives as people created and redeemed by the living God. And to do so in the particular context to which you are sent.

If looked at as a merely human enterprise, such a task would be overwhelming. But thanks be to God, it is *not* primarily a human enterprise. As Pope Francis never tires of repeating to us, the Holy Spirit is the protagonist.⁴ All we need is to be open to him. Saint Paul knew this when he said to Timothy, “Guard this rich trust **with the help of the holy Spirit that dwells within us**” (2 TIM 1:14). The Lord assured Jeremiah of the same truth when he said, “See, I place **my words** in your mouth!” (JER 1:9). And the Psalmist knew this truth as well, when he sang: “The LORD is my shepherd, there is nothing I lack” (PS 23:1).

These promises from the Bible are given to you, Msgr. Randall, so that you may know, as you begin this new calling, the “delightful and comforting joy of evangelizing”.⁵

¹ Pope Francis, Apostolic Exhortation *Evangelii Gaudium*, November 24, 2013, 27; citing Pope St. John Paul II, Post-Synodal Apostolic Exhortation *Ecclesia in Oceania*, November 22, 2001, 19.

² Cf. *Ibid.*, 68, 75.

³ Cf. Pope Francis, Homily at Mass with the New Cardinals and the College of Cardinals for the Opening of the Ordinary General Assembly of the Synod of Bishops, October 4, 2023.

⁴ Cf. *Ibid.*

⁵ *Evangelii Gaudium*, 10; citing Pope St. Paul VI, Apostolic Exhortation *Evangelii Nuntiandi*, December 8, 1975, 80.