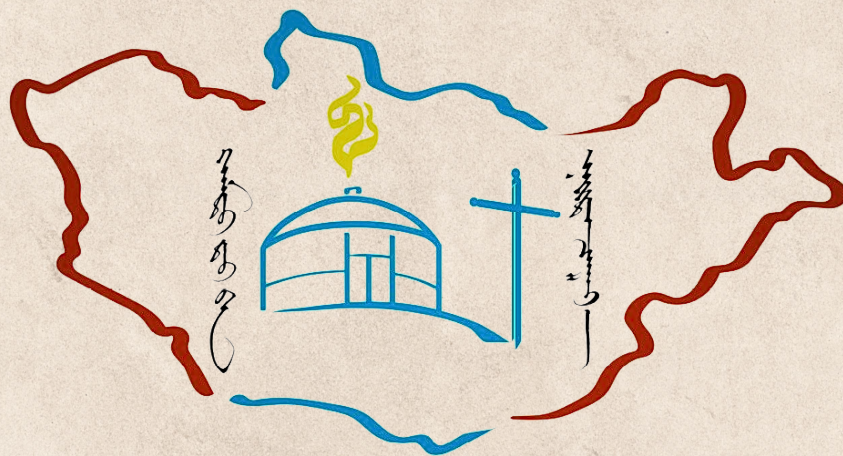


Pax Romana
International Movement of Catholic Students (IMCS)
and
International Catholic Movement for Intellectual and
Cultural Affairs (ICMICA), Asia and Pacific



HOPING TOGETHER

APOSTOLIC JOURNEY OF POPE FRANCIS TO MONGOLIA
ULAANBAATAR, 31 AUGUST - 4 SEPTEMBER 2023

Joint Statement of Warm Welcome
on the Occasion of Pope Francis'
Visit to Mongolia
19 AUGUST 2023



Dear Holy Father Pope Francis,

We, Pax Romana International Movement of Catholic Students (IMCS) and International Catholic Movement for Intellectual and Cultural Affairs (ICMICA) Asia Pacific, are deeply honored and delighted to extend a warm welcome to Your Holiness Pope Francis on the momentous occasion of your historic visit to Mongolia from 31 August to 4 September 2023. Your presence in Mongolia holds a special significance, particularly given the escalating political tensions and conflicts in the East Asia region notably on the Korean peninsula, Taiwan Strait and territorial disputes in the sea in Southeast Asia. In these times of heightened need for harmony, your role as an apostolic messenger of peace is more crucial than ever before.

Mongolia, with its rich history of peace and remarkable tolerance, occupies a distinctive place as the custodian of the world's oldest continuously practicing nomadic culture of living in harmony with the steppes. Within its boundless landscapes, the Mongolian people exemplify a profound reverence for nature, all faiths, fostering an environment of *buen vivir*, inclusivity and harmony.

Moreover, Mongolia's principled stance as the sole nation in Northeast Asia to proclaim itself a nuclear weapons-free zone has positioned her to cultivate amicable multilateral relationships with all her neighboring countries. With this unique diplomatic approach, Mongolia is politically well poised to amplify your message of peace and mutual understanding.

Despite being one of the world's most sparsely populated nations, with approximately 3.4 million inhabitants, Mongolia holds the distinction of being the youngest nation globally. A staggering 35% of its population comprises youths aged 15 to 35, anchoring the nation's dynamism and potential for progress. The average age of the Mongolian populace stands at a youthful 30 years old.

Within Mongolia, the Catholic community is a small minority, counting around 1,450 adherents, constituting a mere 0.04% of the total population. Nonetheless, the Catholic congregation radiates promise, primarily driven by its youthful and vibrant members. This emerging force has the capacity to make a significant impact for evangelization and sustainable social and ecosensitive processes in the country.

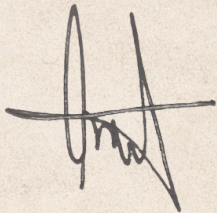
The selection of Seoul, Korea, as the venue for the upcoming World Youth Day in 2027 is an applaudable decision. This second World Youth Day in Asia will be a historic milestone for the youth in Asia, with particular significance for Mongolia and Northeast Asia, to show the young in our world **“that another way is possible, a world of brothers and sisters, where the flags of all peoples fly together, next to each other, without hatred, without fear, without closing up, without weapons!”**

This forthcoming historic visit of Your Holiness in Northeast Asia, with hopes of visit to China and North Korea in the not-so-distant future, holds the promise of promoting peace and reconciliation in a region marred by enduring conflicts, notably those encompassing the Korean Peninsula and the Taiwan Strait, as well as the sea between China and Southeast Asian countries. By casting a spotlight on these complex geopolitical issues, your presence could catalyze global attention and galvanize collective endeavors, aimed at promoting dialogue to facilitate enduring regional peace and stability.

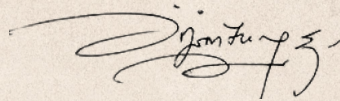
Against the backdrop of Mongolia's rich tapestry of faiths, your call for intercivilizational encounter, interfaith dialogue and collaboration finds a harmonious resonance. This visit presents an invaluable platform for leaders of various faiths and ideologies to convene, fostering a shared comprehension, with transformative potentials for promoting world peace through forging multilateral collaboration and economic cooperation based on mutual respect, encouraging responsible and shared stewardship of our global commons, fostering equitable and sustainable sharing of the resources in our common home.

Once again, we extend our deepest gratitude to you, Your Holiness Pope Francis, for gracing Mongolia with your synodal presence, source and inspiration that will further promote a legacy of sustained tranquility, solidarity and fraternity in Northeast Asia and strengthen global economic collaboration across the broader spectrum of our conflicted world.

Yours sincerely in Jesus and Mary,



Bertha Samponu,
Asia Pacific Coordinator,
IMCS Pax Romana



Fr. Dr. Jojo M. Fung, SJ,
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