**Pastoral Visit of the Cardinal Prefect**

**Of the Congregation for the Evangelization of Peoples**

**In Vietnam**

**HOMILY**

**23/1/2015 – DA NANG**

(The narrative of the story of Evangelization).

The Diocese of Da Nang has been created on the 18th January 1962 by Pope, today Saint, John XXIII, during the Second Vatican Council and, we can say, it was one of the first fruits of that extraordinary ecclesial events, where the Vietnamese episcopacy was present, making its contribution and conveying the spirit of their peoples and cultures. This year we are also celebrating the 50th anniversary of the Conciliar Decree on the missions, the *“Ad Gentes”,* with which the Conciliar Fathers asked that evangelization passes completely under the total competence of the local Churches, both those, where possible, recently formed and those that have a much longer history.

Today we take the occasion of the four hundredth anniversary of the evangelization of Vietnam to start from Da Nang, and we intend to

1. First of all thank God for the gift of faith, that has been brought and fostered by intrepid missionaries, starting with the Franciscans and Jesuits, to whom we are very grateful.
2. Secondly for the fidelity of your ancestors that, even in time of persecutions, have given their witness to the love of Christ, on the example and teachings of Blessed Andrew Phu Yen, who gave his life for Christ through martyrdom in 1644.

The actual Church of Da Nang wanted that these two events – the 50th anniversary of the Diocese, celebrated during these last two years (2013-2015), and the 400th anniversary of Evangelization – have as their conclusion this solemn celebration, where we have the joy of administering the Sacrament of Baptism to 50 adult catechumens and 10 children. To you newly baptized the embrace and caress of Pope Francis is given, and also my most affectionate good wishes to you and your families.

All these elements lead me to make three brief reflections.

1. As the prophet Isiah says in the first Reading, it was not us who started seeking God, or to seek faith. No. It was God himself that came in search for us. It was not us who searched for the sun, the light, but it is the light that seeks us: *“Arise* – says Isiah – *for your light has come!”. “His glory appears over you!”. “The glory of the Lord shines upon you!”.*
2. In the letter to the Romans, St. Paul teaches something very important regarding faith. Jesus, who is at the centre of the faith, has to be believed in the heart and confessed and proclaimed with the mouth and with our living example. This means that faith is not a private and intimate sentiment. In fact, Pope Francis in his first Encyclical “The light of Faith”, writes: “It is impossible to believe on our own. Faith is not simply an individual decision which takes place in the depths of the believer’s heart”. At the same time, faith, is personal, but also common and public; it is not for the few, but for all, without any distinction, as St. Paul says *“Jew of Greek” (Gal. 3,28);* that is without distinction of race, culture or geography. *“To the whole world –* the Apostle writes *– the voice of missionaries has to arrive, to the ends of the earth”.* In this sense our faith is catholic, rather universal and open to all.
3. If faith is not an individual element, it means that it is communal, that is, it is communion between persons, and this means being Church; it is communion of persons, the same way as the Apostles where around Jesus and Mary, enlivened by the Holy Spirit, and therefore sent. This is what today’s Gospel is also telling us, Jesus, before concluding His mission, sends the Apostles: *“All authority in heaven and on earth has been given to me. 19Go therefore and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit”.*

Dear brothers and sisters of Da Nang; dear brothers and sisters of Vietnam; I ask you to make yours this same mission, and with the same enthusiasm of the Apostles and the Missionaries that have brought you the faith, take it forward. How many people are waiting to know here and today, Christ. Good Apostolate!