News
Bishop Gomes

Dhaka, Bangladesh, Auxiliary Bishop Subrata Boniface Gomes urged lay Catholic organizations, especially cooperatives, to promote Christ's values and words during an event marking the 69th founding anniversary of Dhaka Credit July 3. (Stephan Uttom Rozario)



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The newly installed auxiliary bishop of the Archdiocese of Dhaka, Bangladesh, Bishop Subroto Boniface Gomes, has urged lay Catholic organizations to work to promote the values and words of Christ.

Gomes was the chief guest on July 3 at the 69th founding anniversary of The Christian Co-operative Credit Union Ltd., Dhaka, popularly known as Dhaka Credit, the largest financial institution run by lay Christians in Bangladesh.

"We Christians have made a lot of progress," he told the leaders of the credit union. "In addition to that, I call on leaders in credit unions to improve our religious education, Bible studies, moral education, etc. Because financial institutions have a lot of opportunities here, people will spontaneously come to these institutions and you can create opportunities to practice religious and spiritual things."

Pope Francis appointed Gomes as auxiliary bishop of Dhaka Archdiocese on Feb. 15; his episcopal ordination was May 3.

"The pope said that all lay organizations located in parishes are supported by the parish, and let us travel with them," the bishop added. "Financial organizations are working for us, so let us journey with them. The characteristic of the synodal church is that we all journey together and with all we journey."

American Holy Cross missionary Fr. Charles Joseph Young established Dhaka Credit in 1955 with only 50 members with a capital of 25 taka ($0.21). At present, the membership of the organization is nearly 50,000 and the capital amount is about 1,400 crores ($119 million).

Dhaka Credit leaders and guests pay homage to the credit union's founder, Fr. Charles Joseph

Dhaka Credit leaders and guests pay homage to the credit union's founder, Fr. Charles Joseph Young, during an event marking the organization's 69th founding anniversary July 3 in Dhaka, Bangladesh. (Stephan Uttom Rozario)

Credit unions were later established in every parish of Bangladesh, modeled on this institution where people deposit money and take out loans. As financial institutions, they have a high turnover of members.

In addition to financial services, Dhaka Credit runs inaugurated a 300-bed hospital, Divine Mercy Hospital Ltd., on Jan. 31. The organization also has a nursing institution called Divine Mercy Nursing Institute.

"We are now reaping the benefits of the work done by Father Young," Gomes said. "So let us learn from his life. Looking at his life, we see that the foreign missionary loved this country, the people, and the soil of this country and died in this country. As a priest and as a human being, his human love, his tender love for people, especially his love for poor people, may we practice and follow in our own lives."

As the number of Christians steadily decreases in Bangladesh, Gomes called on institutions such as credit unions to bring Christians to religion.

"Even though we run a financial institution, we run the institution according to the ideals and Catholic values of Christ," said Ignatious Hemanta Corraya, president of Dhaka Credit and secretary general of Bangladesh Christian Association. "We

request the priest and our members to consecrate the Eucharist on different days."

Corraya thinks that not only the clergy but also lay Christians should take responsibility for spreading the spirituality of Christ and the message of Christ. "We have created Divine Mercy Hospital from our sense of responsibility where people of all religions will be served with Christian values and love," he said.

"Since there are cooperatives in every parish, if humanity, spirituality and ideals of Christ are practiced in them, then the clergy as well as lay Christians can play an important role in spreading the message of Christ," he added.

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The synod process in Bangladesh is ongoing, but some people allege that although the clergy talk about the synodal church, they do not practice a synodal church in their activities.

Dhaka Archbishop Bejoy D'Cruze agreed.

"While doing various activities regarding the synodal church, we have seen that there are disputes regarding the leadership of various organizations and cooperatives, and we have continued to try to resolve them," he said.

Lay people want to play a role in the church's various bodies, Cruze said, adding, "Our clergymen also have some problems like they sometimes cannot give importance to lay Christians. We will hold a conference with the priests and talk about it there."

In Muslim-majority Bangladesh, Christians make up less than 1% of the nearly 170 million people.

"When we have quarrels, lies and show power, they not only pollute the individual but pollute the entire Christian community in front of the larger society," Gomes said. "So let us try to live with each other with tolerance."