EREBB Congress Archbishop’s Reception
Dr Wayne Tinsey
Monday 3rd October 2016
Kolkata, INDIA

Nomoskar!

Your Grace

We feel wonderfully privileged that you are able to share this time with us. We realize that this is an extremely busy time for you with the official celebrations of Saint Teresa only yesterday. Thank you for being with us and thank you for your words of inspiration and welcome.

Our friendship with the Archdiocese of Kolkata, expressed profoundly in our long partnership with my friend Fr Franklin and Seva Kendra, means an enormous amount to Edmund Rice education. It is partnership such as this that allows us to enflench our vision and be the face of the Church that we aspire to be.

You are probably wondering who we are and why we have come to Kolkata.

We are one community in mission united by a common vision, purpose and heritage; united in our belief that education is the vehicle of liberation for all.

We come in solidarity from every corner of the globe; from 22 countries where Catholic education, inspired by Jesus and Blessed Edmund Rice, makes a difference in the lives of hundreds of thousands of young people.

Please raise your hands as I mention our regions: Africa, North America, Oceania, Europe and South America.

Your Grace, the paths we have walked to this point have been shaped by the diverse realities of our local communities. We come together at our Congress to consider what maps are needed for the next leg of the journey; a journey we commit to undertaking together.

In Kolkata we hope to discover our unique song in education; a song we can sing in global unison and solidarity, but with the rich harmonies of our unique and diverse cultures. A song of education for hope and liberation.

Asa aur mukti ke lie siksa! (Education for hope and liberation)

As both lay people and Christian Brothers, we are here to answer our common call to grow the charism of Blessed Edmund Rice and bring it to new expression based on global partnership and solidarity. We proclaim that we can all be stronger by immersing ourselves in each other’s realities and casting our lot together.

The charism we share makes bold claims about the way that human beings should engage in our world. It calls us to speak for the voiceless and those who are excluded, about justice, about the way in which we are expected to relate to one another, about the dignity of every human life and about liberation for the disenfranchised.
Many of us come from parts of the world where the State educates the young well and in accord with most standards of literacy and numeracy. However we believe that there is much more to education than this. Our vision speaks of personal and communal liberation, social responsibility and preferential option for those who are marginalized. With Pope Francis and Tagore, we believe that we do this best unbounded by borders, culture and religion. Always stronger together.

In your incredible 'City of Joy', we gather in the spirit of Nomaskar; deeply committed to perceiving and celebrating unity in diversity and showing deep reverence the universal God presence in all. Nowhere on earth holds 'the beautiful' and 'the tragic' in such fine balance as Kolkata. No where on Earth could give us the inspiration and energy for our mission in the way that Kolkata has.

We are inspired by Rabindranath Tagore’s vision for a world not defined by narrow, domestic walls and Mother Teresa’s plea that we do the the little things with great love.

We have come to Kolkata after most of us have undertaken an immersion experience in some part of this incredible and diverse land. We feel so blessed! We have experienced hospitality that knows no limits and have been afforded a privilege insight into this beautiful and sacred culture. For many our experience thus far has been life changing. It has challenged us, opened our eyes and opened our hearts.

We witnessed the lives of many who live very humbly and whose dignity as human beings is challenged by poverty and exclusion. We pray that the plight of these people will stay with us and guide our efforts to bring to birth a global vision for education based on hope and liberation.

In your beautiful and sacred land we have learned that a school’s capacity to make a difference is not simply dependent on physical resources or the quality of buildings, but on humble resolve within the school community to build the Reign of God and embrace solidarity with the excluded ones of our world.

It is so important that we share this moment of deep solidarity. Ours is a work of and for our Church. In the words of Pope Francis, a church ‘of’ and ‘for’ the poor: a Church which recognizes the work of the Divine and the presence of God in all faiths; a generous and inclusive Church that strives ceaselessly to tell the poor and excluded that God loves them and that the Gospel is good news for them as well.

The Archdiocese of Kolkata gives flesh to this vision for Church in extraordinary ways; your commitment to the Gospel and those made poor in our unequal and troubled world both inspires and energizes us.

Your Grace, thank you once again for your welcome, your blessing and your inspiration. Thank you and the Archdiocese for being the face of God to millions in the extraordinary city.

This afternoon I found a beautiful thought from Tagore that I will finish with: “I slept and dreamt that life was joy. I awoke and saw that life was service. I acted and behold, service was joy”.

May we all experience life as joy and may we always bring that joy to our service of the poor and the excluded.

Dhayavaad

Nomoskar