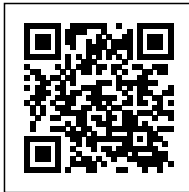


POPE FRANCIS PRAISES MONGOLIA'S RELIGIOUS FREEDOM

Posted on September 4, 2023 by admin



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Pope Francis concluded the first-ever papal visit to Mongolia on Monday, September 4th, where he met with both political leaders and the nation's small Catholic community of just 1,450 Catholics.

During his five days in the country he met with the top 3 government officials, representatives of 12 religious groups in the nation and discussed deepening the cooperation between the two countries. The President of Mongolia, U.Khurelsukh called upon cooperating in the "One Billion Tree", "Food Supply and Security" and the "Healthy Mongolian" projects. All of which is the national movement initiated by the President of Mongolia himself.

On the second day of his arrival Francis addressed the public alongside the President of Mongolia in the Government Palace. During his speech, he commended the country for its commitment to religious freedom and its endeavors to foster peace and environmental preservation. 59.4 percent of Mongolia's population aged 15 and above identify as religious according to a report by the US government.

The pope also expressed the need to combat corruption, which could be referenced to the "coal theft" case in Mongolia, dating back to December last year when hundreds of citizens protested in freezing cold temperatures. "Corruption is the fruit of a utilitarian and unscrupulous mentality that has impoverished whole countries," he said.

Amid the backdrop of this visit, historical documents and correspondence served as reminders of the rich 800-year relationship between Mongolia and the Vatican. In the past three decades, Mongolia has received copies of ten such letters. As a gesture of goodwill and historic significance, Pope Francis presented

President U.Khurelsukh with an official copy of a letter from Guyuk Khan, a descendant of the formidable 13th-century conqueror, Genghis Khan.