



**DICASTERY FOR
INTERRELIGIOUS DIALOGUE**

***The Family: A Privileged Place for the Transmission of Religious
Traditions***

**MESSAGE FOR THE FEAST OF VESAK/HANAMATSURI
2023**

Vatican City

Dear Buddhist Friends,

We congratulate you as you celebrate the Hanamatsuri, the Japanese commemoration of Vesak, the birth of the Buddha. We extend warm greetings to your families and we offer especial good wishes for the health of the elderly and for your young children.

Religious feasts are important occasions to strengthen family ties and for sharing our values. In the context of our interreligious friendship, they make us more conscious of the historical roots of our respective religious traditions and the ways they can help us meet the challenges we face in the modern world. This is why we considered it fitting to share some thoughts with you on religious feasts and the family's role in the transmission of religious traditions. We hope to benefit from your thoughts as well.

Pope Francis has often called attention to a phenomenon that causes anxiety and affects the quality of life of many people. He speaks of the “continued acceleration of changes affecting humanity and the planet, coupled with a more intensified pace of life and work” (cfr. *Laudato Si'* 18). In particular, the Pope is concerned for the strain on family life caused by social changes that are altering the living conditions of married couples and families all over the world, and cause “prolonged and multiple crises” (Cfr. Pope Francis, Address to the Plenary Session of the Pontifical Academy of Social Sciences on Family, 29 April 2022).

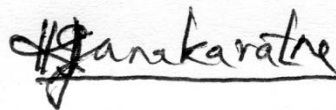
This ever more frenetic pace of social life and the increasing secularization of our world, especially in economically advanced countries, has had an impact on many aspects of family life, including its important religious dimension. This is of particular concern to all of us, since the family has always been a privileged place where the heritage of religious values and traditions is cherished and passed down. With the rapid pace of change and growing secularism, this all-important role of the family is endangered.

Through friendly cooperation, Buddhists and Christians can demonstrate how religious festivals can strengthen the life of families and highlight their important role in cherishing and handing down traditions within their religious communities and within the society as a whole. Religious festivities offer an opportunity for families to make time to come together and thus to pass on to new generation the religious treasures they have received from their ancestors and from the founders of their religious traditions. Celebrating religious festivals can be an important means of reaffirming the uniqueness of family, which Pope Francis has defined as the place where spiritual traditions are handed down from a generation to another, where “parents become their children’s first teachers in the faith.” (Apostolic Exhortation *Amoris Laetitia* 16).

Dear Buddhist brothers and sisters, may you enjoy abundant blessings as you celebrate the annual feast of Hanamatsuri festival and may this celebration provide families with opportunities to share, celebrate, and pass on to new generations the rich inheritance of your religious tradition



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