



PONTIFICAL COUNCIL FOR
INTERRELIGIOUS DIALOGUE

Christians and Jains: Together nurturing a culture of peace

MESSAGE FOR MAHAVIR JANMA KALYANAK DIWAS
2022

Vatican City

Dear Jain Friends,

The Pontifical Council for Interreligious Dialogue extends its most cordial greetings to all of you as you celebrate the 2620th Birth Anniversary of Thirthankar Shri Vardhaman Mahavir on 14 April this year. May the festive spirit of this commemoration infuse your hearts, homes and communities with health and happiness, peace and prosperity!

While the risk of a new wave of Covid-19 in some parts of the globe is becoming a further cause of concern to all of us, we are terribly saddened by the devastating impact of war in some other parts of the world. Growing instances of tensions and violence in several regions, even in the name of religion, are quite distressing and disconcerting to everyone who longs for peace, freedom and harmony. Amidst ugly manifestations of aggression and violence that seem to weaken and frustrate peace-building efforts, nurturing a culture of peace becomes an urgent summons for the sake of the common good and our common home. Prompted by this call to build a more peaceful world, we wish to share with you some ways by which we, both Christians and Jains, can contribute to the cause of peace by nurturing a culture of peace.

In addition to selfishness, pride and greed, the tensions, violence and war that we see in the world are often caused by fear and mistrust. Each time this occurs the human family's innate vocation to fraternity becomes the first victim (cf Pope Francis, Encyclical Letter *Fratelli Tutti*, 26). Many of today's widespread social problems, such as poverty and injustice, trace their origin to a loss or an absence of human fraternity. When fear and mistrust dominate, or a shared conviction that we are all brothers and sisters is lacking, peace and stability cannot be ensured.

In order to build a more peaceful world, it is necessary to work toward the rebirth of a universal desire for fraternity among all men and women (cf *Fratelli Tutti*, 8). In this regard, a radical change in our understanding of how we relate to each other is necessary if there is to be a harmonious co-existence among people. This includes as well the relationship between people and nature. While faithfully adhering to the teachings of their own respective religious traditions, all believers need to acknowledge once again that we all belong to one large human family; that we are brothers and sisters, equal in dignity and rights; that we need each other and that we are responsible for one another and for the protection of nature. We cannot dream of a lasting peace, be it in families, communities, society and the world, "as long as we see others as them and not us" (Pope Francis, Interreligious Meeting, Plain of Ur, Iraq, 6 March, 2021).

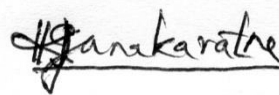
All that has just been affirmed provides us with the necessary ingredients for building a peaceful society. These ingredients are best nurtured in families where children, led by the example of parents and elders, imbibe these noble values. As Pope Francis rightly affirms, “The family is the wellspring of all fraternity, and as such it is the foundation and the first pathway to peace, since, by its vocation, it is meant to spread its love to the world around it.” (Message for the World Day of Peace, 1 January 2014). Moreover, by fostering in students the values of respect, compassion, kindness, non-violence and harmony while also enabling them to respect and appreciate diversity, educational institutions can play an indispensable role in nurturing a culture of peace. Social media too has a major role in disseminating values and news that favour peace. All religions, with their spiritual and moral resources, have an important role in promoting peace. This especially includes religious leaders who have the duty of sowing seeds of peace in the minds and hearts of believers. To this end, interreligious dialogue is an effective tool for building bridges, nurturing love in society and establishing friendship among people of different religious traditions. An integral part of nurturing a culture of peace also involves working for healing and reconciliation among persons and communities while also transforming them into artisans of peace.

As believers rooted in our own respective religious beliefs and as persons with a shared vision of fraternity and a sense of mutual responsibility, may we, Christians and Jains, nurture always and everywhere a culture of peace in ways great and small. May we do so with patience and perseverance, in solidarity and in constant pursuit of the common good, together with believers of other religious traditions and people of good will.

We wish you all a happy feast of Mahavir Janma Kalyanak Diwas!



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