



**DICASTERY FOR
INTERRELIGIOUS DIALOGUE**

***Buddhists and Christians
in Liberating Dialogue for Our Time***

**MESSAGE FOR THE FEAST OF VESAK
2025**

Vatican City

Dear Buddhist Friends,

As in past years, we readily extend our heartfelt greetings and warm good wishes on the joyful celebration of Vesak. This sacred festival, which commemorates the birth, enlightenment, and passing of the Buddha, holds profound spiritual significance for you. Our greetings this year are further enriched by the spirit of the Jubilee, which is for us Catholics a time of grace, reconciliation and spiritual renewal.

As partners journeying in dialogue, we also greet you in the spirit of *Nostra Aetate*, the groundbreaking Declaration of the Second Vatican Council on the Church's relation to non-Christian religions, whose sixtieth anniversary we are celebrating this year. Since its promulgation in 1965, *Nostra Aetate* has deepened our engagement with the followers of other religious traditions. Inspired by its vision, we once more affirm that "the Catholic Church rejects nothing of what is true and holy" in other religions and "has a high regard for the manner of life and conduct, the precepts and doctrines which, although differing in many ways from its own teaching, nevertheless often reflect a ray of that truth which enlightens all men and women" (*Nostra Aetate*, 2).

Our commitment to dialogue is further confirmed by the positive recognition expressed in *Nostra Aetate* with regard to your own tradition: "Buddhism in its various forms testifies to the essential inadequacy of this changing world. It proposes a way of life by which people can, with confidence and trust, attain a state of perfect liberation and reach supreme illumination either through their own efforts or with divine help" (*Nostra Aetate*, 2). For you, the Buddhist path to liberation involves transcending ignorance, craving, and suffering through insight, ethical conduct, and mental discipline. The journey towards Nibbana – the ultimate freedom from the cycle of birth, death, and rebirth – highlights the transformative power of wisdom and compassion.

This yearning for true liberation finds deep resonance in our shared pursuit of truth and fullness of life, and it aligns with the teachings of our respective traditions. The Buddha taught that, "he who is free from craving and attachment, is perfect in uncovering the true meaning of the Teaching, and knows the arrangement of the sacred texts in correct sequence – he indeed is the bearer of his final body. He is truly called the profoundly wise one, the great man" (*Dhammapada*, Ch. 24, V. 352). For Jesus, knowledge of Truth is liberating: "You will know the truth, and the truth will make you free" (*John* 8:32).

In our time, marked by division, conflict and suffering, we recognize the urgent need for a liberating dialogue, one that is not limited to words but is capable of translating those words into concrete actions for peace, justice and dignity for all.

As was the case when *Nostra Aetate* was promulgated, our world today is also burdened by injustice, conflict and uncertainty about the future. Yet we remain convinced of the profound capacity of religions to offer meaningful responses to “the unsolved riddles of human existence” (*Nostra Aetate*, 1). The dialogue that takes place between us serves as a way to communicate the treasures of our religious traditions and draw upon their wisdom in order to address the pressing challenges of our time.

The longing for fraternity and authentic dialogue, so eloquently expressed in *Nostra Aetate*, motivates us to strive for unity and love among all peoples and nations. It invites us to build upon our commonalities, appreciate our differences and draw mutual enrichment from our diverse traditions.

This spirit grows deeper as we strive to embrace a culture of dialogue as the path forward, with “mutual cooperation as the code of conduct [and] reciprocal understanding as the method and standard” (*Document on Human Fraternity for World Peace and Living Together*, Abu Dhabi, 4 February 2019).

With these prayerful reflections, we sincerely trust that, through dialogue, our respective traditions may offer worthy responses to the challenges of our time.

We wish you a blessed and fruitful celebration of Vesak!

From the Vatican, 12 May 2025



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