DICASTERY FOR INTERRELIGIOUS DIALOGUE

Christians and Hindus: Building Peace in Truth, Justice, Love and Freedom

MESSAGE FOR THE FEAST OF DEEPAVALI
2023

Vatican City

Dear Hindu Friends,

The Dicastery for Interreligious Dialogue offers its festive greetings and best wishes to you as you celebrate Deepavali throughout the world on 12 November this year. May God, supreme Light, illumine your hearts and minds, bless your homes and neighbourhoods, and fill your lives with peace and happiness!

This year marks the sixtieth anniversary of *Pacem in Terris* (Peace on Earth), the Encyclical Letter of Pope John XXIII. In 1963, when the world was deeply troubled and on the brink of a nuclear war, that Document issued a timely, impassioned and much-needed plea to world leaders and people to work together for peace, and urged them to find amicable solutions to problems in a spirit of mutual trust, through dialogue and negotiations. Pope John XXIII, now a revered saint, prophetically stated that "peace is but an empty word if it does not rest upon… an order that is founded on truth, built up on justice, nurtured and animated by charity, and brought into effect under the auspices of freedom" (No. 167). Inspired by the lofty vision that *Pacem in Terris* proposed for peacemaking, we would like, on this occasion, to share with you some thoughts on building peace in truth, justice, love, and freedom.

The teaching of *Pacem in Terris* has given rise, over the past six decades, to a heightened awareness among people worldwide – albeit in varying degrees – of the need to respect the transcendental dignity of persons, their legitimate rights and their shared responsibility to work for the common good in a spirit of solidarity. It also gave rise to movements that passionately engage in the protection and defence of human rights and promotion of peace through dialogue and negotiation. Nonetheless, the full realization of its prophecy of peace remains a distant dream, which can only be realized through collaborative efforts on the part of men and women of every religious tradition and all sectors of society. These efforts must continue and make further progress.

Initiatives aimed at fostering peace and the universal common good must not yield to pessimism, discouragement and renunciation. These attitudes may be prompted by instances of contempt for human dignity; the denial or curtailment of the fundamental rights and freedoms of citizens, including their religious rights; and of intolerance and hatred, injustice and discrimination, violence and aggression directed towards those who are ethnically, culturally, economically, linguistically and religiously diverse, or against the more vulnerable members of society. Pessimism and discouragement can be present today, even as they were in 1963, yet Saint John XXIII, as a man of deep hope, remained convinced that peace is possible, provided it is based on truth, justice, love, and freedom. These are, as Saint John Paul II of happy memory insisted, "essential conditions for peace" and fundamental "pillars of peace" (cf. Message for the Celebration of the 2003 World Day of Peace – *Pacem in Terris: A Permanent Commitment,* Nos. 3-4). As believers, we need to express our aspiration for peace through consistent and concerted efforts, grounded in an unshakable fidelity to those pillars.

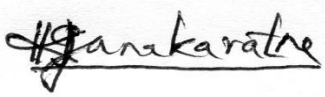
In our efforts to contribute to the building of a peaceful world by using every means in our power, we need to strengthen those pillars of peace. For this reason, families, led by the example of parents and the elderly, as well as educational institutions and the media, ought to play a preeminent role in inspiring the desire for peace and teaching the values that build peace in men and women of every age.

Interreligious dialogue possesses great potential for nurturing mutual trust and social friendship among interfaith communities, and it has indeed become "a necessary condition for contributing to peace in the world" (POPE FRANCIS, Address to the Delegation of the 'Emouna Fraternité Alumni' Association, 23 June 2018). Hence, it is incumbent on religions and religious leaders to strive to encourage their followers to be persons whose lives are shaped by truth, justice, love and freedom.

As believers and leaders of our respective religions, with common convictions and a sense of shared responsibility for the welfare of humanity, may we, Christians and Hindus, sincerely endeavour to become artisans of peace. Joining hands with followers of other religious traditions and with all people of good will, may we work together to build our world on the lasting foundations of truth, justice, love and freedom, so that everyone can enjoy genuine and lasting peace!

Wishing you all a Happy Deepavali!

Miguel Ángel Cardinal Ayuso Guixot, MCCJ
Prefect



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