



DICASTERY FOR INTERRELIGIOUS DIALOGUE

Christians and Jains: In solidarity with suffering humanity

MESSAGE FOR MAHAVIR JANMA KALYANAK DIWAS
2023

Vatican City

Dear Jain Friends,

The Dicastery for Interreligious Dialogue - known until recently as the Pontifical Council for Interreligious Dialogue - offers you its warmest greetings as you celebrate the 2621st anniversary of the birth of Shree Vardhaman Mahavir on 4 April of this year. May this festive commemoration bring happiness and peace to your hearts and homes, and bless your families and communities with a spirit of unity and solidarity!

No one can deny that the cry of the poor, the suffering and the oppressed is heard in every corner of the world today. The suffering of so many people as a result of hunger, disease, wars, disasters both natural and manmade, acts of terrorism and extremism, intolerance and hatred, discrimination and marginalization, at times even in the name of religion, is a source of grave concern to everyone. To make matters worse, an alarmingly large number of individuals and groups in our society is growing inured to the sufferings of others; sadly, their numbers are daily increasing across the globe. These situations obviously sadden and dismay us, yet at the same time, they summon all those who are concerned for the welfare of our one human family to join in offering a practical response. Amid these complex and difficult situations, we consider it helpful to share with you some thoughts on the need for Christians and Jains alike to stand in solidarity with suffering humanity and be both a sign of hope and a source of help.

‘Solidarity’, as Saint John Paul II pointed out, is an authentic moral virtue. It is not a feeling of vague compassion for the misfortunes of others, but rather a firm and persevering determination to commit ourselves to the good of all (cf. Encyclical Letter *Sollicitudo Rei Socialis*, 1987, No. 38). In the case of the poor, this means “sharing the little we have with those who have nothing, so that no one will go without.” (Pope Francis, Message for the World Day of the Poor, 2022). It is also a question of justice (cf. Pope Francis, General Audience, 2 September 2020) for those who suffer from injustices of every kind. Whatever the form it takes, solidarity is a noble act, stemming from a sense of responsibility towards our suffering brothers and sisters. To foster solidarity today, the present economic system needs to be transformed, collectively and creatively, into one which is, in the words of Pope Francis, “more attentive to ethical principles” and whose activity is aimed solely at “the service of the human being, not just of the few, but of all, especially the poor” (cf. Pope Francis, Address to Entrepreneurs, 17 October, 2022).

Building a spirit of solidarity with the suffering and those in need should be promoted across all sections of society by raising awareness of our responsibility, as individuals and societies, towards each of our brothers and sisters. Greater sensitivity to the sufferings of others and increased efforts to better their condition will not only strengthen social friendship and human fellowship, but will also help to transmit the spirit of solidarity from the present generation to those yet to come. If cultivated at every level of society, the harvest of solidarity

will become truly “global”, and serve to alleviate, if not eliminate, the sufferings of a great number of people.

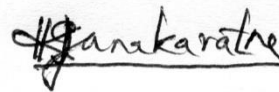
The family is the first school of solidarity. There the values of love and compassion, togetherness and sharing, generosity and solidarity, care and concern, especially for the weak and the suffering, are learned and practised, thanks to the example set by parents and elders. Communications and social media also have a major role to play in helping inculcate these values among people of all ages and generations. Educational institutions provide many opportunities for sowing the seeds of solidarity among their students, not only by academic instruction, but also through practical forms of training. Religions and religious leaders are called to take every favourable occasion and to use every means at their disposal to encourage their followers to sow the seeds and reap the fruits of solidarity, transcending all differences and divisions.

As believers grounded in our own respective religious beliefs and convictions, solidarity has always been a core value for us. As men and women with a shared sense of our humanity and responsibility, may we, Christians and Jains, individually and collectively, join hands with people of other religious traditions, and all persons of good will, in striving to mitigate, as best as we can, the sufferings of our brothers and sisters. May we stand with them and for them, and thereby play our own small part in promoting human solidarity, social responsibility and genuine fraternity.

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



Cardinal Miguel Ángel Ayuso Guixot, MCCJ
Prefect



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