

**Vatican's Diwali message to Hindus stresses peaceful coexistence
Let not negative news headlines dampen the resolve of Christians and
Hindus to sow seeds of fraternity, says goodwill message**

La Croix International staff, Vatican City, 22 October 2019



The Vatican has called on Christians and Hindus to shun apathy, indifference and hatred towards others and be builders of fraternity and peaceful coexistence wherever they are.

"Though negative news dominates the headlines, this should not dampen our resolve to sow seeds of fraternity, for there is a hidden sea of goodness that is growing and leads us to hope in the possibility of building, together with the followers of other religions and all men and women of good will, a world of solidarity and peace," the Vatican said in its message to Hindus celebrating the feast of Diwali festival.

"This is often caused by a failure to recognize the 'other' as a brother or sister. Such an attitude can arise from misguided, ungenerous or unsympathetic sentiments, which upset and unsettle the very fabric of harmonious coexistence in society," said the message signed by Cardinal Miguel Ayuso Guixot, president of the Pontifical Council for Interreligious Dialogue.

"It is with concern about this situation that we deem it fitting and beneficial to share with you some thoughts on the need for every individual, particularly Christians and Hindus, to be builders of fraternity and peaceful coexistence wherever they are," it said.

Diwali or Deepavali, also known as the "festival of lights," is a major Hindu festival celebrated every year in October or November with the dates being determined by the Hindu lunar calendar.

This year millions of people in various countries will be celebrating the festival Oct. 27, although it may locally vary a day before or after.

Fiji, Guyana, India, Kenya, Malaysia, Mauritius, Myanmar, Singapore, Sri Lanka, Suriname and Trinidad and Tobago all celebrate Diwali as a public holiday.

Rooted in the Hindu culture, Diwali celebrates the triumph of light over darkness, life over death and good over evil.

As is customary, the Pontifical Council for Interreligious Dialogue issued a message on Oct. 21 entitled "Believers: Builders of Fraternity and Peaceful Coexistence."

The annual festival of lights, which Hindus in most parts of the world celebrate, dates to the Vedic period, around 2,000 years before the birth of Christ.

As part of the celebration, gifts and sweets are exchanged among relatives and neighbors. Children set off noisy fireworks. It is believed that the light and sounds of fireworks drive away evil spirits.

Hindus illuminate their homes with earthen oil lamps and colorful electric bulbs, recalling stories from their scriptures of the victory of good over evil and commemorating it as a victory of light over darkness.

The festival resonates with Catholics as light is a very important part of Christianity and has much significance for Catholics who light candles in all ceremonies, including baptism, Communion and Easter.