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Message from the Pontifical Council for Interreligious Dialogue to Hindus for the Feast of Deepavali

The Feast of Diwali is celebrated by all Hindus, and is known as Deepavali, or the “row of oil lamps”. Symbolically based on an ancient mythology, it represents the victory of truth over lies, of light over darkness, of life over death, and of good over evil.

The actual celebration lasts three days, marking the beginning of a new year, family reconciliation, especially between brothers and sisters, and worship of God.

This year the feast will be celebrated by many Hindus on 14 November.

For the occasion, the Pontifical Council for Interreligious Dialogue has sent a Message with the theme: “Christians and Hindus: Rekindling Positivity and Hope during the Covid-19 Pandemic and Beyond”.

The following is the full text of the message:

Christians and Hindus: Rekindling Positivity and Hope

during the Covid-19 Pandemic and Beyond

Dear Hindu Friends,

The Pontifical Council for Interreligious Dialogue offers its warmest greetings and best wishes to you on the occasion of Deepavali, which you are observing this year on 14 November. Amid the difficulties of the Covid-19 pandemic, may this very meaningful feast dispel every cloud of fear, anxiety and worry, and fill your hearts and

minds with the light of friendship, generosity and solidarity!

With this year's Deepavali Message, the Pontifical Council charged with promoting interreligious dialogue and cooperation continues its cherished tradition of sending you festive greetings and a few timely reflections. This is the twenty-fifth of such Messages, which seek to acknowledge, maintain and cherish the good things present in both of our religious traditions and spiritual patrimonies (cf. *Nostra Aetate*, 2). Albeit a small step in the direction of interreligious appreciation and cooperation, these Messages have, over the years, enhanced and promoted Hindu-Christian dialogue and harmony at various levels. We readily continue this noble tradition for the sake of forging, fostering and furthering mutual relationships between Hindus and Christians as a means of working together for our good and for the good of all humanity.

This year, in the wake of the Covid-19 pandemic, we wish to share with you some thoughts on the need to encourage a positive spirit and hope for the future, even in the face of apparently insurmountable obstacles, socio-economic, political and spiritual challenges, and widespread anxiety, uncertainty and fear.

Our efforts to do so are surely based upon our conviction that God, who created us and sustains us, will never abandon us. An encouragement to be optimistic may well sound unrealistic to those who have lost their loved ones or livelihoods or both. Even the boldest hope and positivity can dissipate in the tragic situations caused by the present pandemic and its grave effects on daily life, the economy, healthcare, education and religious practices. Yet it is precisely trust in God's providence that inspires us to remain optimistic and to work to rekindle hope in the midst of our societies.

The pandemic has in fact brought a number of positive changes in our way of thinking and living, despite the unprecedented suffering it has caused worldwide and the lockdowns that have disrupted our normal life. Experiences of suffering and a sense of responsibility for one another have brought our communities together in solidarity and concern, in acts of kindness and compassion for the suffering and those in need. Such signs of solidarity have led us to appreciate more deeply the importance of coexistence, the fact that we belong to one another and that we need one another for the well-being of all and that of our common home. As Pope Francis has rightly noted, "solidarity today is the road to take towards a post-pandemic world, towards the healing of our interpersonal and social ills", and "a way of coming out of the crisis better" (General Audience, 2 September 2020).

Our respective religious traditions teach us to remain positive and hopeful even amid adversity. In cherishing those religious traditions and teachings, may we strive in the midst of this global crisis to spread what Pope Francis delights in calling "the contagion of hope" (*Urbi et Orbi* Message, 12 April 2020) through gestures of care, affection, kindness, gentleness and compassion which are more contagious than the coronavirus itself.

Based on those religious traditions and teachings, our shared values and our commitment to the betterment of humanity, may we, as Christians and Hindus, join all people of good will in working to build a culture of positivity and hope in the heart of our societies, not only in these difficult days but also in the future that lies before us.

To all of you we wish a Happy Deepavali!

Miguel Ángel Cardinal Ayuso Guixot, MCCJ

President

Rev. Msgr. Indunil Kodithuwakku Janakaratne Kankanamalage

Secretary
