

Vatican sends message for Buddhist feast of Vesakh



A monk marks the Buddhist festival of Vesakh in Surabaya, Indonesia (AFP or licensors)

The Pontifical Council for Interreligious Dialogue sends its annual message, entitled "Buddhists and Christians: Standing Together in Hopeful Resilience," as Buddhists worldwide celebrate the holiday commemorating Buddha's birth.

Deborah Castellano Lubov, *Vatican News*, 2 May 2022

Numerous Buddhists worldwide are marking the feast of Vesakh on Friday, 6 May. Celebrated in different countries on different days, the feast commemorates the birth, enlightenment, and death of Gautama Buddha.

The Pontifical Council for Interreligious Dialogue on Sunday released their message for the occasion, entitled "Buddhists and Christians: Standing Together in Hopeful Resilience," conveying the Vatican's warm greetings for the holiday amid humanitarian crises globally.

The letter was signed by the Pontifical Council's President, Cardinal Miguel Ángel Ayuso Guixot, and its Secretary, Msgr. Indunil Janakaratne Kodithuwakku Kankanamalage.

Humanity faces manifold crises

"We write at a time when humanity faces manifold crises," the Vatican officials observed, reflecting, "For a third consecutive year, people around the world are held hostage by the lingering health crisis brought on by COVID-19."

While recognizing that frequent natural disasters related to the ecological crisis "have exposed our fragility as citizens of a shared Earth," they decried conflicts continuing "to shed innocent blood and to provoke widespread suffering."

"Sadly, there are still those who use religion to justify violence."

The Cardinal and Dicastery Secretary recalled Pope Francis' disappointment that while humanity "is proud of its advancement in science and thought," it "is going backward in bringing about peace."

Despite signs of solidarity emerging in response to tragedies provoked by these crises, they expressed "the search for lasting solutions remains arduous."

Amid societal moral decline, religions as ‘lamps of hope’

The pursuit of material wealth and the abandonment of spiritual values, the Vatican officials reflected, "have led to a generalized moral decline in society."

In this context, the message encouraged Buddhists and Christians to be motivated by their religious and moral sense of responsibility to sustain humanity in its quest for reconciliation and resilience.

"Religious people, sustained by their noble principles," they encouraged, "must strive to be lamps of hope that, even though small, still illuminate the path that leads humanity to triumph over the spiritual emptiness that causes so much wrong-doing and suffering. "

“The Gospel never suggests violence as the answer.”

The Beatitudes proclaimed by Jesus, they noted, "show us how to be resilient by giving priority to spiritual values in the midst of a world running amok."

Working together for better tomorrow

The Vatican's message praised Buddhists' compassion and wisdom which inspires various social initiatives, and highlighted the importance of hope. "As Pope Francis says" in *Laudato si,* ' it continued, "hope would have us recognize that there is always a way out, that we can always redirect our steps, that we can always do something to solve our problems."

The Vatican expressed its conviction that hope rescues us from discouragement.

“Let us work together for a better tomorrow!”

The Dicastery's message concluded wishing their "friends" a good Vesakh celebration that "will keep hope alive and generate actions that welcome and respond to the adversities caused by the present crises."

For more than 25 years, the Pontifical Council has been sending messages for Vesakh, and similarly sends messages for Ramadan and Diwali.