

**MESSAGE OF THE PONTIFICAL COUNCIL
FOR INTERRELIGIOUS DIALOGUE
TO THE HINDUS ON THE FEAST OF DIWALI 2008**

***"Christians and Hindus:
Together in favour of Non-violence"***

Dear Hindu Friends,

1. On behalf of the Pontifical Council for Interreligious Dialogue, I am pleased to send you and your communities my cordial greetings as you prepare to celebrate *Diwali*, the festival of light.
2. Traditionally on this occasion, we share a reflection on a matter of common interest. I would like to propose then considering together how we can live harmoniously in today's society, witnessing to the truth, light and hope that *Diwali* celebrates. While religions are often blamed for society's ills, we know that it is rather the manipulation of religion, contrary to its fundamental beliefs, that is used to carry out so many forms of violence.
3. In this regard, His Holiness Pope Benedict XVI said, "In the world there is *too much* violence, *too much* injustice, and therefore this situation cannot be overcome except by countering it with *more* love, with *more* goodness". He added, "This *more* comes from God. Thus by the mercy of God ... it is possible to tip the balance of the world from evil to good, when we recognize that it begins in that small and decisive 'world' which is the human heart" (Address, ["Angelus", 18 February 2007](#)). For Christians, in the "Sermon on the Mount" Jesus called on his disciples to love their enemies, to pray for those who hated them, to do good to those who wronged them, to walk the extra mile with their opponents (Cf. Matthew 5).
4. In the Hindu tradition, non-violence is one of the more important teachings. Mahatma Gandhi, the Father of the Indian nation, is respected and held in high regard by people of different generations around the world for his complete dedication to the service of humanity. During the course of his struggle for freedom, he realized that "an eye for an eye, and soon the whole world is blind". Throughout his life, he developed among others, the concept of *Ahimsa* (non-violence). He is a model for non-violence and he led by example to the point of laying down his life because of his refusal to engage in violence.
5. Non-violence is not merely a tactical manoeuvre but is the attitude of one who, as the Pope affirmed, "is so convinced of God's love and power" (ibid) that he is not afraid to tackle evil with the weapons of love and truth alone. Love of one's enemy is the revolution of love, a love that does not rely ultimately on human resources but is a gift of God.
6. Non-violence is encouraged by many other religions. Non-violence is central to our beliefs as the way to promote truth, light, mutual respect, freedom and harmony. As religious leaders called to uphold the truth found in our respective religions, let us

help to foster non-violence among our followers and support it in their actions. Let us do all we can to promote the sacredness of human life, the good of the poor and lowly in our midst and collaborate, through dialogue, to foster the dignity of the human person regardless of race or caste, creed or class. As Hindus and Christians, especially in the present situation, let us be won over by love without reserve, with the conviction that non-violence is the only way to build a global society that is more compassionate, more just and more caring. It is our hope and our prayer!

7. Once again, let me wish you peace and joy as you gather with your loved ones and your community to celebrate the gift of Light that illumines all hearts. Happy Diwali!

Jean-Louis Cardinal Tauran

President

Archbishop Pier Luigi Celata

Secretary