



PONTIFICAL COUNCIL
FOR INTERRELIGIOSO DIALOGUE

*Christians and Buddhists:
Caring for the Planet Earth*

MESSAGE FOR THE FEAST OF VESAKH
2008

Vatican City

Dear Buddhist Friends,

1. On the occasion of the festival of Vesakh, I am writing to you and your communities worldwide to convey my own warm greetings, as well as those of the Pontifical Council for Interreligious Dialogue.

2. It gives me much joy to recall the positive relationships that Catholics and Buddhists have enjoyed for many years. I am confident that this foundation will serve to strengthen and deepen our understanding of each other as we continue to work together to build a better world not only for ourselves but also for the entire human family. Experience teaches us that dialogue fosters the desire within the person and the community to share the goodwill and harmony which already exists, and indeed to reach out ever more courageously to others, ready to embrace the challenges and difficulties that may arise.

3. Pope Benedict XVI, in his 2008 Message for the World Day of Peace, observed: “For the human family, this home is the earth, the environment that God the Creator has given us to inhabit with creativity and responsibility. We need to care for the environment: it has been entrusted to men and women to be protected and cultivated with responsible freedom, with the good of all as a constant guiding criterion” (no. 7). The United Nations General Assembly has declared 2008 as The International Year of Planet Earth. As inhabitants of the earth and believers, Christians and Buddhists respect the same creation and have a common concern to promote care for the environment which we all share.

4. Preservation of the environment, promotion of sustainable development and particular attention to climate change are matters of grave concern for everyone. Many governments, NGOs, multi-national companies, and research and tertiary institutes, in recognizing the ethical implications present in all economic and social development, are investing financial resources as well as sharing expertise on biodiversity, climate change, environmental protection and conservation. Religious leaders, too, are contributing to the public debate. This contribution is of course not just a reaction to the more recent pressing threats associated with global warming. Christianity and Buddhism have always upheld a great respect for nature and taught that we should be grateful stewards of the earth. Indeed it is only through a profound reflection on the relationship between the divine Creator, creation and creatures that attempts to address environmental concerns will not be marred by individual greed or hampered by the interests of particular groups.

5. On a practical level can we Christians and Buddhists not do more to collaborate in projects which confirm the responsibility that falls to each and everyone of us? Recycling, energy conservation, the prevention of indiscriminate destruction of plant and animal life, and the protection of waterways all speak of careful stewardship and indeed foster goodwill and promote cordial relations among peoples. In this way Christians and Buddhists together can be harbingers of hope for a clean, safe and harmonious world.

6. Dear Friends, I trust that we can promote this message within our respective communities through public education and our good example in respecting nature and acting responsibly towards our one common planet Earth. Once again let me renew my heartfelt greetings and wish you a Happy Feast of Vesakh.

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