



CATHOLIC BISHOPS' CONFERENCE

Interreligious Dialogue

Vatican Message for Vesakh 2013

FEAST OF VESAKH, 2013 A.D. / 2556 B.E.

Christians and Buddhists: Loving, defending and promoting human life

Dear Buddhist Friends

1. On behalf of the Pontifical Council for Interreligious Dialogue, I would like to extend my heartfelt greetings and good wishes to all of you, as you celebrate the feast of Vesakh which offers us Christians an occasion to renew our friendly dialogue and close collaboration with the different traditions that you represent.

2. Pope Francis, at the very beginning of his ministry, has reaffirmed the necessity of dialogue of friendship among followers of different religions. He noted that "The Church is [...] conscious of the responsibility which all of us have for our world, for the whole of creation, which we must love and protect. There is much that we can do to benefit the poor, the needy and those who suffer, and to favour justice, promote reconciliation and build peace" (*Audience with Representatives of the Churches and Ecclesial Communities and of the Different Religions, 20 March 2013*).

The Message of the World Day of Peace in 2013 entitled *Blessed are the Peacemakers*," notes that "The path to the attainment of the common good and to peace is above all that of respect for human life in all its many aspects, beginning with its conception, through its development and up to its natural end. True peacemakers, then, are those who love, defend and promote human life in all its dimensions, personal, communitarian and transcendent. Life in its fullness is the height of peace. Anyone who loves peace cannot tolerate attacks and crimes against life" (*Message for the World Day of Peace in 2013, n. 4*).

3. I wish to voice that the Catholic Church has sincere respect for your noble religious tradition. Frequently we note a consonance with values expressed also in your religious books: respect for life, contemplation, silence, simplicity (*cf. Verbum Domini, no. 119*). Our genuine fraternal dialogue needs to foster what we Buddhists and Christians have in common especially a shared profound reverence for life.

4. Dear Buddhist friends, your first precept teaches you to abstain from destroying the life of any sentient being and it thus prohibits killing oneself and others. The cornerstone of your ethics lies in loving kindness to all beings. We Christians believe that the core of Jesus' moral teaching is twofold; love of God and love of neighbour. Jesus says: "As the Father has loved me, so have I loved you; abide in my love." And again: "This is my commandment, that you love one another as I have loved you" (*Catechism of the Catholic Church n. 1823*). The fifth Christian Commandment, "You shall not kill" harmonizes so well with your first precept. *Nostra Aetate* teaches that "the Catholic Church rejects nothing of what is true and holy in these religions" (*NA 2*). I think, therefore, that it is urgent for both Buddhists and Christians on the basis of the genuine patrimony of our religious traditions to create a climate of peace to love, defend and promote human life.

5. As we all know, in spite of these noble teachings on the sanctity of human life, evil in different forms contributes to the dehumanization of the person by mitigating the sense of humanity in individuals and communities. This tragic situation calls upon us, Buddhists and Christians, to join hands to unmask the threats to human life and to awaken the ethical consciousness of our respective followers to generate a spiritual and moral rebirth of individuals and societies in order to be true peacemakers who love, defend and promote human life in all its dimensions.

6. Dear Buddhist friends, let us continue to collaborate with a renewed compassion and fraternity to alleviate the suffering of the human family by fostering the sacredness of human life. It is in this spirit that I wish you once again a peaceful and joyful feast of Vesakh.

Jean-Louis Cardinal Tauran

President

Rev. Miguel Ángel Ayuso Guixot, MCCJ

Secretary