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

The festival of Diwali is celebrated by all Hindus and is known as Deepavali or “row of oil lamps”. Symbolically based on ancient mythology, it represents the victory of truth over falsehood, of light over darkness, of life over death, 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 festival will be celebrated by many Hindus on 4 November.

On this occasion, the Pontifical Council for Interreligious Dialogue has sent them a message on the theme: “Christians and Hindus: Together bringing light into people’s lives in times of despair”.

The following is the full text of the message:

Message

Dear Hindu Friends,

The Pontifical Council for Interreligious Dialogue extends its most cordial greetings to you on the occasion of Deepavali which falls on 4 November this year. May the observance of this feast even in the midst of anxiety and uncertainty arising from the present pandemic, and its resultant worldwide crises, light up your lives, homes and communities with the hope for a better future!

Besides the scars that are fresh in our minds of the first and second waves of the pandemic which upended the lives and livelihood of people, in one way or another, there runs through in all of us, in varying degrees, a sense of resignation, despair and despondency whenever devastating things happen across the globe caused by

factors ranging from terrorism to ecological degradation. These not only instil fear in people but also add to their distress and despair. It is in this context, we wish to share with you some thoughts - in keeping with our cherished tradition - on how we, both Christians and Hindus can bring the light of hope in people's lives in such challenging times.

As amidst the dark clouds of the current pandemic which have caused immeasurable suffering and trauma to the people there have been silver linings of solidarity and fraternity, it is within our ability to demonstrate that we can be 'together' and overcome every crisis with resolve and love, even the seemingly insurmountable. The power of solidarity unleashed in alleviating the suffering and assisting the needy, more so with an interreligious character and responsibility, gives visibility to the light of hope by putting in evidence the response which adherents of all religious traditions are called upon to make in times of despair and darkness. Bringing light together in people's lives through interreligious solidarity also validates the usefulness and resourcefulness of religious traditions in society.

A growing awareness of the need to be with and to belong to one another in the present pandemic period calls for finding, more and more, ways of bringing the light of hope where there is discord and division, destruction and devastation, deprivation and dehumanization. Only through a greater awareness among us that we are all part of one another, that we are brothers and sisters of one another (cfr. Pope Francis, *Encyclical Letter Fratelli Tutti- On Fraternity and Social Friendship*, 3 October 2020) and that we have a shared responsibility for one another and for the planet, which is our 'common home', can we attempt to lift us out of despair of any kind. Moreover, by being interdependent and working in solidarity with others, we shall emerge out of every crisis better. Even the pressing global issues that threaten to disrupt the harmony between nature and people and the harmonious co-existence of people such as climate change, religious fundamentalism, terrorism, hyper nationalism, xenophobia can be effectively addressed since these are concerns that affect us all.

In times of crisis, while religious traditions- as repositories of centuries of wisdom - have the power of lifting our sagging spirits, they also have the capacity to help individuals and communities to reset their life's compass with hope, with their gaze fixed beyond their present despair. Above all else, they instruct and invite their adherents to reach out, using every means in their power, to those who feel a sense of hopelessness so as to give them hope.

It is incumbent upon religious and community leaders, therefore, to nurture the spirit of fraternity among their followers with a view to helping them walk and work together with the people of other religious traditions, most especially during crisis and calamity of every kind. Fraternity, according to Pope Francis, "is the true cure for the pandemic and the many evils that have affected us" (*Address to the Members of the Diplomatic Corps accredited to the Holy See*, 8 February, 2021). Being responsible for one another inter-religiously is a sure means of strengthening solidarity and fraternity among us, and bringing succour to the afflicted and hope to the distressed.

As believers grounded in our own respective religious traditions and as persons with shared vision for and shared responsibility towards humanity, in particular the suffering humanity, may we Christians and Hindus, individually and collectively, and joining hands with people of other religious traditions and of good will, reach out to people who are in despair, to bring light into their lives!

We wish you all a Happy Deepavali!

Miguel Ángel Cardinal Ayuso Guixot, MCCJ

President

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Secretary
