



PONTIFICAL COUNCIL FOR
INTERRELIGIOUS DIALOGUE

**Christians and Jains: Rebuilding hope in the present
and post-pandemic world**

MESSAGE FOR MAHAVIR JANMA KALYANAK DIWAS
2021

Vatican City

Dear Jain Friends,

The Pontifical Council for Interreligious Dialogue (PCID) offers its most cordial greetings and best wishes to you on the occasion of the Birth Anniversary of Tirthankar Vardhaman Mahavir which you commemorate on 25 April this year. May the celebration of this holy festival during these difficult and protracted pandemic times renew your hearts and homes with serenity and peace, and may the teachings of the Tirthankar rekindle your hope for a safer and better future and reinforce communitarian bonds for happiness and peace in the world!

It is the tenth year since the Pontifical Council formally and directly connected with you through its first greetings cum message on this occasion, and we take this opportunity to thank each and every one of you for your esteemed friendship and collaboration in fostering the spirit of fraternity, not just between the Jains and the Christians, but also among people of diverse religious traditions. We also wish to express our appreciation to you for all the compassionate services you have rendered, individually and collectively, to those affected by the present pandemic, in different parts of the world. The reflection we wish to share with you this year is on how we can rebuild hope together in the present and post-pandemic times.

To hear someone speak about ‘hope’ may sound challenging to those whose lives have been completely upended and overwhelmed by the consequences of the pandemic, which is quite understandable. Yet as believers, we found our hope on our conviction that the Supreme divine who sustains us and leads us through the thick and thin of life will never abandon us. We also endeavour to spread hope among those in despair. Only hope can help us to look forward with courage and determination. The ‘virtue of hope’, therefore, is very crucial in the current circumstances, for us to move forward in life, to reconstruct our present and future, and to help others rebuild theirs.

Rebuilding of hope is possible only if we support one another in a spirit of solidarity. Pope Francis, who has become a symbol of hope to the entire world during these troubled times, has often appealed for a ‘renewed hope’ in the present and post-pandemic world. He rightly affirms that “No one ‘rebuilds’ by himself or herself; nobody can start over alone”. We need friendly and fraternal hands which are “capable of helping to...raise our horizon and hope” (*Meeting with the Victims of Triple Disaster*, “Bellesalle Hanzomon”, Tokyo, Japan, 25 November 2019). Religions, religious leaders and indeed all believers have a special role in rebuilding

hope by way of nurturing and promoting the spirit of fraternity and solidarity among people across all divides.

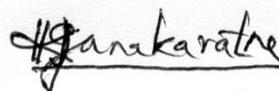
In the beginning of the present pandemic, there were also great 'signs of hope', of which the most outstanding was the unprecedented spirit of solidarity, including that of interreligious solidarity, witnessed in serving those affected by the corona-virus and the subsequent lockdowns. This is a good enough reason for us to rebuild hope, and to encourage others to display concrete expressions of solidarity that further spread hope. Rebuilding hope in the present pandemic times can usher in a future in which humans will have learned to unite all their forces and resources to eliminate all forms of 'viruses' – even the social ones like inequality, injustice, religious fundamentalism, extremism, racism, unhealthy nationalism and exploitation of the most vulnerable of society- which not so infrequently come in the way of a harmonious and peaceful coexistence among individuals and communities.

As believers grounded in our own respective religious traditions and as persons with shared values and concerns for the wellbeing of all, particularly in these pandemic times for those who are devoid of hope about their present and future, may we Christians and Jains, individually and collectively and joining together with the people of other religious traditions and people of goodwill everywhere, do everything that we can to rebuild hope in the lives of others so that they in turn become 'bearers of hope' themselves!

We wish you all a happy feast of Mahavir Janma Kalyanak Diwas!



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