DICASTERY FOR INTERRELIGIOUS DIALOGUE

Hindus and Christians:

Building world peace through dialogue and collaboration in the spirit of Nostra Aetate

MESSAGE FOR THE FEAST OF DEEPAVALI
2025

Vatican City

Dear Friends,

The Dicastery for Interreligious Dialogue is pleased to offer its warmest greetings and best wishes to you, as you celebrate Deepavali on 20 October this year. May this festival of lights brighten your lives and bring happiness, unity and peace to your families and communities!

The eighth day after Deepavali this year will mark the sixtieth anniversary of *Nostra Aetate* (28 October 1965), the Catholic Church's landmark document that encouraged Catholics around the world to engage in dialogue and collaboration with people of other religious traditions. It urged all to "recognize, preserve and promote the good things, spiritual and moral, as well as the socio-cultural values" found among them (NA 2) in the service of promoting peace.

Over the past six decades, this historic initiative of interreligious dialogue has evolved into a global project, generously supported and championed by people of diverse religious beliefs and non-beliefs alike, thereby making a significant contribution to world peace. This very message is itself a fruit of that noble vision.

On this diamond jubilee, *Nostra Aetate* calls us to renew our commitment to promoting interreligious dialogue as a path to peace. During this festive season, we invite you to join us in reflecting on how Christians and Hindus, together with people of all faiths and goodwill, can strengthen our shared efforts for peace through dialogue and collaboration in the spirit of *Nostra Aetate*.

Such a spirit is rooted in "promoting unity and love among people, indeed among nations" by focusing on "what people have in common and what draws them to fellowship" (NA 1). It calls us to reject "nothing that is true and holy" in other religions and to uphold "with sincere reverence those ways of conduct and of life, those precepts and teachings" which "reflect a ray of that Truth which enlightens all people" (NA 2). It inspires a firm resolve "to preserve as well as to promote together for the benefit of all humanity social justice and moral welfare, as well as peace and freedom" (NA 3).

While much progress has been made since *Nostra Aetate*, much more has to be done. In today's world, where mistrust, polarization, tensions and divisions are on the rise, interreligious dialogue is more necessary than ever. It must continue to sow seeds of unity and harmony, becoming a beacon of hope for all. Interreligious understanding and collaboration must find a place in our daily lives and become a natural way of living together.

Pope Leo XIV has called upon all people to "build bridges through dialogue and encounter, joining together as one people" (*Urbi et Orbi*, 8 May 2025). He reminds us that fostering a culture of dialogue and collaboration for peace is "a task entrusted to all, believers and non-believers alike, who must advance it through reflection and a praxis inspired by the dignity of the person and the common good" (*Address to the Movements and Associations of the "Arena of Peace" Verona*, 30 May 2025). Only by working together

can we secure and sustain a peace founded on truth, justice, love and freedom (cf. John Paul II, *Message for the Celebration of the World Day of Peace*, 1 January 2003).

The family, as the primary place of education in life and faith, has a preeminent role in nurturing these values. Religious traditions also have a crucial responsibility in fostering peace, with religious leaders bearing the moral duty to lead by example – encouraging their followers to respect diversity and to build bridges of friendship and fraternity. Educational institutions and the media likewise play essential roles in shaping hearts and minds toward peaceful coexistence. In this way, interreligious dialogue and collaboration can and must be embraced as indispensable tools for cultivating a culture of peace; they should grow into a powerful, dynamic movement dedicated to building and defending peace at all times.

As believers rooted in our respective faith traditions, and as people united by shared values and a common concern for peace, may we – Hindus and Christians, together with those of other religions and all people of goodwill – join hands in both small and great ways to nurture peace in our homes, communities and societies. May we strive to build world peace by fostering "a culture of dialogue as the path; mutual cooperation as the code of conduct; reciprocal understanding as the method and standard" (*Document on Human Fraternity for World Peace and Living Together*, 4 February 2019).

We wish you all a Happy Deepavali!

Cardinal George Jacob Koovakad
Prefect

Msgr. Indunil Janakaratne Kodithuwakku Kankanamalage
Secretary

DICASTERY FOR INTERRELIGIOUS DIALOGUE
00120 Vatican City

Tel: +39.06.6988 4321

E-mail: dialogo@interrel.va
http://www.dicasteryinterreligious.va