



PONTIFICAL COUNCIL
FOR INTERRELIGIOUS DIALOGUE

Christians and Sikhs: Together to foster a culture of care

MESSAGE FOR GURU NANAK PRAKASH DIWAS
2021

Vatican City

Dear Sikh Friends,

The Pontifical Council for Interreligious Dialogue warmly extends its festal greetings and fraternal felicitations to you on the occasion of the Birth Anniversary of Sri Guru Nanak Dev ji (1469-1539 C.E.), celebrated this year on 19 November. May the celebration of this festival fill your hearts and homes with love and hope, joy and peace, and may it strengthen every caring and harmonious relationship in your families and communities!

Our interconnectedness with nature and our interdependence on one another as humans make us realize more and more that caring for one another and for the environment is very important for our survival and sustenance. In our present-day society dominated by a growingly unbridled individualism and a culture of unrelenting indifference, ‘care for fellow-beings and for our common home’ as our collective ‘culture’ and as individual ‘lifestyle’ becomes crucial to build a more fraternal society, which ensures a safe life also for future generations. Therefore, we wish to share with you, in keeping with our cherished tradition, a few thoughts this year, on how we, both Sikhs and Christians, can nurture and foster a culture of care today.

A culture of care stems from a realization of our being “as a single human family, as fellow travellers sharing the same flesh, as children of the same earth which is our common home, each of us bringing the richness of his or her beliefs and convictions, each of us with his or her own voice, brothers and sisters all” (Pope Francis, Encyclical Letter Fratelli Tutti - On fraternity and social friendship, n.8, 3 October 2020). It begins with a “commitment to promoting the dignity of each person, solidarity with the poor and vulnerable, the pursuit of the common good and concern for the protection of creation” (Pope Francis, Message for the Celebration of the 54th World Day of Peace, 1 January 2021).

“Culture of care” can become the richest resource for humankind because it aims at putting to productive use the resourcefulness of individuals and communities with a view to ensuring environmental safety and dignified living for all. It can also become the expression of ecological conversion which seeks to effect, individually and collectively, a course-correction in treating our fellow-beings and nature. It certainly becomes an opportunity to selflessly work together with renewed commitment for the common good. It is a sure way to respond to the current crises facing humankind which, are an urgent summons to all of us to listen attentively to “both the cry of the earth and the cry of the poor” (Pope Francis, Encyclical Letter Laudato Si’-On care for our Common Home, 2015, 49). It is also the right approach to mitigate the suffering and pain of the poor and of the earth in justice and love, and to foster harmonious relationships among human beings and, between human beings and nature. A culture of care for oneself, care for others and care for the environment, can thus become “a privileged path to peace” (Message for the 54th World Day of Peace, 1 January 2021) and a path to development of all.

The promotion of a culture of care calls for a process of education and formation starting from families where members, led by the example of parents and elders, learn to care for one another in a spirit of mutual love and respect; they also learn to care for the environment. Educational institutions and communication media definitely have a preeminent role in creating a greater awareness among the students and people about the pressing need and the responsibility of taking care of the earth and one another. Religions in general and religious leaders in particular can play an indispensable role in nurturing this culture by reminding their followers, time and again, about the indivisible relationship between God, human beings and the creation, and how each of us has a spiritual commission to care for God's creation and for one another. Governmental and non-governmental agencies equally have an important role in propagating and promoting such a culture.

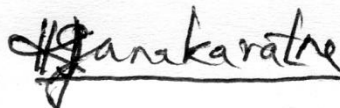
While it is very heartening to know that there has been some movement forward, in different parts of the world, at different levels and in different ways, since the past few years - boosted more so by the publication of Pope Francis' Encyclical Letter 'Laudato Si' - towards containing the damages done to nature, and protecting the rights and needs of the people, most specially the poor and the most vulnerable of the society, it must be acknowledged that a lot more remains to be done with a sense of urgency and through an exercise of "a new form of solidarity that is grounded in fraternity, love and mutual understanding" (Pope Francis, Preface to the e-book 'Laudato Si' Reader. An Alliance of Care for Common Home', 31 October 2021), so as to foster a culture of care in our society based on the emphasis that our respective religious traditions lay on the importance of harmony with God, with others, with nature and with oneself.

As believers grounded in our own religious convictions and as persons with shared concerns and responsibility towards the well-being of our fellow humans and towards the planet earth, may we, Christians and Sikhs, individually and as a community, and together with the people of other religious traditions and persons of good will do all that we can to take care of one another, of our common home and of the entire created order!

Wish you all a happy feast of Guru Nanak Dev Prakash Diwas!



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