PONTIFICAL COUNCIL FOR
INTERRELIGIOUS DIALOGUE

Christians and Sikhs: together to promote compassionate service

MESSAGE FOR GURU NANAK JAYANTI
2014

Vatican City

Dear Sikh Friends,

1. The Pontifical Council for Interreligious Dialogue, in a spirit of friendship and goodwill, extends its warmest greetings and felicitations to you as you observe the *Prakash Diwas* of Siri Guru Nanak Dev Sahib on 6 November this year. May the celebrations of this feast further strengthen the bonds of relationships between your families and communities for greater happiness, harmony and peace!

2. We wish to reflect with you this year on how we, both Christians and Sikhs together, can promote compassionate service in the society. Compassionate service, in its different aspects and nuances, can be said to lie at the very heart of every great religion. For us Christians, it finds its perfect expression in the very person of Jesus Himself. The most eloquent description of it in the Holy Bible (NT), can be found in the parable of the 'good Samaritan' (Lk 10:25-37). For you, too, compassion (*daya*) and service (*seva*), selfless service rather, for the benefit of others, are the core concepts. Bhai Gurdas, the first interpreter of Gurbani wrote: "the hands and feet that shun *seva* are condemnable; actions other than *seva* are fruitless" (*Varan*, XXVII.10). To do compassionate service means to reach out to the poor, the needy, sick, elderly, differently-abled, migrants, refugees, the exploited and persecuted, transcending all kinds of barriers and giving up one's own interests and comforts, for they, too, are God's handiwork and as such our brothers and sisters and are part of our one large human family. When clothed in the true spirit of charity and selflessness, such a service becomes an all-encompassing and rewarding experience for both the giver and the receiver.

3. The growing materialistic, consumerist and individualistic tendencies in today's world, unfortunately, are making humans more and more self-centred, insensitive and indifferent to the needs and sufferings of others. Decrying these disturbing trends, Pope Francis, whose words and gestures of compassion and service have by now become proverbial, has called for a culture in which everyone feels loved, wanted and cared for and "no one is seen as useless, out of place or disposable" (*Message for the 101st World Day of Migrants and Refugees* (2015), 3 September 2014).

4. As believers in our own respective religions with a shared treasury of values, may we, Christians and Sikhs, rediscover the importance of compassionate service in our personal and collective lives and make it a way of life, inspiring and encouraging others as well in this regard so as to promote happiness, harmony and peace everywhere. May we, joining hands with others, contribute to making a better, more just and fraternal world.

We wish you all a Happy *Prakash Divas* of Siri Guru Nanak Dev Sahib!

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