



PONTIFICAL COUNCIL FOR
INTERRELIGIOUS DIALOGUE

*Christians and Jains:
Together to foster a culture of compassion and mercy for peace*

MESSAGE FOR MAHAVIR JAYANTI
2016

Vatican City

Dear Jain Friends,

The Pontifical Council for Interreligious Dialogue sends you its warmest greetings on the occasion of the Birth Anniversary of Tirthankar Vardhaman Mahavir falling this year on the 19th of April. May all the religious celebrations, observances and festivities of this event bring you greater serenity and happiness, so also stronger familial and communitarian bonds of love.

Human beings have always shown in our chequered history gestures of solidarity, to varying degrees, in the wake of miseries and mishaps that befell on fellow beings. Happily and fortunately, this magnanimous legacy is carried on by individuals and groups showcasing common humanness beyond every religious and parochial divide almost in all parts of the globe.

In the context of a disturbingly growing global phenomenon of insensitivity to the needs and cries of other human beings today, Pope Francis reminds us that “Mercy is divine and has to do with the judgement of sin (wrongdoing). Compassion has a more human face. It means to suffer with, to suffer together, to not remain indifferent to the pain and the suffering of others” (The Name of God is Mercy, p. 91). Thus a compassionate person always manifests humanness, human face and human touch. A merciful person on the other hand shows understanding towards the offender and forgiveness for wrongdoing, both great and small. For this to happen, compassion, love, mercy, forgiveness and charity need to become the lifeline and lifestyle of all.

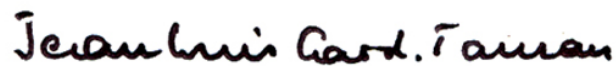
Evidently, formation and education in this respect must begin in the family which “is the first and most important school of mercy” (Pope Francis, Message for the World Day of Peace, 2016) and of humanity and solidarity. It is in the family that children, led by the example of parents and elders learn and practice the values of love, sharing, respect, tolerance, peace, honesty, fidelity, justice, compassion, forgiveness etc. The role of educational institutions both secular and religious too is vital in inculcating in the students such values. Political as well as religious leaders and those handling social means of communication also have a great responsibility of being role-models as well as protectors and promoters of a culture of compassion and mercy.

‘Compassion’ and ‘mercy’ are core values for both of our religious traditions. The Christian faith teaches us that God is full of compassion and mercy (Holy Bible, Psalm 103:8) of which Jesus Himself is the veritable epitome. On the directive of Pope Francis, we, the Catholics all over the world celebrate the current year as the Year of Mercy during which we seek to do gestures and acts of mercy. The profoundly rich concepts of *Ahimsā* (non-violence), *dayā* (mercy), *karunā* (compassion), *kshamā* (forgiveness) and the observation every year of a

Day of Universal Forgiveness in your religious tradition surely call upon you the Jains to shape a more humane and compassionate world. Our traditions thus embrace each other in their purpose of nurturing compassion and mercy.

As believers grounded in our own respective religions and as members of one human family conscious of our shared responsibility towards society, may we Christians and Jains, joining hands with others, through our acts of mercy and compassion in our daily lives, promote a culture of compassion and mercy for a world of peace!

Wish you all a happy feast of *Mahavir Janma Kalyanak*!



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