



PONTIFICAL COUNCIL
FOR INTERRELIGIOUS DIALOGUE

*Christians and Sikhs:
Promoting Together Human Fraternity*

MESSAGE FOR GURU NANAK PRAKASH DIWAS
2019

Vatican City

Dear Sikh Friends,

The Pontifical Council for Interreligious Dialogue sends you its most felicitous congratulations on the momentous commemoration of the five hundred and fiftieth Birth Anniversary of Sri Guru Nanak Dev ji (1469-1539) celebrated worldwide 12 November this year. May the celebrations and festivities marking this historic event fill your hearts, homes and communities with jubilations while reinvigorating fraternity and fellowship among you and enhancing everywhere unity and peace in and through you!

Faced with increasing threats to fraternal coexistence today - both covert and overt – arising, as they often are, from a refusal to recognize and accept the different “other” accompanied by a phlegmatic culture of deplorable apathy and growing indifference towards the needy and the suffering and by unjust policies favouring the exclusion and marginalization of the poor and vulnerable in society, we deem it opportune to share with you on this occasion a reflection on how we both Christians and Sikhs can promote human fraternity for harmony, peace and prosperity in the world.

Human fraternity determines the overall strength of the edifice of humanity and measures the health of relationships humans establish among themselves ranging from the familial to the international. The bond of brotherhood, moreover, as history attests, strengthens human solidarity, fosters co-responsibility and forges human alliances for peace and prosperity. Hence each individual’s share - to make this edifice stand tall and steady and to help human relations stay healthy and hearty - counts.

Our respective faith in God as a loving Father invites us to recognize, love and help the ‘other’ as a brother or a sister since to love God and to love neighbour are two aspects of one’s life of faith. Contrarily, if someone says, ‘I love God’ but hates his brother, he is a liar (Cf. Holy Bible, 1 Jn 4:20). In other words, a God-oriented person cannot but delight in doing good to others (Cf. *Guru Granth Sahib*, p. 273) and one’s faith in God may only be measured by seeing how one loves, respects and succours one’s fellow beings, most especially the poor, the weak and the needy. It is no surprise then that Guru Nanak ji called upon his adherents to follow this profound exhortation: “Let universal brotherhood be your highest religious aspiration” (*Guru Granth Sahib*, Amritsar, 1604, Japu, Stanza 28, p. 6).

Universal Brotherhood is both richness and responsibility. As richness, it structures relationships within the fundamentally ethical and moral framework of treating life with dignity and sanctity as a God-given gift, and the human rights deriving

there from with respect and sanity. As responsibility, it demands fulfilment of duties humans have towards others. Besides, it is so inextricably linked to world peace that "Whoever works to educate the rising generation in the conviction that every man is our brother, is building from the foundation the edifice of peace," and "Where brotherhood amongst men is at root disregarded, peace is at root destroyed" (Paul VI, *Message for the Celebration of the Day of Peace*, 1 January, 1971).

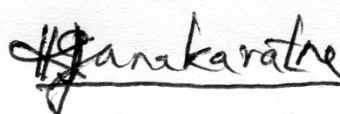
Promotion of human fraternity begins in the families. Families, as basic units of society, have to display themselves more and more as "the wellspring of fraternity" and "the foundation and the first pathway to peace" (Pope Francis, *Message for the Celebration of the World Day of Peace*, 2014) wherein values of mutual love and respect, fraternal caring and sharing, service and self-giving can profoundly and humanely be learned and imparted and, whereat in a spirit of mutual acceptance and cooperation the well-being of all can eminently be ensured. "Peace and joy at home, peace and joy in the world around" (*Guru Granth Sahib*, Amritsar, 1604, pp. 619, 1136).

Religions have an important role in nurturing fraternal relationships in the families, communities, nations and wider world. Their role becomes even more crucial and beneficial when vested interests seek to divide people and tear the fabric of fraternity. As believers grounded in our own respective religious traditions and as persons with shared convictions and concerns for the welfare of all (*sarbat da bhalaa*), may we Christians and Sikhs, conscious of our own inherent calling to fraternity, strive to become "artisans of fraternity" (Pope Francis, *Meeting with the Members of Higher Committee for achieving goals contained in the Document on 'Human Fraternity for World Peace and Living Together'*, 11 Sept. 2019, Santa Marta, Rome) and may we, joining hands with people of other religious traditions and of good will, promote human fraternity everywhere!

Wish you all once again a joyous Prakash Diwas of Sri Guru Nanak Dev ji!



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