



PONTIFICAL COUNCIL FOR
INTERRELIGIOUS DIALOGUE

*Christians and Jains:
To promote listening to the cry of the earth and of the poor*

MESSAGE FOR MAHAVIR JANMA KALYANAK DIWAS
2019

Vatican City

Dear Jain Friends,

The Pontifical Council for Interreligious Dialogue sends its most felicitous greetings to you as you celebrate the 2617th birth anniversary of ‘*Thirthankar*’ Shri Vardhaman Mahavir on 17 April this year. May this commemorative event fill your hearts and homes with happiness and peace and rekindle your spirit of fellowship and sense of responsibility towards one another.

Grave concerns in our times arising from the alarming ecological crisis we are confronted with, and from the disquieting conditions of the poor and the marginalized in different parts of the globe, impel us to share with you on this occasion a thought on the compelling need before us, the Christians and Jains, to listen and to respond to the cry of our mother Earth and of our brethren who go through the unending pangs of poverty and misery.

The ‘cry of the earth and the cry of the poor’, as Pope Francis pointed out in his famous Encyclical Letter “*Laudato Si’ on Care for our Common Home*” (24 May 2015, nos. 16, 49), are inextricably linked. The earth cries out, on one hand, because of the ineffable harm that human beings, due to their unfettered greed, overbearing attitude and indulgence in materialism and consumerism, inflict upon her, and the poor, on the other hand, cry out since they are the most affected of all by the ugly consequences of the environmental degradation. It is an irony that being least responsible for the crisis, they bear the most brunt.

When human beings without qualms of conscience fail or refuse to recognize they are interconnected with and interdependent on nature and one another, it advances a ‘culture of indifference’ whereby everyone tends to turn a blind eye to the suffering of others. It increasingly makes them turn a deaf ear to human and ecological cries, most especially to the cry of the poor, and victims of violence and injustice.

The taproot we need in the line of developing a counter culture of listening and responding to these cries is the conviction that we as members of one human family are responsible for one another and for mother earth which is “a common heritage, the fruits of which are for the benefits of all” (Pope John Paul II, Message for the World Day of Peace, 1990, no. 8). The ‘wounded creation’ and the ‘wounded humanity’ need healing more than ever through a nurturing of fraternal relationships with one another and with the created world and by uniting all efforts towards it and forging purpose bound alliances. The Document on ‘Human Fraternity’ co-signed by Pope Francis and the Grand Imam of Al-Azhar in Abu Dhabi on 4 February 2019 can serve as a veritable guide in this direction.

As believers grounded in our own respective religious traditions that underscore the primacy of caring for the poor and the earth, may we Christians and Jains, conscious of our shared moral responsibility towards people and our Common Home, join hands with people of all faiths and good will do all that we can to “protecting nature, defending the poor, and building networks of respect and fraternity” (‘Laudato Si’, no. 201)!

Wish you all a happy feast of Mahavir Janma Kalyanak!

A handwritten signature in black ink, starting with a cross symbol and followed by the name Miguel Ángel Ayuso Guixot.

Bishop Miguel Ángel Ayuso Guixot, MCCJ
Secretary

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