



PONTIFICAL COUNCIL
FOR INTERRELIGIOUS DIALOGUE

*Christians and Sikhs:
To Promote Education towards Universal Fraternity*

MESSAGE FOR GURU NANAK PRAKASH DIWAS
2017

Dear Sikh Friends,

1. From the Pontifical Council for Interreligious Dialogue, with great joy, we offer our most auspicious festal greetings to you on the occasion of *Guru Nanak Prakash Diwas*, celebrated this year on the 4th of November. May all your celebrations marking this holy feast strengthen the spirit of belonging and the bond of unity in your families and communities and thereby enhance peace and happiness among you.
2. This year our cherished practice of sharing with you a few thoughts on this occasion focuses on how we, both Christians and Sikhs can promote education towards universal fraternity. This theme, while assuming great relevance and significance in the present day global context of disturbingly growing apathy, indifference, intolerance, hatred and violence, also calls for making greater efforts on our part towards promotion of universal fraternity.
3. More than ever now it is being felt across the globe that universal fraternity as the foundational principle, upon which the edifice of life of humans as individuals and communities must be raised, needs new expressions. Because we are all related to one another as children of God, ensuring education about universal relationality of humans and our responsibility towards one another, as well as, the cosmos, acquires a great importance for our times in order to advance the wellbeing and care of all persons. Echoing this need, Pope Francis unequivocally pointed out that “The common home of all men and women must continue to rise on the foundations of a right understanding of universal fraternity and respect for the sacredness of every human life, of every man and every woman,(and) of created nature” (*Address to the UN General Assembly*, 25 Sept. 2015).
4. But unfortunately, ignorance and bias, greed and selfishness of some continue to create a situation where the ‘other’ tends to be treated as an inferior, a nonperson, or someone to be feared or even eliminated. These destabilise, damage and destroy the bonds of fraternity and fellowship.
5. Promotion of education towards universal fraternity, therefore, requires a prime focus, a renewed fervour and a new expression in shaping mind-sets and educating persons at all levels, starting with the family, the “wellspring of all fraternity” (Pope Francis, *Message for the World Day of Peace*, 2014). It is in

the family that children, led by the example of their parents and other elders begin first to learn to respect, love and care for others; to accept the differences; to be sympathetic towards the less fortunate and to love and care for nature. Educational institutions, religious teachings, the media, Governmental and non-Governmental agencies too have a prominent role to play in inculcating this value among the masses. Interreligious dialogue and action, of course, play a pivotal role in generating peace, harmony and fraternity among people of diverse religious traditions.

6. As believers grounded in our own respective religious traditions and as persons with shared belief that the Fatherhood of God is the foundation of fraternity amongst us, may we, Christians and Sikhs, together with other believers and people of good will, rediscovering our connectedness with and responsibility towards one another and nature, promote, individually and collectively, education towards universal fraternity. Education towards universal fraternity, according to Pope Francis, is nothing but education for peace itself in the complementarity of diverse sensitivities and of proper roles (cf. *Address to Participants in the Plenary Session of the Pontifical Council for Interreligious Dialogue*, 9 June, 2017).

Wish you all, once again, a happy Prakash Diwas of Guru Nanak Dev Ji!

Jean-Louis Card. Tauran

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