



PONTIFICAL COUNCIL FOR
INTERRELIGIOUS DIALOGUE

*Christians and Buddhists Together,
Taking Care of the Environment*

MESSAGE FOR THE FEAST OF HANA MATSURI IN JAPAN
8 APRIL 2016

Vatican City

Dear Buddhist Friends in Japan,

1. The Pontifical Council for Interreligious Dialogue joyfully greets all of you as you commemorate the Birthday of Buddha, *Hana Matsuri*, on the 8th of April. We wish you peace, tranquillity and joy in your hearts, within your families and in your country.
2. This year we write to you inspired by His Holiness Pope Francis's Encyclical Letter, *Laudato Si, On the Care for Our Common Home*. Climate change is a common struggle that we are all facing today. Our common home needs to be cared for, in every place and at every level. Though we all are children of Mother Earth, yet, we continue to cause tremendous damage to the planet resulting in deterioration of the environment, global warming, desertification, exhaustion of resources and extinction of vulnerable species. It is evident that there is a connection between environmental deterioration and human and ethical degradation. We can postpone the imminent ecological catastrophe only if we work together for the common good.
3. Pope Francis notes that "human life is grounded in three fundamental and closely intertwined relationships: with God, with our neighbour and with the earth itself. According to the Bible, these three vital relationships have been broken, both outwardly and within us. This rupture is sin" (*Laudato Si, On the Care for Our Common Home*, n. 66). He further points out that "The violence present in our hearts, wounded by sin, is also reflected in the symptoms of sickness evident in the soil, in the water, in the air and in all forms of life" (*Ibid*, n. 2).
4. We are aware of the close relationship that exist between Buddhist teachings, practices and the environment. Monastic temples were often built in mountainous or forest places, and the monks took attentive care of their surroundings. We also know that Buddhist scholars, teachers, and practitioners are constantly addressing the Eco-crisis by incorporating Buddhist teachings relevant and helpful for cultivating ecological awareness. You also find the roots of the ecological problem in the human heart - greed, hatred, and delusion produce pollution within and without. On the other hand, generosity, compassion, and wisdom produce a certain purity which seeks a balanced and ecologically sound habitat. Buddhists who are environmentally engaged seek to liberate humans from the suffering they are causing for the earth and for themselves. The Buddhist principle of *ahimsa* or non-harming is clearly a foundational core for environmental concerns.
5. Dear Buddhist friends, it is clear that confronting the environmental problems today requires, besides the spiritual dimension, a new opportunity for dialogue regarding how to shape the future of our planet and a new and universal solidarity in this task. We need to move beyond just mere discussion towards action. In all religious traditions, the essence of spirituality lies in the teaching of the interconnectedness among all living beings in the world. As Christians we believe that "Everything is related, and we human beings are united as brothers and sisters on a wonderful pilgrimage, woven together by the love God has for each of his creatures and which also unites us in fond affection with brother sun, sister moon,

brother river and mother earth” (*Ibid*, n.92). The Buddhist ideals similarly express this belief that all beings are connected and in fact that the idea of separateness is merely an illusion.

6. The task of taking care of our common home needs the participation of each person and every religion. Taking the core religious values shared by both our religions as our base, may we work together hand in hand, making our planet a more liveable place, not only for ourselves but also for generations to come. With these sentiments, we join you with our heartfelt greetings as you celebrate the Birthday of Buddha.

Happy *Hana Matsuri* to you all!

Jean-Louis Card. Tauran

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