



PONTIFICAL COUNCIL FOR
INTERRELIGIOUS DIALOGUE

*Christians and Sikhs:
nurturing together families as true centres of humanity*

MESSAGE FOR GURU NANAK JAYANTI
2015

Vatican City

Dear Sikh Friends,

1. The Pontifical Council for Interreligious Dialogue is much pleased to offer its warmest greetings and felicitations as you commemorate on 25th November the five hundred and forty sixth birth anniversary of Siri Guru Nanak Dev (1469-1539). May the celebration of this feast enrich and enliven your hearts and homes with the warmth of love to make your families and communities more and more serene and humane!
2. In our times, there seems to be a gradual erosion of familial values that threaten the very institution of the family, the 'nest' of humanization of persons. Being truly concerned about this global scenario, we deem it opportune to share with you, on this occasion, some thoughts on the need both for Christians and Sikhs, as members of one larger human family, to rise to the challenges and to contribute towards protecting and promoting families as centres of deep humanity.
3. Family founded on sound ethical and spiritual values, unarguably, is the first school of human formation in which children concretely and in a healthy manner experience and learn what it means to be human. Inspired and challenged by the humanness of parents and elders, visibly and tangibly demonstrated not only within the family but also outside, they grow into caring, sharing and forgiving persons in an atmosphere of mutual give and take and with a great sense of self-sacrifice. Their care and concern extends to everyone irrespective of who and what they are and in a special way to the needy and the marginalized. It is the good of the family more than anything else that binds them to a common code of conduct and drives them to work in unison despite the differences they may have. Such a family is home to some of the fundamental elements of peace and therefore is rightly called "the primary agency", "the first and indispensable teacher of peace" (Pope Benedict XVI, *Message for the World Day of Peace*, 2008) and "the primary place of 'humanization' for the person and society" (Pope John Paul II, *Apostolic Exhortation Christifideles Laici*, 40, 1989). Members of these families transcend the confines of their own immediate, adopted and extended families to embrace the whole of humanity as their one large human family.
4. Family becomes what the members are. It is true of the society too whose constituents the families are. If the members of the families are men and women of virtues and values that make them genuinely human- that they respect others as they are and that they open their hearts to others' needs, the society is bound to be one of compassion and sharing, paving the way for equality and peaceful co-existence of all; a lack of them would result in a

rise in individualistic, egoistic and consumerist tendencies whereby indifference gets globalized. The rapid spreading of these tendencies among the members of families renders individuals poor in terms of 'humanness' and makes the humanization process difficult, adversely affecting thus cohesion, cooperation and co-existence within families and in the society.

5. Both of our religions stress the centrality of families in the society. As believers grounded in our own respective religious traditions and as members of larger human family we are concerned about the future of families. May we Christians and Sikhs, therefore, join hands with all believers and people of goodwill in order to nurture 'true family spirit' and to promote effective humanization. Pope Francis' appeal to us is: "...let us care for our families, true schools for the future. Let us care for our families, true spaces of freedom. Let us care for families, true centres of humanity" (*Meeting with Families*, Cathedral of Our Lady of Assumption, Santiago (Cuba), 22 September, 2015).

Wishing you all a happy Prakash Diwas of Guru Nanak Dev Ji!

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