

Buddhists, Christians, Hindus, Jains and Sikhs: In dialogue and collaboration to renew and to re-ignite hope in our times'

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Welcome Address

Your Eminence George Jacob Card. Koovakad
Members of the Dicastery for Interreligious Dialogue

Professor Ambrogio Bongiovanni
Members of Pontifical Gregorian University

Fellow speakers, ladies and gentlemen.

“Jai Jinendra”

It is my great pleasure to add my welcome to you all for this important conference.

I would like to start by paying our respects to HH the late Pope Francis who was a true friend of the Jain faith. During his Ministry we reached a great deal of convergence between the Jain and Catholic positions on several important issues.

We congratulate HH Pope Leo XIV at the start of his papacy and look forward to deepening ties between our two faiths.

Jainism, like Buddhism, believes in the power of the individual soul to achieve liberation through its own efforts, and without a creator God. The soul's journey is driven by its bound karma, or lack of it, and its rebirth covers all life, including plant, insect, and animal.

Therefore, for Jains, all life is sacred, and the soul (or *atma*) within any lifeform is potentially that of a future liberated soul.

To understand 'Hope' in the Jain content is to understand karma. A physical molecule bound through one's own thoughts, words and deeds - in equal measure - that shapes our life, environment and future circumstances as it gives its 'equal and opposite' fruits.

Therefore, logically, a compassionate mind, with an attitude of tolerance, diversity and inclusion, and a disciplined life all eventually lead to positive blessed future, which will re-ignite hope for a better, more peaceful, and harmonious world.

Mahatma Gandhi often called the “Apostle of Peace” taught us to embody the change we seek. He also showed by his own example how whole nations can be moved towards a positive common goal, without conflict or violence.

We pray that this this conference, through our dialogue and collaboration, can create such a movement which using our collective voices and congregations bring renewal, change, and hope in our times.

I wish you all a good conference and a wonderful day.

Thank you.