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VATICAN NOTE ON OCCASION OF BUDDHIST VESAKHA

"Seeking Truth in Freedom: Christians and Buddhists Live in Peace"

VATICAN CITY, MARCH 31, 2011 ([Zenit.org](http://www.zenit.org)).- Here is the letter of the Pontifical Council for Interreligious Dialogue addressed to Buddhists on the occasion of Vesakha, which commemorates the birth, enlightenment and passing away of Buddha.

The message is titled "Seeking Truth in Freedom: Christians and Buddhists Live in Peace," and is signed by Cardinal Jean-Louis Tauran, president of the dialogue council, and Archbishop Pier Luigi Celata, its secretary. Vesakha is observed this year in on April 8 in Japan, May 10 in Korea, China, Taiwan, Vietnam, Singapore and those that follow the Mahayana traditions, and on May 17 in Thailand, Cambodia, Myanmar, Laos and those of the Theravada school.

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Dear Buddhist Friends,

1. On behalf of the Pontifical Council for Interreligious Dialogue I am happy once again to offer heartfelt good wishes to all of you on the occasion of Vesakh/Hanamatsuri. I pray that this annual feast may bring serenity and joy to Buddhists throughout the world.
2. In the light of an exchange of mutual friendship, as in the past, I would like to share with you some of our convictions in the hope of strengthening relations between our communities. My thoughts turn first to the relationship between peace, truth and freedom. In the pursuit of authentic peace, a commitment to seek truth is a necessary condition. All persons have a natural duty to seek truth, to follow it and freely to live their lives in accordance with it (Cf. Second Vatican Ecumenical Council, Declaration on Religious Freedom *Dignitatis Humanae*, no. 1). This human striving for truth offers a fruitful opportunity for the followers of the different religions to encounter one another in depth and to grow in appreciation of the gifts of each.
3. In today's world, marked by forms of secularism and fundamentalism that are often inimical to true freedom and spiritual values, interreligious dialogue can be the alternative choice by which we find the "golden way" to live in peace and work together for the good of all. As Pope Benedict XVI has said, "for the Church, dialogue between the followers of the different religions represents an important means of cooperating with all religious communities for the common good" (Message for the World Day of Peace 2011, no. 11). Such dialogue is also a powerful stimulus to respect for the fundamental human rights of freedom of conscience and freedom of worship. Wherever religious freedom is effectively acknowledged, the

dignity of the human person is respected at its root; by the sincere search for what is true and good, moral conscience and civil institutions are strengthened; and justice and peace are firmly established (Cf. *ibid.*, no. 5).

4. Dear Buddhist friends, we pray that your celebration of Vesakh will be a source of spiritual enrichment and an occasion to take up anew the quest of truth and goodness, to show compassion to all who suffer, and to strive to live together in harmony. Once again allow us to express our cordial greetings and to wish all of you a Happy Feast of Vesakh/Hanamatsuri.

Jean-Louis Cardinal Tauran

President

Archbishop Pier Luigi Celata

Secretary