



**DICASTERY FOR  
INTERRELIGIOUS DIALOGUE**

***Buddhists and Christians Together for a Fully  
Human Civilization***

**MESSAGE FOR THE FEAST OF HANAMATSURI  
2026**

**Vatican City**

Dear Buddhist friends in Japan,

1. On the joyful celebration of Hanamatsuri, the commemoration of the birth of the Buddha, we extend our heartfelt greetings to you. This auspicious occasion is an opportunity for us to renew our shared commitment to building a civilization open to spiritual and moral values — a civilization of love, where justice, peace and human fraternity take deep and lasting root.
2. The year 2026 also marks the fortieth anniversary of the historic gathering of world religious leaders held on 27 October 1986 in Assisi, Italy — the city of Saint Francis, an exemplary witness of interreligious dialogue. In response to the courageous invitation of Pope Saint John Paul II, representatives of diverse religious traditions gathered for the World Day of Prayer with a common resolve to serve peace and authentic human values. That meeting proved to be a turning point in interreligious relations, fostering enduring friendship and cooperation among believers worldwide. The “Spirit of Assisi,” one of its most precious legacies, has been faithfully sustained in Japan, where for thirty-eight years religious leaders have gathered on Mount Hiei to pray for peace.
3. Today, humanity witnesses remarkable progress in understanding and harnessing the material dimensions of life, particularly through rapid developments in artificial intelligence and communication technologies. Yet, such advances are often directed primarily toward economic gain or, regrettably, toward ever-more sophisticated weaponry. At the same time, we observe a troubling erosion of spiritual vision — evident in ongoing conflicts, restrictions on the free practice of religion, widening economic disparities, and a reluctance to welcome migrants in need.
4. In this context, religions are called to illuminate the path toward transcendent values: the search for truth, the pursuit of justice, reverence for human dignity and life, and the strengthening of bonds that unite peoples beyond every difference. As Saint John Paul II affirmed, “God makes himself present in many ways, not only to individuals but also to entire peoples through their spiritual riches, of which religions are the main and essential expressions” (*Redemptoris Missio*, 55). He further observed that although religions are many and varied, “they reflect the desire of men and women down through the ages to enter into a relationship with the Absolute Being” (*Address to the Representatives of the Christian Churches and Ecclesial Communities and of the World Religions*, 27 October 1986).
5. Forty years after Assisi, and in response to the renewed appeal of Pope Leo XIV, we — Buddhists and Christians — once again unite in spirit to renew our pledge

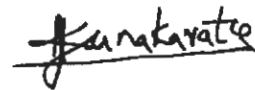
to serve the cause of spiritual awakening and authentic human flourishing. Together, we seek to foster a civilization in which compassion, mutual care and the safeguarding of peace prevail over purely material ambitions. As Pope Leo XIV recently observed: “It is through meditation that we open our hearts, and in prayer that we go beyond ourselves. We recollect ourselves in order to transcend ourselves. This is our witness — offering the immense treasures of ancient spiritualities to contemporary humanity” (*Address to Participants in the International Meeting for Peace organized by the Sant’Egidio Community, 28 October 2025*).

6. On this joyful occasion, we recall Buddha’s exhortation: “Let one’s thoughts of boundless love pervade the whole world — above, below and across — without any obstruction, without any hatred, without any enmity” (*Mettā Sutta*, 8). This appeal for *mettā*, or loving-kindness, invites us to transcend every boundary and to embrace all humanity with compassion. In a world marked by division and uncertainty, such a boundless heart becomes the wellspring of a society rooted in solidarity, reverence for life, and peace.
7. With these sentiments, we renew our warm greetings to our Buddhist friends in Japan and express our sincere hope that we may continue walking together toward a civilization nourished by spiritual wisdom, guided by compassion and strengthened by our shared commitment to peace.

From the Vatican, 21 March 2026



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