Members of the Dicastery for Inter-religious dialogue

Members of the International Jain delegation

Pujya Samaniji

On behalf of the international Jain delegation we would like to offer the Dicastery our sincere condolences on the passing of Cardinal Ayuso. I was fortunate to be at the Vatican on his appointment at Cardinal by the Holy Father, and had the opportunity to congratulate him thereafter. He led many dialogue sessions between the Jains and Catholics, and always in the spirit of understanding and friendship. May his soul find eternal peace.

On behalf of the Institute of Jainology and the international Jain delegation, I would like to start by acknowledging the warm welcome we have received on this trip from Father Santiago and other members of the Dicastery. We are delighted to join you here for this dialogue and It has already been a wonderful few days.

I also want to thank the team at the institute of Jainology for all their work in preparation for this meeting.

Our delegates have come from across be go the world, and I would like to thank them too for their time.

The Institute has had strong relations with the Vatican for three decades and our work together has fostered greater awareness and understanding between our two faiths. The first such delegation in 1995 was during the time of His Holiness Pope John Paul II. Since then, IOJ has led international delegations in 2011 and 2016. In between we have done much work together across areas as diverse as gender and the UN's Sustainable Development Goals.

We are delighted that after the interruption of the pandemic, we can resume our dialogue, through this fourth delegation, to agree on areas of convergence and collaboration.

At this point, I would like to acknowledge Shri Nemubhai Chandaria for his leadership of the Institute over the past 35 years and the foundations he laid for the work that we now do. Nemubhai retired this year and has passed his warm regards to all of you.

We were honoured to have a private audience with the Holy Father yesterday, and for us it symbolised the strong empathy that both faiths have towards the current "cry of the earth and the cry of the poor". We pray for his continued good health and his ministry for the 'benefit of all humanity and its common home'.

The planet we live on is considered by Jains as life since we consider all its plant, insect and animal life as souls with the potential for rebirth as humans. Therefore its destruction through deforestation, unsustainable agriculture, heating through carbon waste and plunder of the seas is considered not just destruction of life, but also the cause of suffering of human life through catastrophic climate consequences.

The poor, who suffer the most, are also prone to discrimination, and the repercussions of war. As we shall discuss later, His Holinesses' comments that 'all humans are created equal...and should live together as brothers and sisters', is also the Jain belief in the inclusivity and tolerance that comes from an acceptance of others with differing beliefs and viewpoints.

Our collective voice on these matters will add to those of concerned governments and other organisations working for the upliftment of the poor, the downtrodden and the environment.

We are delighted that the this dialogue has such distinguished speakers, and we look forward to an insightful discussion thereafter.

We pray that together our dialogue, our collective voices, and our engagement will lead to us working together for a better world.