



OFFICE OF THE ARCHBISHOP

May 2021

To our friends in the Buddhist communities of the Edmonton area:

Warmest greetings on the occasion of the Feast of Vesakh!

This festive time in your religious calendar gives me the opportunity to address you on behalf of the Catholic Archdiocese of Edmonton, to extend my personal best wishes and those of our entire Catholic community, to all the members of your communities residing here in the Edmonton area.

Each year on the feast of Vesakh, the Pontifical Council for Interreligious Dialogue issues a message to Buddhists around the world, encouraging a greater spirit of respect, dialogue and collaboration between Buddhists and Christians.

This year's message, entitled "*Buddhists and Christians: Promoting a Culture of Care and Solidarity*," calls us to a most pressing and important task in our world today, namely: "to discover and practice the solidarity enshrined in our respective religious traditions."

What might these words mean for us, Christians and Buddhists, living here in the Edmonton area where our two communities enjoy the blessings of peaceful co-existence together? What do they mean for us, also, living at this particular moment in history?

As the attached message states: "The suffering caused by the COVID-19 pandemic has made us aware of our shared vulnerability and interdependence." It has left many people experiencing a sense of helplessness, of being ensnared by circumstances too powerful to control. The feeling of isolation is widespread, or of being caught with no way out. Attitudes of intolerance, aggression and self-interest appear before us every day. In such circumstances, comes the challenge to us to promote a culture of care and solidarity.

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During this time of pandemic, let us find ways to overcome the social isolation that many are feeling by making concerted efforts to “check-in” with friends and neighbours. We can do this in so many simple and practical ways: a telephone call, a message of support and comfort, a prayer, help in buying medicines or food, advice, the security of knowing that someone is always there for us in times of necessity. As individuals and as communities, let us “strengthen our bonds of friendship” and “further unite in service to the human family.” Such a witness can only contribute to the well-being of everyone living here in the Edmonton area.

Friends, the authentic message of care and solidarity offered by our two religious traditions is needed more than ever in our day. I want to assure you that our Catholic Church has the greatest interest to work with you to foster these values locally and around the world. As Christians and Buddhists living in the Edmonton area, let us find ways, separately and together, to be witnesses of hope in these troubling times. Please accept this message in a spirit of friendship and joy, and with heartfelt wishes for the feast of Vesakh. May its message of fraternity and good will add to the joy of your celebrations.

With kindest regards,

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read "Richard W. Smith". The signature is fluid and cursive, with a long horizontal stroke extending to the right.

✠Richard W. Smith  
Archbishop of Edmonton