

Jain – Catholic Dialogue

Remarks about JAINA: Prem Jain

May 24th, 2015

Jai Jinendra & Good Morning!

Welcome to Jain-Catholic dialogue, His Eminence Jean-Louis Cardinal Tauran, Cardinal Theodore McCarrick and Bishop Rozanski, Dr. Francis Clooney, Dean Dr. Dipak Jain, Arvind Vora & distinguished guests and friends. I am honored and privileged to speak to you all today about JAINA, the federation of Jain Associations in North America. JAINA is an umbrella organization that preserves and shares Jain Dharma and Jain way of life. JAINA was started in 1981 in Los Angeles with the blessings from Late Acharya Sushil Kumarji and Guru Dev Chitrabhanu Ji. Today, there are over 70 Jain organizations (including 35 Jain Temples) in the US and Canada who are members of JAINA, representing over 150,000 Jains in North America.

JAINA's most popular program is the JAINA Biennial Convention. This year, the 18th JAINA convention will be held in Atlanta from July 2nd to July 5th. Appropriately, the theme of this year's convention is Jainism: World of Non-Violence. Mayor Andrew Young and Congressman John Lewis, both civil rights movement activists with Dr. Martin Luther King, are keynote speakers for the convention. Of course, all of you are invited to attend the convention and join us in spreading our message of non-violence.

Other important programs and projects JAINA creates include our JAINA calendar, which is distributed to 15,000 families to preserve and promote Jain heritage and culture to the western world. Additionally, we have a Jain education committee that provides Jain educational material to our children, youth and adults. Last, Jain Digest is a quarterly magazine covering activities of JAINA and our local centers, community news, and special topics like Jain Diaspora outside of India and North America.

Last year, JAINA was instrumental in establishing four JAINA days to celebrate Jain values. The first day is "Live and Help Live". Under this program, JAINA has launched academic scholarships and loan programs for needy students as well as the JAINA Upliftment Program to provide better education and training for underprivileged families. Our second Day is "Forgiveness Day", which occurs after Paryushan and Das-Lakshana ceremony. Our third day is "Ahimsa Day", which occurs on October 2nd and is Mahatma Gandhi's birthday. Last, we celebrated "World Compassion and Vegan Day" on November 1st. Each of these days was vital in celebrating and encouraging Jain values by our entire community nationwide.

Jainism has a huge effect on the global population in terms of religion, commerce, education, culture, language and cuisine. Ancient teachings of Jainism, especially Ahimsa (non-violence), Aparigraha (non-possessiveness), and Anekantvada (non-absolutism) continue to serve a deep purpose to the world community. In today's world, Jainism stresses on the idea of equality, meditation, yoga, animal rights & minimizing our impact to mother earth. In fact, in October of this year, JAINA will be participating in the 2015 Parliament of the Worlds Religion, as we are at the heart of the interfaith movement.

At this time, I would like to take a few moments of silence for those who lost their lives and the devastation that occurred in the recent earthquake in Nepal.

JAINA World Community Services committee has launched a fund for victims of this tragedy. We are asking all of you to help contribute to this fund. Your donation will be used for humanitarian projects after the relief operation ends and rehabilitations work begins. The first project is building a school in partnership with Acharya Chandana ji (Veerayatan) for children who lost their parents and the second project is to build a hospital in partnership with Jain Sanghaton Group (JSG) of Pune. We hope you join our efforts to help those that are less fortunate and in need.

I would like to thank the Jain Society of Metropolitan Washington, their President and chairman of the board, and the Executive committee for hosting Jain Catholic dialogue. Also, I would like to thank all of you, our distinguished guests, and past Jaina Presidents for attending today's event. As tomorrow is Memorial Day, it is our duty to honor our service men & women. They deserve our appreciation, our thanks, and a moment of our time for their sacrifice for this country.

I will close with this quote from Shri Atamanand ji:

Mass Prayers are helpful for all mankind as they produce vibration of peace, love and well being of all living beings.

Jai Jinendra and Thank You!

Prem Jain, JAINA President