



## AUSTRALIAN CATHOLIC BISHOPS CONFERENCE

### Media Release

Monday, November 8

### **Catholic church wishes Hindus a happy Diwali**

The Catholic Church has issued a message to Hindus, wishing them a happy *Diwali*, the Festival of Lights, one of the oldest and most important feasts on the Hindu calendar.

Echoing the theme of last week's Message to Muslims, marking the approaching end of the Holy Month of Ramadan, the message to Hindus focused on children.

It was issued by Archbishop Michael Fitzgerald, the President of the Pontifical Council for Interreligious Dialogue.

In the message, Archbishop Fitzgerald called for collaboration among people of different faiths in protecting children.

"During this season of *Diwali*, as you strive to overcome darkness through light, evil through goodness and hatred through love, I would like to propose to you, as one of your Christian friends, that we focus our attention on the evils in our society that afflict children," the message said.

These evils included forced labour and conscription, family breakdown, trafficking in organs and persons, sexual abuse, forced prostitution, AIDS and the sale and use of drugs.

"Could not the dialogue between Hindus and Christians take concrete form by working together in support of underprivileged children, who are often the innocent victims of war and violence, inadequate food and water, forced immigration and the many forms of injustice present in today's world?", he asked.

Australian Catholic Bishops Conference President, Archbishop Francis Carroll noted Archbishop Fitzgerald's acknowledgement that such interfaith cooperation already exists, but that more could be done.

"We must always strive to do more to protect the dignity of all human persons, particularly children, who are among society's most vulnerable members," Archbishop Carroll said.

"As we face the future together, we look to our friends from other faiths to walk with us in exploring new ways of ensuring that children, both here in Australia and around the world, are safe and free to take their rightful place in our society.

"I wish all Hindus in Australia a happy *Diwali*."

For more information contact Debra Way on 02 6201 9859 or 0414 880 475.