

# DIWALI MESSAGE BY ARCHBISHOP PETER LOY CHONG



"In each legend, myth, and story of Deepawali lies the significance of the victory of good over evil. All human beings have a deep yearning-reaching out to God. Why? Because human beings are finite, limited, broken, sinful. We desire to be infinite, wholesome, complete – like God."

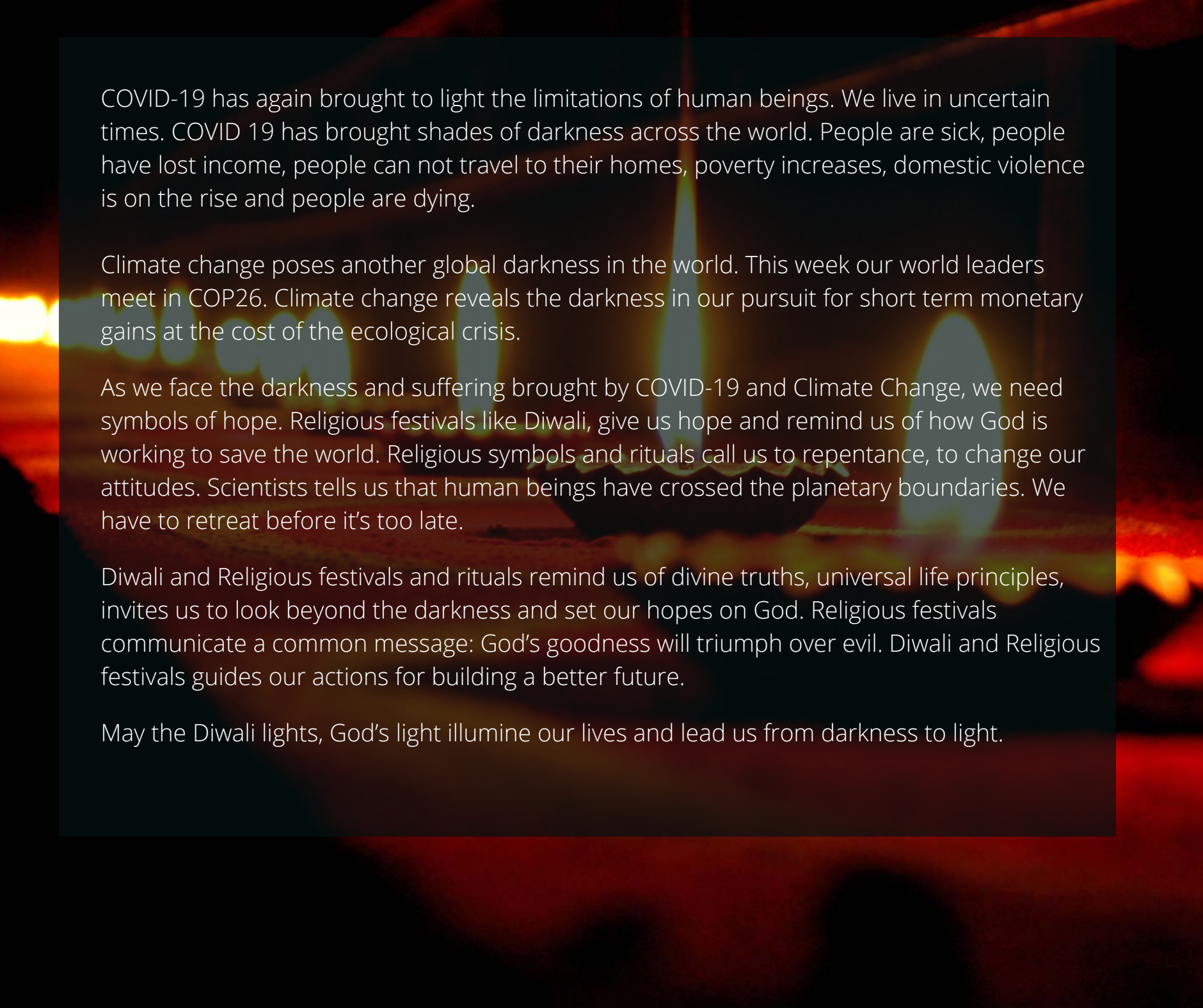
## Diwali – Festival of Hope

On behalf of the Catholic Church and the Fiji Council of Churches we wish our Hindu sisters and brothers and the people of Fiji a Happy Diwali. The Hindu festival, recalls the night when Lord Rama returned to his palace in Ayodhya with his wife Sita and brother Laxman after a 14-year exile. Many people of other faiths also join in the celebration, lighting their homes, yards and streets with oil lamps call divas, to commemorate the victory of light over darkness and of good over evil.

We pray that God who is light and love will remove the darkness of sin from our lives. All of the simple rituals of Diwali have a significance and a story behind them. Homes are illuminated with lights, and firecrackers fill the skies as an expression of respect to the heavens for the attainment of health, wealth, knowledge, peace, and prosperity. According to one belief, the sound of firecrackers indicates the joy of the people living on earth, making the gods aware of their plentiful state. Still another possible reason has a more scientific basis: the fumes produced by the firecrackers kill or repel many insects, including mosquitoes, which are plentiful after the rains. Beyond the lights and fire crackers, Diwali is a time to reflect and RESET our lives.

### **From Darkness Unto Light...**

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COVID-19 has again brought to light the limitations of human beings. We live in uncertain times. COVID 19 has brought shades of darkness across the world. People are sick, people have lost income, people can not travel to their homes, poverty increases, domestic violence is on the rise and people are dying.

Climate change poses another global darkness in the world. This week our world leaders meet in COP26. Climate change reveals the darkness in our pursuit for short term monetary gains at the cost of the ecological crisis.

As we face the darkness and suffering brought by COVID-19 and Climate Change, we need symbols of hope. Religious festivals like Diwali, give us hope and remind us of how God is working to save the world. Religious symbols and rituals call us to repentance, to change our attitudes. Scientists tells us that human beings have crossed the planetary boundaries. We have to retreat before it's too late.

Diwali and Religious festivals and rituals remind us of divine truths, universal life principles, invites us to look beyond the darkness and set our hopes on God. Religious festivals communicate a common message: God's goodness will triumph over evil. Diwali and Religious festivals guides our actions for building a better future.

May the Diwali lights, God's light illumine our lives and lead us from darkness to light.