

'LET YOUR LIGHT SHINE'

ARCHBISHOP PETER CHONG'S
DIWALI MASS HOMILY - 2022

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and fire crackers,
Diwali is a time to
reflect and RESET
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‘LET YOUR LIGHT SHINE’

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 diyas , to commemorate the victory of light over darkness and of good over evil.

The Catholic Church in Fiji joins our Hindu brothers and sisters in wishing you all ‘Happy Diwali’.

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.

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.

Our world is in a vulnerable situation. Scientists state that the earth is almost in a tipping over situation because human beings have crossed over planetary boundaries. The 9/11 twin tower bombing, wars around the world, Covid 19, climate change and the Russian invasion on Ukraine are symptoms of the earth's vulnerability. Small island nations face extinction through sea-level rising. Mining companies are overpowering rural and coastal villages to exploit our natural resources while destroying the environment.

Here in Fiji, we face the uncertainties of our general elections. The next government faces the mammoth task of paying foreign debt while promoting a 'people centered' development. On 6-18th November our world leaders meet in Egypt for COP27. Climate change reveals the darkness in our pursuit for short term monetary gains at the cost of the ecological crisis.

Scientists tells us that human beings have crossed the planetary boundaries. We have to retreat before it's too late. As we face the worlds vulnerability as well as our personal vulnerabilities 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.

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.

JESUS

Each one of us is the bearer of this light. Jesus has taught us: Let your light so shine before men, that they may see your good works, and glorify your Father who is in heaven. (Matthew 5:16)

POPE FRANCIS

"May the observance of this feast even in the midst of anxiety and uncertainty arising from the present pandemic, and its resultant worldwide crises, light up your lives, homes and communities with the hope for a better future"

The Pontifical Council for Inter-religious Dialogue sent "it's most cordial greetings" on Friday to all Hindus on the occasion of Diwali, also known as the festival of lights, on the theme Christians and Hindus: Together bringing light into people's lives in times of despair.

SWAMI VIVEKANANDA: an Indian Hindu monk, philosopher, author, religious teacher, and the chief disciple of the Indian mystic speaks about the LIGHT:

“Bring all light into the world. Light, bring light!

Let light come unto every one; the task will not be finished till everyone has reached the Lord. Bring light to the poor and bring more light to the rich, for they require it more than the poor. Bring light to the ignorant, and more light to the educated, for the vanities of the education of our time are tremendous! Thus bring light to all and leave the rest unto the Lord...”

May this Diwali be an occasion for all of us to light up our inner lamps of truth and integrity, justice and peace. May we effuse the light of wisdom, understanding and tolerance. May our hearts kindled with the fire of God’s love assist the poor and marginalized, the weak and the afflicted, so that those who are less privileged may also feel the joy of Diwali.

As we celebrate this great Indian Festival, we pray for our country, our leaders and our people.

May God bless us with prosperity, tranquility , peace and harmony.

Let each diya we light bring a glow of happiness on our face, enlighten our soul and bring goodness to those around us.

Happy Diwali!