



Board of Deputies President meets Pope to demonstrate strong inter-communal relationship

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16 February 2022 / The President of the Board of Deputies of British Jews, Marie van der Zyl, was honoured to meet His Holiness Pope Francis I at the Vatican this morning, to demonstrate the significant and close relationship between Jewish and Catholic communities today.

Marie, together with the Chief Executive of the Board, Michael Wegier, were in the front row for the Pope's weekly general audience. Once Pope Francis finished his opening remarks, they were the first individuals to be approached by the Pope, and they conversed with His Holiness for a few minutes.

Marie thanked the Pope for the warmth of the relationship between Catholic and Jewish communities in recent decades and stressed the importance of that relationship, particularly in the UK. She also thanked him for his significant efforts towards Holocaust Remembrance and speaking out against antisemitism.

Marie presented the Pope with a gift of a rare, signed volume of the History of the Great Synagogue, by the renowned British Jewish historian, Cecil Roth. The Pope, speaking in English, thanked the Board's representatives for visiting him and was delighted to accept the gift. He said he would pray for them and asked them to pray for him as well.

Marie said: "I was delighted to have the opportunity to meet Pope Francis to discuss issues of importance to both our communities. As two historic religious communities, the relationship between the Jewish and Catholic communities is of great significance and particularly in recent decades since Nostra Aetate, since when it has grown from strength to strength. As faith communities, we will continue to build on this relationship and work together to further combat bigotry, protect religious freedoms and create bridges of understanding between our communities."

As part of the President's visit to Rome, she and Michael also met the city's Chief Rabbi Riccardo Di Segni and other Jewish communal leaders, and received a tour of the Great Synagogue of Rome as well as the Jewish Museum.

Source: [Board of Deputies of British Jews](#).