In Memory of Rev. Dr. John T. Pawlikowski (November 2, 1940 – June 26, 2026)

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Catholic Theological Union President Fr. Enzo Del Brocco's Letter Announcing the Death of John T. Pawlikowski:

June 27, 2026 - Catholic Theological Union has lost one of its founding voices, and the Church has lost one of its most distinguished theologians of Christian-Jewish relations. It is with profound sadness that I share with the Catholic Theological Union community the news that Fr. John T. Pawlikowski, OSM, passed away yesterday morning.

Although I had only a brief opportunity to know John personally during my first year as President of Catholic Theological Union, I came to appreciate the extraordinary breadth of his legacy. At virtually every gathering dedicated to interreligious dialogue that I attended on behalf of CTU, colleagues spoke of John with profound respect and gratitude. It became quickly clear to me that John’s life and work have become an enduring part of CTU’s identity and one of the defining ways our institution is recognized within the global community of interreligious dialogue.

As one of CTU's founding faculty members, John helped shape this institution from its earliest years while contributing significantly to the development of Catholic theology in the decades following the Second Vatican Council. Over nearly five decades of teaching, he formed generations of students, scholars, and religious leaders, among them Robert Prevost, now Pope Leo XIV, who

studied Catholic social teaching under him at CTU.

John was one of the world's foremost Catholic theologians of Christian-Jewish relations and among the principal architects of the Church's renewed relationship with the Jewish people in the spirit of *Nostra Aetate*. Through his scholarship, teaching, and decades of dialogue, he demonstrated that authentic encounter with people of other faiths is neither peripheral nor optional but lies at the very heart of the Church's mission and faithful witness.

His contributions to theology and interreligious dialogue earned him worldwide respect. He served for six years as President of the International Council of Christians and Jews, served several terms on the board of the Parliament of the World's Religions, and was deeply involved in the development of the United States Holocaust Memorial Museum. First appointed to the United States Holocaust Memorial Council by President Carter in 1980 and reappointed by successive presidents across four terms, he helped shape the institution’s mission over many years. His landmark works, including *Jesus and the Theology of Israel and Christ in the Light of the Christian-Jewish Dialogue*, helped reshape Catholic theological reflection on Judaism, the Holocaust, and the enduring covenant between God and the Jewish people. As Professor (later Professor Emeritus) of Social Ethics, his scholarship also addressed human rights, economic justice, environmental responsibility, and the ethical challenges facing contemporary society, reflecting his conviction that theology must always serve justice and human dignity.

John’s legacy is inseparable from the story of Catholic Theological Union. The values that shaped his life and work continue to shape our own: rigorous theological scholarship, dialogue across religious traditions, justice, care for our common home, and reconciliation. These commitments remain at the heart of our mission and will continue to guide the generations of students, scholars, and religious leaders formed at CTU.

On behalf of the Catholic Theological Union community, I extend our deepest condolences to the Servite Order, to Fr. John’s family and friends, to his former students and colleagues, and to the many Jewish, Christian, and interreligious partners whose lives he touched. We give thanks to God for his extraordinary life of scholarship, dialogue, and faithful service.

The most fitting tribute we can offer is to carry forward the work to which John devoted his life: pursuing theological scholarship with intellectual rigor and humility, deepening friendship and dialogue across religious traditions, defending the dignity of every human person, caring for our common home, and bearing witness to justice, reconciliation, and peace.

May he rest in the peace of Christ. May his memory continue to be a blessing, and may his legacy inspire generations to come.

Fr. Enzo Del Brocco, CP
President
Catholic Theological Union

John Pawlikowski was the recipient of many honors, including:

- CCJR's Shevet Achim Award
- Honorary President of the International Council of Christians and Jews
- Honorary doctorate from the Sacred Heart Seminary and School of Theology in Milwaukee, and the Sister Rose Thering Award from its Lux Center for Catholic Jewish Studies
- The Eternal Light Award of Saint Leo University in Florida
- Legacy Award from the United States Holocaust Memorial Museum

- Anti-Defamation League Interfaith Award

Video Interview: "John Pawlikowski Tells How He Entered the Field of Jewish-Christian Relations." May 22, 2020. Courtesy of Dr. Malka Simkovich. [video]

Source: Council of Centers on Jewish-Christian Relations.