



Nostra Aetate at 60: A Two-Day Catholic-Jewish Encounter in Jerusalem

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From 11–12 February 2026, the Commission for Religious Relations with the Jews (CRRJ) and the International Jewish Committee for Interreligious Consultations (IJCCJ) held a joint gathering in Jerusalem marking the 60th anniversary of Nostra Aetate. The meeting included plenary sessions, round-table discussions, visits to sites in the Old City, and a public evening of dialogue and music. Fr. Piotr Zelazko, the Vicar, took an active part throughout the sessions, together with Fr. Benny who also contributed musically during the Wednesday evening public event.

The two-day conference “**Nostra Aetate at 60**” took place at the Orient Hotel in Jerusalem, bringing together Catholic and Jewish leaders, scholars, and practitioners committed to deepening the relationship between the two faith communities. The gathering opened on Wednesday, 11 February, with a group departure to the Old City and a meeting with **Cardinal Pierbattista Pizzaballa**, Latin Patriarch of Jerusalem, at his residence in the Christian Quarter. Participants then visited the **Tower of David Jerusalem Museum**, setting the tone for an encounter rooted both in history and in the shared life of the city.

The academic program began in the afternoon with **Session 1**, dedicated to “The History and Achievements of Nostra Aetate,” presented by Dr. Marcie Lenk and Fr. Christian Rutishauser, S.J., followed by **Session 2**, “The Legacy and Future Challenges of Nostra Aetate,” featuring contributions from Prof. Karma Ben-Johanan and Bishop Etienne Vetö. After these sessions, participants broke into **round-table discussions** reflecting on the continued relevance and future direction of Catholic–Jewish dialogue.

A key highlight of the day was the Public Session on Wednesday evening. Moderated by journalist Matti Friedman, the event brought together Cardinal Kurt Koch and Rabbi Mark Dratch for opening reflections, followed by a panel including Rabbi Noam Marans, Bishop Rafic Nahra, Ms. Carole Nuriel, and Bishop Etienne Vetö.

During this public gathering, Fr. Benny represented our Vicariate in the musical component of the evening, contributing to a moving artistic segment that included the Yasmeeen choir of the Magnificat Institute and the Amen Jerusalemite Interfaith Leadership Circle with the Zion Ensemble. The musical part was introduced by Fr. Piotr, the Vicar of St. James and Rabbi Tamar Appelbaum from Zion Community.

The second day, Thursday 12 February, focused on anthropological and ethical dimensions central to interreligious dialogue. **Session 3**, “The Infinite Dignity of the Human Person,” was presented by Sister Catherine Droste and Rabbi Dr. Eugene Korn, while **Session 4**, “Religious Freedom and Responsibility in a Pluralistic World,” featured Fr. Paul O’Callaghan and Rabbi Dr. Daniel Polish. These discussions reaffirmed the shared commitment of both traditions to human dignity, justice, and peaceful coexistence.

The meeting concluded on Thursday afternoon, closing two days filled with thoughtful exchange, historical reflection, and renewed dedication to the path opened by Nostra Aetate sixty years ago.

Source: [Saint James Vicariate For Hebrew Speaking Catholics in Israel](#).