



# Rabbis and scholars thank Pope for sowing friendship amidst animosity

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**In a letter to Pope Francis, a group of Rabbis and scholars of Jewish-Christian dialogue express gratitude to Pope Francis for his “outstretched hand to Jews worldwide” and for “his active opposition to anti-Semitism and anti-Judaism.”**

“The Church’s effort to cultivate understanding where there was once rivalry, friendship, where there was once animosity, and empathy where there was once contempt, has transformed our communities and left an everlasting imprint on our histories. We find in Your Holiness’ letter an affirmation of this commitment, evermore significant at this time when instability threatens even relationships which have been cultivated for many decades”.

These words are the heart of a letter sent to Pope Francis by several Rabbis and Scholars of Jewish-Christian dialogue. The letter is co-signed by Rabbi Jehoshua Ahrens (Frankfurt/Bern), Rabbi Yitz Greenberg (Jerusalem/ New York), Rabbi David Meyer (Paris/Rome), Karma Ben Johanan (Jerusalem) and Malka Zeiger Simkovich (Chicago). The same group had written to the Holy Father to invoke closeness between Jews and Christians, following the massacre of 7 October and the surge in anti-semitism and anti-Judaism around the world.

On 2 February, Pope Francis sent a letter to his “Jewish brothers and sisters in Israel”, ensuring them of the Church’s solidarity with the Jewish people, and at the same time, calling for a swift reconciliation among all people of all ethnic backgrounds and religious confessions living in the Holy Land.

The signatories quoted Rabbi Moshe Ibn Ezra to express their gratitude to the Holy Father, writing that “words that emanate from the heart, enter the heart”. Indeed, the letter continued, “we take comfort in your extension of a hand to Jews around the world, and especially in Israel, in this time of great distress”, and in your “commitment to actively resist antisemitism and anti-Judaism, which have recently gained intensity in dimensions unknown to most of us during our lifetime”.

“We are living in a historic moment that necessitates persistence, hope, and courage”, the letter reads. “The transformative power of Nostra Aetate is an inspiration for us, demonstrating that brotherhood can be retrieved even in the most difficult of conflicts. We join our Catholic brothers and sisters in their trust that religions can be creative forces, imbued with the power to open paths which otherwise remain closed”.

Professor Karma Ben Johanan, who coordinated the group of signatories, explained that the Pope’s letter had been “an invitation to deepen the dialogue between our communities. Almost 60 years since Vatican Council II launched a new era in Jewish-Christian relations, she said, “Today we have to renew our relations through the tribulations of these sad times”. However, she added, despite current tensions, “we are convinced that our relations are solid enough to overcome them and to move forward, but there is still much work to be done”.

The letter ends by recalling the “pain of this land’s inhabitants, be they Jews, Christians, Muslims, and others, pains us all, and impacts our lives and our futures. The obligation to heal this fractured

world, beginning here and now, penetrates our being, holding a mountain over us like a barrel”.

Source: [Vatican News](#).