



Some Jewish reservations to the April 4 , 2008 Statement of the Vatican Secretariat of State

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In a [statement](#) by the Secretariat of State of the Vatican of April 4, 2008, the Vatican confirms that the new prayer "in no way intends to indicate a change in the Catholic Church's regard for the Jews which has evolved from the basis of the Second Vatican Council, particularly the Declaration *Nostra Aetate*."

However, Jews content that the statement does not go far enough. It does not rule out any attempt by the Catholic Church to convert Jews.

The strongest protests against the new prayer had been expressed by representatives of Italian Jews. The senior rabbi of Rome, Riccardo Di Segni ? the successor of Rabbi Elio Toaff, who had welcomed John Paul II to the synagogue and had been in conversations with him for years ? has suspended plans for future meetings with representatives of the Vatican even after the statement of the Secretariat was released.

Rabbi Riccardo Di Segni was asked for the reason of the unilateral interruption of the dialogue.

The Rabbi answered: "The most disquieting element of this affair is not so much the prayer itself as its being re-proposed, in consideration of the historical progress already made and still underway. By this progress I mean the relationship between the Christian world and the Jews, marked in past centuries by various forms of hostility, and by a deeply rooted incomprehension. According to this incomprehension, ever since its origins Christianity, which was born from Judaism, has asked itself why the Jews, from whose bosom Jesus was born, did not accept him as God and Savior. This incomprehension has been carried forward since then, and has always marked our relations, in some way. And, not infrequently, in dramatic fashion."

Abraham Foxman, director of the Anti-Defamation League, issued the following reaction to the Vatican statement:

"On this issue the Vatican has taken two steps forward and three steps backward. It is reassuring that the Catholic Church remains committed to the ideals of *Nostra Aetate* and to an approach toward relations with the Jewish people based on cordiality and mutual respect.

Yet it is troubling that the statement still does not specifically say that the Catholic Church is opposed to proselytizing Jews. While they say it does not change *Nostra Aetate*, the statement does not go far enough to allay concerns about how the message of this prayer will be understood by the people in the pews. The Latin prayer is still out there, and stands by itself, and unless this statement will be read along with the prayer, it will not repair or mitigate the impact of the words of the prayer itself, with its call for Jews to recognize Jesus as the savior of all men and its hope that ?all Israel will be saved.?

The impact of those words is undeniable, and we wish the Vatican had explicitly rejected calls to conversion or to proselytizing Jews."

Rabbi Eugene Korn, executive director of the Center for Christian-Jewish Understanding of Sacred Heart University, said in an e-mail that the Vatican statement does not address the core Jewish concern about the Good Friday Prayer: "Will there be new attempts — in dialogue, formal relations, or informal relations — to convert Jews to the Church?"