



The Dignity of the Human Being. Children in Jewish and Catholic Teaching

30.11.2018

16th Bilateral Commission Meeting of the Delegations of the Chief Rabbinate of Israel and the Holy See's Commission for Religious Relations with the Jews.

1. Cardinal Peter Turkson as chair of the Catholic delegation welcomed the Jewish partners to Rome invoking Divine blessing on the deliberations. Rabbi Rasson Arusi responded expressing the joy and satisfaction of the Jewish delegation to be reunited in this joint holy endeavour and quoted in prayer Psalm 90:17, "may the favour of the Lord our God rest on us and establish the work of our hands for us".

2. The Bilateral Commission convened on the occasion of the United Nations' Universal Children's Day and accordingly devoted its deliberations to the subject of human dignity with special reference to the child.

3. The Commission noted the significant advance in modern society regarding the subject of human rights as evidenced in the Universal Declaration on Human Rights and in particular the 1989 Convention on the Rights of the Child. These principles of the inviolability of human life and the inalienability of human dignity find their full expression in relationships between the individual and the Divine and the individual and his/her neighbour; with responsibility to provide for such expression throughout society. We have a special obligation towards the more vulnerable members of our communities and in particular towards children, the guarantors of posterity, who are not yet able to express their full potential and to protect themselves.

4. The importance of identifying the ethical foundation for such affirmations was discussed in depth, noting that these ideals are already rooted with transcendent validity in our shared biblical patrimony that declares that the human being is created in the Divine Image (cf. Gen 1:26-27; 5:1-2).

5. Respect for the personal dignity of children must also take the form of offering the widest range of stimuli and instruments to develop their reflective and operative capacities. Not only is it necessary that children perceive themselves to be the object of appropriate and loving attention, but also that they be dynamically engaged in such a way that their cognitive and practical capabilities are stimulated. In order for this development to take place in consonance with the aforementioned values, it is necessary to nurture authentic and stable loving relationships, and provide for adequate nutrition, healthcare and protection, as well as the necessary religious education, schooling, informal learning and creativity.

6. Society as a whole, but in particular parents, teachers and religious guides, have a special responsibility regarding the moral and spiritual growth of the child. In their deliberations on the rights of the child to autonomy and liberty, the members of the Bilateral Commission highlighted the tension between guaranteeing maximal freedom of choice and ensuring protection and disciplined guidance. All of this demands that we refrain from any instrumentalization of another person, whose dignity should always be seen as a goal in and of itself.

7. The members of the Bilateral Commission were hosted by Pope Francis at a special audience where he affirmed his own commitment to their work and the advancement of Catholic-Jewish relations: “We are brothers and the children of One God, and we must work together for peace hand in hand”, he said. At this meeting the Pope welcomed the information provided to him regarding a draft interreligious position-paper on end-of-life matters with particular reference to the dangers of legalizing euthanasia and physician-assisted suicide instead of providing palliative care and maximal respect for God given life.

8. Concluding their deliberations, the members of the Bilateral Commission gave thanks to the Almighty for His blessings upon their lives and work; and for His gifts, not least of these being children themselves, who are described thus in Psalm 127:3, “Children are a gift from the Lord, the reward of the fruit of the womb.” To ensure their healthy spiritual development, it is particularly important to familiarize them with the Biblical patrimony that both Jews and Catholics share.

9. Furthermore the Commission urges that these texts of Holy Scripture should be studied throughout their respective communities. In addition, the teaching of *Nostra aetate* (n. 4) and subsequent documents pertaining to Jewish-Christian relations, should be widely known and disseminated throughout both communities, providing impetus for the ongoing blessed reconciliation and cooperation between Jews and Catholics for the betterment of their faithful and society as a whole.

Rome,

November 20th, 2018 – Kislev 12th, 5779

Rabbin Rason Arusi
(Chairman of the Jewish Delegation)

Rabbi David Rosen

Rabbi Pr Daniel Sperber

Rabbi Pr Avraham Steinberg

Mr. Oded Wiener

Cardinal Peter Turkson
(Chairman of the Catholic Delegation)

Archbishop Pierbattista Pizzaballa
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Archbishop Bruno Forte

Bishop Giacinto-Boulos Marcuzzo

Msgr Pier Francesco Fumagalli

Fr. Norbert J. Hofmann S.D.B.

Source: [Vatican website](#).