# Address to a Delegation from B'nai B'rith International

01.07.2022 | Pope Francis

**Monday, 30 May 2022.**

**Dear friends,**

I am happy to welcome once more a Jewish delegation, since a number of such visits in the past two years had to be postponed because of the pandemic. Your organization has a long history of contacts with the Holy See, beginning in the years following the publication of the Declaration *Nostra Aetate* of the Second Vatican Council.

Throughout these years, you have been tirelessly committed to humanitarian causes. Persons in need have a right to receive help and solidarity from the larger community; more than anything else, they have a right to hope. If the duty to care for others is incumbent upon every member of our human family, it applies even more to those of us who are Jews and Christians. For us, helping the needy also means respecting the will of the Most High who, in the words of the Psalm, “protects the stranger and upholds the orphan and the widow” (Ps 146:9). The Lord watches over the poor and those on the peripheries of society.

Helping the lowly, the poor, the sick: this is the most concrete way to promote greater human fraternity. When we think of many conflicts and dangerous forms of extremism that jeopardize the security of people in our world today, we cannot help but recognize that frequently the greatest risk factor is represented by material, educational and spiritual poverty, which then becomes fertile terrain for fueling hatred, anger, frustration and radicalism.

In our time, dear friends, world peace is also threatened by forms of particularism and nationalism, driven by selfish interests and unbridled greed. This increases the risk, in the end, of even greater contempt for human dignity and rights. The antidote to this escalation of evil is remembrance: remembrance of the past, remembrance of its wars, remembrance of the Shoah and of countless other atrocities.

Our shared spiritual memory, as the pages of sacred Scripture attest, brings us back to the primordial act of violence: to Cain who killed his brother Abel. “Then the Lord said to Cain: ‘Where is Abel, your brother?’ Cain said, ‘I don’t know; am I my brother’s keeper?’” (Gen 4:9). Cain denies knowing the whereabouts of the brother he has just killed. He simply does not care. Violence is always accompanied by lying and indifference.

*Where is your brother?* We should all be troubled by this question, and repeat it often to ourselves. We cannot take the Lord’s dream of a world filled with brothers and sisters, and replace it with a world of only children, marked by violence and indifference. In the face of violence, in the face of indifference, the pages of Scripture show us the face of our brothers, our sisters. They present us with “the challenge of the other”. That is the measure of our fidelity to who we are, to our common humanity: it is measured by our fraternity, by our concern for others.

Striking in this regard are the great questions that, in Scripture, the Almighty addresses to mankind from the very beginning. He asks Cain: “Where is your brother?”, even as he had asked Adam: “Where are you?” (Gen 3:9). Both questions are linked by the same question: *Where*? We cannot

be fully ourselves without watching out for our brothers and sisters. We cannot find the Eternal One without welcoming our neighbour.

It is good, then, that we should help one another, because in each one of us, in every religious tradition and in every human society, there is always a risk that we can hold grudges and foster disputes against others, and at times do so in the name of absolute and even sacred principles. This is the deceptive temptation of violence; this is the evil crouching at the door of the heart (cf. Gen 4:7). This is the illusion that disputes can be resolved by violence and war. Yet violence always generates more violence, weapons only produce death, and war is never the solution but a problem, a failure.

For this reason – the account of Genesis continues – “the Lord put a mark on Cain, lest any who came upon him should kill him” (v. 15). This shows the “strategy” of Heaven: to break the cycle of violence, the spiral of hatred, and to start protecting one another. It is my hope that you will persevere in this, that you will continue to protect our sisters and brothers, especially those most vulnerable and neglected. This we can do together: we can work for the poor, for peace, for justice, and for the protection of creation.

Even before I became Pope, the promotion and deepening of Jewish-Catholic dialogue was something close to my heart – as a boy at school I had Jewish friends – , for it is a dialogue made up of encounter and concrete gestures of fraternity. Let us go forward together, on the basis of our shared spiritual values, to defend human dignity against all violence and to seek peace. May the Almighty bless us, so that our friendship may grow and we can work together for the common good.

Thank you. **Shalom!**

Source: Vatican.