



American Jewish Committee Advances Catholic-Jewish Relations with Visit to Vatican

01.05.2023 | American Jewish Committee

April 2, 2023 — Vatican City. American Jewish Committee (AJC) President Michael Tichnor and CEO Ted Deutch led a leadership delegation to the Vatican.

At a festive Shabbat dinner for Catholic and Jewish leadership, Tichnor presented AJC's gift to Pope Francis, which was received by Cardinal Leonardo Sandri, vice dean of the College of Cardinals, on behalf of the ailing pontiff. The gift, a unique Tree of Life image in which the nanochips of the Holy Scriptures of Christianity, Judaism and Islam are embodied, includes quotes from all three Abrahamic traditions referring to the Divine word as the Tree of Life.

"Pope Francis continues to lead the way of mutual respect and love between all people and especially in the family of Abraham, and this artwork of beauty, both physical and spiritual, encapsulates that message, which, we pray, will extend to all humanity," said Tichnor. "We deeply appreciate the special relationship we have enjoyed with the Holy See for some sixty years. We are moved to be with our Catholic friends as we all celebrate the tenth anniversary of Pope Francis's pontificate."

"We are so grateful for the transformation in Catholic-Jewish relations and for the privilege AJC has enjoyed and continues to enjoy as a central actor in this ongoing historic reconciliation, which Pope Francis has taken to even greater heights," said Deutch. "Pope Francis's love and care for the Jewish People is universally known. We are grateful for his strong voice condemning antisemitism."

Upon receiving the papal gift, Sandri declared that "Pope Francis will be very happy with this beautiful gift, especially because it expresses his vision for human fraternity in our world."

In response to Pope Francis's hospitalization, the AJC delegation gathered outside the main synagogue in Rome to pray for his full and speedy recovery.

AJC, the global advocacy organization for the Jewish people and the worldwide Jewish pioneer of interfaith understanding, enjoys close, cooperative relations with the Vatican, as well as with American Catholic leadership. AJC played a central role in the international contacts between the Holy See and the Jewish people during the Second Vatican Ecumenical Council, and has continued to be a leader in advancing Catholic-Jewish relations since the promulgation of *Nostra Aetate*.

This three-day AJC leadership mission to the Vatican was the third of Pope Francis's papacy. "I am very grateful to you for the distinguished contribution you have made to dialogue and fraternity between Jews and Catholics," the Pope told an AJC leadership delegation in February 2014.

In March 2019, addressing an AJC leadership delegation, the pope spoke of the church's longstanding relationship with AJC and the value of interreligious dialogue. "Your commitment to Jewish-Christian dialogue goes back to *Nostra Aetate*, a milestone in our journey of fraternal reckoning," he said.

In addition to meeting with cardinals, archbishops, and bishops – the senior leaders of the Catholic Church - AJC's delegation met with the ambassadors to the Holy See of the United States and Israel, the leaders of the Roman and wider Italian Jewish community, and American seminarians at the Pontifical North American College.

The delegation of 40 AJC leaders included Rabbi David Rosen, AJC International Director of Interreligious Affairs, who was knighted by the Vatican in 2005; Rabbi Noam Marans, AJC Director of Interreligious and Intergroup Relations; Lisa Palmieri-Billig, AJC Representative in Rome and Liaison to the Holy See; and AJC Interreligious Affairs Chair Amy Levin Ragen.

Source: [American Jewish Committee](#).