



Biannual Meeting of the Dialogue of The Canadian Conference of Catholic Bishops and The Canadian Rabbinic Caucus

01.01.2021 | JCR

Ottawa – The national bilateral dialogue of the Canadian Conference of Catholic Bishops (CCCB) and the Canadian Rabbinic Caucus met for its biannual meeting 16-17 November 2020 by videoconference due to the ongoing challenges caused by the COVID-19 pandemic. Over the course of the two-day online meeting, the Jewish and Catholic members reflected theologically and pastorally on COVID-19, its effects on their lives and their respective faith communities.

The dialogue members broke open the Book of Psalms to inspire their reflections of the pandemic, viewing it through the lens of faith, and focusing on the theme of “*Ad Mata!?*”, “How long!?” found in psalms 6, 13, 62, 74 and others. A reoccurring theme was highlighted whereby, in part, the Psalmist prays for deliverance in the midst of a calamity, speaks of the faithfulness of God in the midst of waiting, reiterates trust and dependence on the Lord, and continually acknowledges the fragility and precariousness of the human condition.

Psalm 44 (43) was likewise chosen as a focal point for study wherein the Psalmist calls on God to act: “Rise up, come to our help. Redeem us for the sake of your steadfast love.” (Ps. 44 v. 26). In both instances, the dialogue members found the cry of the Psalmist fitting and familiar in light of the many contemporary challenges and questions arising from the pandemic and the difficulties it poses.

The dialogue also conducted a brief survey of some of the theological, spiritual, sacramental, biblical and moral responses to the pandemic published to date in popular magazines and journals. The Jewish and Catholic members found many similarities in these responses from both traditions, encompassing a broad range of viewpoints.

Finally, the dialogue members shared with one another some of the more practical implications of the pandemic on the life of the parishes and synagogues in Canada. In addition to acknowledging the challenges, the dialogue members noted some emerging opportunities, which included broader outreach to their communities via videoconference and a rediscovered focus on the primary importance of family life.

While the pandemic has caused significant challenges for all peoples, the Jewish and Catholic dialogue members underscored the particular heartache and difficulty of those who were unable to grieve and mourn properly the recent deaths of loved ones due to the physical distancing requirements.

Following this meeting, the national bilateral dialogue of the Canadian Rabbinic Caucus and the Canadian Conference of Catholic Bishops released a document entitled: “**The Psalms: A Doorway to Jewish – Catholic Dialogue.**” This resource is free and available on the respective websites of the [Canadian Conference of Catholic Bishops](#) and the [Canadian Centre for Israel and Jewish Affairs](#).

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Source : [Canadian Conference of Catholic Bishops](#)