



Jewish-Christian Dialogue: Commitment and Challenges

30.04.2014 | Deborah Weissman, ICCJ President

A few days ago the International Council of Christians and Jews (ICCJ) announced opening of registration for this year's annual conference in Buenos Aires, Argentina, Aug 19-21. This is what Dr. Deborah Weissman, ICCJ President, wrote about the theme of the conference:

The 2014 ICCJ conference will be held this year in Buenos Aires, Argentina — the first time we have met in Latin America since 2001 in Montevideo. Much has happened on the continent in the interim and a new generation of people involved in dialogue is emerging. Within the ICCJ, as well, there has been significant change, including the adoption of the 2009 Berlin Document, “A Time for Re-commitment.” The situation in the Middle East has impacted negatively on inter-religious relations throughout the world, and the worsening condition of many economies has exacerbated the problem of xenophobia.

There are some more hopeful signs, one of which is the election of a Buenos Aires native who became Pope Francis, and the new spirit he has brought not only to the Catholic Church but also to dialogue circles. A close friend and colleague of his, Argentinean Rabbi Abraham Skorka, will serve as chairman of our conference.

The first day of the conference will be devoted to the recent history of the dialogue, giving background for the international visitors on the uniqueness of the Latin American experience, with some perspectives from abroad. Context is crucial in dialogue — we must always be respectful of, and sensitive to indigenous spiritual traditions, political realities, and local social and cultural challenges.

The second day will explore theological aspects of the Jewish-Christian dialogue and relationship. Latin Americans have made a profound contribution to theologies of liberation. It is important to integrate into these approaches an accurate understanding of Judaism and of Christian-Jewish relations.

The third day will be on religious and cultural identities, how they are affected by the dialogue, and how they also affect it. Many Latin American countries have Catholic majorities, but with growing Protestant minorities. The Jewish community in Argentina in particular has changed significantly in the last decades of the 20th century. From a community that was largely secular-ethnic-cultural, it has now developed diverse ways of expressing Jewish religious identity and spirituality. We will consider what it means to be Christian or Jewish in Latin America today and offer comparisons with other parts of the world. Within the context of the bilateral relationship, we will consider, as well, trilateral

dialogue, involving Jews, Christians and Muslims.

We will mark together a tragic anniversary, twenty years since the bombing of the AMIA Jewish community center, which was the most devastating attack on a Diaspora Jewish community since the Shoah.

But, as usual, there will be plenary sessions and smaller workshops, food, fellowship, music, denominational prayers and shared meditative moments. We will also explore the fascinating and beautiful city of Buenos Aires.

For further information (in English and Spanish) and registration see:

www.iccj.org