



The Catholic Church and the Jewish People

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In his address to the 2003 Annual Conference of the International Council of Christians and Jews in Utrecht, Cardinal William H. Keeler, Archbishop of Baltimore, Maryland (USA) reviews recent developments in Catholic-Jewish relations, with special attention to the contributions of Pope John Paul II.

The Catholic Church and the Jewish People

[William H. Keeler](#)

It is a great joy to accept the invitation of Father John Pawlikowski, a friend for many years and a companion on an historic Catholic-Jewish pilgrimage to Poland in 1992. You are already familiar with many of the very significant and positive developments that have taken place in the relationships between the Catholic Church and the Jewish people in the last four decades. My intention is to review some of them with a special emphasis on Pope John Paul II, who has been so personally dedicated to efforts to build bridges between church and synagogue.

Pope John Paul has committed himself to making the teachings of the Second Vatican Council come alive in the thinking of Catholic people around the world.

At the Council, Cardinal Augustin Bea introduced the first draft of what eventually became the Declaration on the Relationship Between the Catholic Church and Non-Christian Religions (*Nostra Aetate*). It seems to me like yesterday when he stood before us at the Council to speak with persuasive logic of the request of Pope John XXIII, before he died, that the Council take up this issue.

Cardinal Bea referred to what had occurred under Nazi rule in Europe during World War II. He repeated the injunction of Pope John XXIII that the Council should take whatever steps were necessary to be sure that never again would the Christian scriptures or the teachings of the Church be misused in a way that might contribute to anti-Semitism.

The Council document reminds Catholics of several points, but I will mention two of these now as bases for our reflection:

1. Although some Jews opposed the spread of the gospel of Jesus, "nevertheless, according to the Apostle, the Jews still remain most dear to God because of their fathers, for he does not repent of the gifts he makes nor of the calls he issues (cf. Romans 11:28-29). Since the spiritual patrimony common to Christians and Jews is thus so great, this sacred Synod [The Second Vatican Council] wishes to foster and recommend that mutual understanding and respect which is the fruit above all of biblical and theological studies and of brotherly dialogues."
2. With specific reference to texts of the Christian scriptures, the Council points out that what happened to Jesus in "his suffering cannot be blamed upon all the Jews then living, without distinction, nor upon the Jews of today." What follows is the basis for catechetical

instruction to ensure that neither Christian scriptures nor Christian teaching could be used in any way that would be an excuse for anti-Semitism. In a word, the dream of Pope John XXIII had been endorsed as a way of acting by the highest authority in the Catholic Church, the Pope and bishops acting together in an ecumenical council.

In the years since the Second Vatican Council, we have tried to apply this document to preaching in our churches and to our teaching in seminaries, universities, colleges and, perhaps most important of all, in the religious education classes for children of every age.

Pope John Paul II made me personally aware of how closely he had taken to his heart the challenges and possibilities of Catholic-Jewish relations when on September 1, 1987, he received the International Liaison Committee of Catholics and Jews at his residence at Castelgandolfo. He spoke of what had occurred in his native land of Poland on September 1, 1939. On that day the Nazis invaded the country and began a period of persecution. He recalled how he had returned to his own hometown after the war to discover that many who had been his friends and classmates were no more. He spoke also of his own meditation that very morning on the meaning of the Exodus and of how he could understand that the Jewish people would see in Israel today a fulfillment of ancient prophecy.

The year before, Pope John Paul had become the first Pope since St. Peter to visit a synagogue. Since then, in all of his trips, he has tried to meet with local Jewish leaders. That includes his trips to the United States. I recall vividly his meeting with the Jewish leadership in Miami in 1987 and in New York in 1995. One was very formal and the other very informal. Both were occasions when heart spoke to heart. At Miami, Pope John Paul specifically commended our dialogue efforts in the United States and our commitment to introduce a formal curriculum on the Holocaust in our Catholic schools. This we have succeeded in doing, with advice from representatives of various Jewish groups. The outline of the curriculum has now been distributed nationally with the endorsement of our United States Conference of Catholic Bishops.

Also, in the United States, we have been able to introduce into our published liturgical resources statements that make clear the teaching of the Councils of Trent (Jesus died because of the sins of all of us) and of Vatican II (What occurred in the suffering and death of Jesus is not to be attributed to the Jewish people as a whole of his day or of any subsequent age).

When Roman Catholics begin to think about the important relationships between the Catholic Church and the Jewish people, we have a history that is both stormy and troubled but, finally, we come to the Second Vatican Council and a profound awareness that we are speaking about a mystery that joins Christians and Jews together.

It is a mystery more fully recognized but not yet fully understood. As Cardinal Walter Kasper has noted recently, "We are at the beginning of the beginning."

I would like to carry forward this reflection, limited as it must be by the mysterious nature of the Jewish-Christian bond, by speaking first of the insights, to which I have just referred, that emerged in *Nostra Aetate*; secondly, by noting how Pope John Paul II has developed these insights in meetings with Jewish representatives including his historic visit to the Jewish synagogue in Rome in April, 1986; and, thirdly, with some theological reflections that seek to take on a step further our theology so that our dialogues may be framed in a way that will relate the mystery of Jewish-Christian relations with the other dimensions of the mystery of the Church. Finally, I wish to underscore the symbolic actions on the part of Pope John Paul II that probably help people everywhere to see that something positive has happened in relationships between the Catholic Church and the Jewish people.

First, then, *Nostra Aetate*. This declaration, as we have seen, affirmed in a public and universal

manner the Church's self-knowledge. In doing so it presented the Church with a dimension of itself that, while evident in the Scriptures, is spoken anew, for this declaration notes that in the very searching "into the mystery of the Church" herself there is found "that spiritual bond linking the people of the New Covenant with Abraham's stock."

The compact formulation given in the Council document has been gradually differentiated in terms of the meaning of this mystery. Leading that clarification has been Pope John Paul II in his writings, his public pronouncements, and his practice.

Pope John Paul's bond with the Jewish people begins in his hometown. How fortunate that Gian Franco Svidercoschi's account of the boyhood friendship of Karol Wojtyła and Jerzy Kluger was published, for in that little book, *Letter to a Jewish Friend*, we are able to get a glimpse of a Catholic and Jewish boy growing up together in Wadowice. They were great friends. They played together; did their homework together; listened to records together. They both suffered the chaos of the Nazi invasion in 1939. Jurek [Jerzy] fled after a long and difficult time. Lolek [Karol] began to flee to the east with his father, just as the Red Army was marching in to "liberate" Poland. He could not leave and returned to Krakow where he worked in the mines and studied theology and, finally, was ordained a priest.

It was only in 1965, having been apart for almost thirty years, that they saw each other again. The then Archbishop of Krakow met him in Rome where Jurek had been living for twenty years. Archbishop Wojtyła told him of the twentieth anniversary of their graduation from the high school in Wadowice, ". . . we did it in our old classroom on the second floor." (Op. cit., p. 88) Their farewell on that November day hints at the vision of Pope John Paul II.

"They both held their hands out to shake them. But then they embraced. As Wojtyła gazed into his eyes, he said something that surprised his friend. Or at least something he was not expecting. "One day all Jews and Christians will be able to meet in this fashion." Kluger did not know what to say. He just said: Let's hope so. Anyway, thank you. Then with a smile: "Bye Lolek." "Bye Yurek." (Op. cit., p. 88)

The vision of Pope John Paul II found its fuller account in his remarks given on March 12, 1979 during his first formal presentation to an audience of representatives of Jewish organizations. There he speaks of the importance of guidelines that had been developed by the Holy See in 1974 (*Guidelines and Suggestions for Implementing the Conciliar Declaration, Nostra Aetate*, No. 4, by the Holy See's Commission for Religious Relations with the Jews.) He points to the central aspects of the mystery of the relationship of Jews and Christians.

First, there is the necessity for Christians to "strive to learn by what essential traits the Jews define themselves in the light of their own religious experience." (*Guidelines and Suggestions for Implementing the Conciliar Declaration, Nostra Aetate*, No. 4, by the Vatican Commission for Religious Relations with the Jews, Prologue.)

Secondly, "In virtue of her divine mission, and her very nature, the Church must preach Jesus Christ to the world (*Ad Gentes*, 2). Lest witness of Catholics to Jesus Christ should give offense to Jews, they must take care to live and spread their Christian faith while maintaining the strictest respect for religious liberty in line with the teaching of the Second Vatican Council (*Dignitatis Humanae*). They will likewise strive to understand the difficulties which arise for the Jewish soul rightly imbued with an extremely high, pure notion of the divine transcendence when faced with the mystery of the incarnate Word." The demand made on Catholics is how to give witness to Christ by respecting the mystery that is found in the hearts and souls of Jews who are our "older brothers."

Now I wish to turn to some reflections of scholars and theologians, including those of Cardinal Walter Kasper, the President of the Pontifical Council for Promoting Christian Unity.

Nostra Aetate quotes St. Paul's letter to the Romans, showing how St. Paul grappled with the relationship between the Christian family and the Jewish people. For him, it was obviously a mystery. Two major truths were in coincidence and he sought a way to state both the tension and its resolution. And so he said God does not call back his gifts; God does not repent of his calls.

One statement of the question as it appeared to Catholics at the beginning of the pontificate of Pope John Paul II was given in the study paper, "Mission and Witness of the Church," by Tommaso Federici for the 1977 meeting in Venice of the International Catholic-Jewish Liaison Committee.

Federici emphasized the "irreversible" nature of the Church's new understanding of its relationship to the Jewish people, arguing on the basis of scriptural and magisterial sources that "none of the inspired Christian sources justifies the notion that the Old Covenant of the Lord with His people has been abrogated or in any sense nullified . . . The Church recognizes that in God's revealed plan, Israel plays a fundamental role of her own: the sanctification of the Name in the world. The Church is clear too that the honor of the Name is never unrelated to the salvation of the Jewish people who are the original nucleus of God's plan of salvation . . . Christ did not nullify God's plan but rather (serves) as the living and efficacious synthesis of the divine promise" (I, B, 6-8, p. 53). Therefore, Christian witness must take into account "the permanent place of the Jewish people according to God's plan" (I, C, 4, p. 54).

Pope John Paul II had brought with him to the Papacy, as he did with his friendship with Jerzy Kluger, a considerable experience from the practical and pastoral sphere of his life as a worker, a student, a priest and bishop under totalitarian rule. In terms of personal and official witness, he focused on the centrality of the Christian mystery of Redemption of the world through the life, death and resurrection of Christ, in his first encyclical letter of March 4, 1979, *Redemptor Hominis*. In his address to the people gathered in St. Peter's Square for the Angelus on that day, he spoke of his purpose in the encyclical:

I tried to express in it what has animated and continually animates my thoughts and my heart since the beginning of my pontificate.... The Encyclical contains those thoughts which then, at the beginning of this new life, were pressing with particular forcefulness on my mind and which certainly, already had been maturing in me previously, during the years of my service as a priest and then as bishop.

Indeed, in a personal reflection on this fifteen years later, he noted in his book, *Crossing the Threshold of Hope*:

I was actually carrying its [the Encyclical's] contents within me. I had only to "copy" from memory and experience what I had already been living on the threshold of the Papacy. . . The Encyclical aims to be a great hymn of joy for the fact that man has been redeemed through Christ – redeemed in spirit and body.

This is the belief of Catholics and all other Christians, (6, 1, 2); furthermore he notes that it is this mystery which impels authentic "dialogue, prayer, investigation of the treasures of human spirituality with peoples of other religions."

In the Encyclical *Redemptoris Missio*, written 14 years later, and presented to the Church on December 7, 1990 on the twenty-fifth anniversary of Vatican II's Decree on the Church's Missionary Activity, *Ad Gentes*, he urges the Church to renew its commitment to evangelize the world, as he considers one aspect of St. Paul's concern, "Woe to me if I do not preach the Gospel." This encyclical deals with a theme that had been controversial among some Catholics since Vatican II. These considered teaching about one's faith to be merely "exporting" a foreign religion from one culture to another. The Pope affirms that the mission of the Church is part of her catholicity.

In every situation the missionary task is to propose not to impose, but always for the Christian to seek to live by and teach the truth revealed in the Lord.

The Encyclical has a special section on the relationship of Mission and other religions.(55) Here the Pope speaks to authorities in missionary countries noting that evangelization is not the agency of any foreign political, social, economic, educational or cultural imperialism; it "has but one purpose: to serve man by revealing to him the love God made manifest in Jesus Christ."(2.5) In her preaching the Church herself must always respect the freedom of conscience. "The Church proposes; she imposes nothing. She respects individuals and cultures, and she honors the sanctuary of conscience."(39.2) Catholics then are to undertake dialogue with "deep respect for everything that has been brought about in human beings by the Spirit who blows where he wills."(56.1) Respect and dialogue do not permit the Church to avoid its missionary task given it by Christ, but respect and dialogue help to purify the Church, and encourage greater mutual understanding among peoples and the elimination of prejudice and intolerance.

The Federici paper, with which I began this section, indicates that in the relationship with the Jewish people, the Church does not seek a proselytism that focuses on the Jewish people. John Paul II, in his understanding of the three central issues noted in his very first meeting with the Jewish leaders in 1979, knows well the difference between proselytizing and evangelizing in mission. For the mystery of mission of the relation of the Catholic Church and the Jewish people holds together simultaneously the issues of religious freedom, the Church's responsibility for her mission and the eternity of the Jewish Covenant.

The Church herself has established no organizations designed for the conversion of Jews. In 1996, Cardinal John O'Connor of New York joined with Protestant Church executives in affirming that this is the basic approach of the post-Holocaust family of churches. Of course, there are exceptions [including those] who so read New Testament passages as not to account for the tension expressed by St. Paul in Chapter 11 of his letter to the Romans.

Lex Orandi, Lex Credendi

There is only one official prayer for the Jews in the Liturgy of the Catholic Church. This is the traditional Good Friday prayer. It was (and is) in the middle of a threefold prayer first for the church (*fideles*, believers), then for the Jews (*perfideles*, half-believers), and for the unbelievers (*infideles*). Over the centuries, the teaching of contempt burdened the original theological category of "*perfideles*" with so much opprobrium that the modern term "perfidious" took on a far more sinister meaning than perhaps first intended by the ancient liturgy. Thus, Pope Pius XII in the mid 1950's directed that "*perfideles*" no longer be translated as "perfidious" in official liturgical books, such as missals, but rather as "unbelieving" or "unfaithful." Blessed John XXIII ordered that the Latin term be deleted from the prayer altogether, though it remained a prayer for the conversion of Jews

The reform of the Liturgy mandated by the Second Vatican Council, however, re-conceptualized and rewrote the prayer entirely. It now reads:

Let us pray for the Jewish people, the first to hear the word of God that they may continue to grow in the love of his Name and in faithfulness to his covenant. – Almighty and eternal God, long ago you gave your promise to Abraham and his posterity. Listen to your Church as we pray that the people you first made your own may arrive at the fullness of redemption.

The phrase, "fullness of redemption," here, is blessed with ambiguity. Some see it as not historical but eschatological. Like St. Paul in Romans 11, the phrase leaves the issue in God's hands, to be revealed at the end of time with the Second Coming of Christ, Redeemer of all humanity. Of course, individual Jews whose own, personal spiritual lives and consciences lead them to the fullness of our faith are welcomed into the Church. To do otherwise would offend against the principles of religious freedom and of mission.

Pope John Paul II has been leading and teaching the Church how to pray for a quarter of a century. The most significant of the prayers touching on the relationship between the Church and the Jewish people is the one he prayed first at the millennial liturgy of repentance in St. Peter's. Later, in a dramatic gesture, he inserted it into the Western Wall, where Jewish people have developed the custom of placing their written prayers. Pope John Paul's prayer is deeply significant. Central to the Christian anti-Judaism had been the notion that the destruction of the Jerusalem Temple and the dispersion (Diaspora) of Jews around the then-known world was God's punishment of the Jews for the crime of "deicide" ("God-killing"). While Vatican II condemned this notion, many Jews understandably felt that its influence lingered in the Church. The pope's dramatic gesture affirmed in the strongest way possible that that sort of thinking has no place in the Church today, nor in the future. The Church acknowledges its eternal debt to Judaism for having given it the revelation of God:

God of our fathers, you chose Abraham and his descendants to bring your Name to the Nations. We are deeply saddened by the behavior of those who in the course of history have caused these children of yours to suffer, and asking your forgiveness we wish to commit ourselves to genuine brotherhood with the people of the Covenant. (March 26, 2000)

Less well known but also theologically significant is the prayer for the Jews composed by Pope John Paul II at the request of the Bishops of Poland in 1998, which is now prayed throughout the country on Poland's annual day of reflection on Jews and Judaism. It serves as a model for how Catholics should pray for the Jews:

God of Abraham, the prophets, Jesus Christ,

in you everything is embraced,

toward you everything moves,

you are the end of all things.

Hear the prayers we extend for the Jewish People

Which, thanks to its forefathers, is still very dear to you.

Instill within them a constant, ever livelier desire

to deepen your truth and love.

Help them, as they yearn for peace and justice,

that they may reveal to the world the might of your blessing.

Succor them, that they may obtain respect and love

from those who do not yet understand

the greatness of suffering they have borne,

and those who, in solidarity and a sense of mutual care,

experience together the pain of wounds inflicted upon them.

Remember the new generations of youth and children,

that they may, unchangeably faithful to you,

uphold what remains the particular mystery of their vocation.

Strengthen all generations so that, thanks to their testimony,

humanity will understand that your salvific intention

extends over all the human family, and that you, God,

are for all nations the beginning and the final end.

The Universal Mission of the Church and the Jewish People

In the United States the publication of a fruit of the dialogue there on Covenant and Mission has given rise to considerable discussion. As Cardinal Kasper has pointed out, it has opened the way

to a more profound theological discussion.

However, it is useful to note that the term "covenant" must be seen as not universal in meaning. It does not indicate a clearly defined and universally recognized reality.

It is important to remember that the Old Testament speaks of different types of covenant according to the situation and the persons involved. Note for example the covenant with Noah in Gen. 9, the covenant with Abraham in Gen. 17 and the one on Sinai in Ex 19-24,32-34. Jer. 31:31 even mentions a "new Covenant" which refers to the content of the Sinaitic one but implies a completely new orientation: the law is written in the hearts of the Israelites so that it cannot be broken any more. The fundamental meaning of this Covenant is expressed through the words: "I will be their God, and they shall be my people" (Jer 31:33). The "Covenant" itself does not guarantee automatic salvation but offers the possibility of partaking in salvation, Therefore, those who follow God's indications contained in the Covenant, i.e., who are faithful to the Torah, have the correct relationship to God and can receive the gift of salvation from God.

The Bible presents not only different examples of covenant, but also different conceptions of it, such as the deuteronomic idea based on the old oriental contracts, and the priestly idea according to which there is only God's salvific proposal, which man simply needs to accept. "Covenant" never means a legal or juridical contract between two partners with equal rights, which can be used as the basis for human claims. In the end, the initiative always comes from God and cannot be forced by individual men and women. Because of these different types and ideas of covenant, there are different ways in which the word "Covenant" (in Hebrew *berit*) is used in the Bible, so that this word is never univocal and uni-dimensional. One should also pay attention to the parallelism between the words "Covenant" and "Election," which sometimes simply mean a special relationship with God.

The conclusions that can be drawn from these reflections is that the theological discussion following "Reflections on Covenant and Mission" should give greater weight to the biblical dimension of the concept of covenant. It seems necessary to deepen the understanding of this word and see which theological implications are bound into it.

A statement made last year in Boston by Cardinal Kasper of the Holy See's Commission on Religious Relations with the Jews gives us guidelines on how to relate the overall mission to proclaim the Good News universally while at the same time acknowledging the profound particularity of its unique relationship with God's People, Israel.

This issue is not a new one, and has been debated for a long time in our dialogues. But it does touch on the fundamental question which stands between us, and in that perspective new reflections and fresh ideas are welcome, although clearly easy answers are not possible. As I see things, a convincing solution is not yet in sight and the discussion must continue. Thus, I take this document [on Covenant and Mission] for what it sets itself out to be, and that is, an invitation and a challenge for further discussion. What I have to say is certainly not definitive, and represents no more than a modest personal contribution to a still unresolved problem.

I know very well that the question of Christian missionary activity evokes among Jews bitter and painful historical memories of forced conversions. We sincerely reject and regret this today. The Second Vatican Council in its 'Declaration on Religious Liberty,' *Dignitatis Humane*, was very clear regarding the rejection of all means of coercion in matters of faith and regarding the recognition of religious freedom. Nevertheless, I know that given the historical background even the word "mission" raises for Jews still today often insurmountable misunderstandings, suspicion and resistance. The wounds of the past are far from being healed. The question must therefore be dealt with with great sensitivity.

On the other hand, there are also Christian sensitivities and there is a Christian identity also at stake. The word "mission" is central in the New Testament. We cannot cancel it, and if we should try to do so, it would not help the Jewish-Christian dialogue at all. Rather, it would make the dialogue dishonest, and ultimately distort it. If Jews want to speak with Christians they cannot demand that Christians no longer be Christians. This is the very essence of dialogue – neither confusion nor absorption, or relativism or syncretism, but encounter of different perspectives and horizons, and – as I have learned from Jewish thinkers like Martin Buber and Emmanuel Levinas – recognition of the other in his/her otherness.

Indeed, the problem of mission touches the substance of what we have in common and of what divides us as well, and both our rich common heritage and our incontestable differences are constitutive for our respective identities. Thus we speak on a question which touches the heart of both of us, we deal with a question which cannot be approached without emotion and one which must be dealt with mutual respect for our most profound convictions as believers.

What we have in common is above all what Jews call the Hebrew Bible and we the Old Testament. We have in common our common father in faith Abraham, and Moses and the Ten Commandments, the Patriarchs and Prophets, the covenant and the promises of the one and unique God, and the messianic hope. Because we have all this in common and because as Christians we know that God's covenant with Israel by God's faithfulness is not broken (Rom. 11:29; cf. 3.4), mission understood as a call to conversion from idolatry to the living and true God (1 Thess. 1:9) does not apply and cannot be applied to Jews. They confess the living true God, who gave and gives them support, hope, confidence and strength in many difficult situations of their history. There cannot be the same kind of behavior towards Jews as there exists towards Gentiles. This is not a merely abstract theological affirmation, but an affirmation that has concrete and tangible consequences such as the fact that there is no organized Catholic missionary activity towards Jews.

But having said and confirmed all this we cannot stop, because we have considered only one half of the problem. And on this point the issues raised in the above-mentioned document – as I see it – should be developed and amplified. The approach to be taken to this becomes clear when we reflect on our differences, immediately evident from the different names we give to our common heritage – Hebrew Bible or Old Testament. This difference in terminology denotes that we have a different reading of what we have in common. Paradoxically we could say: we differ on what we have in common. The recent document of the Biblical Pontifical Commission entitled "The Jewish People and their Sacred Scriptures in the Christian Bible" (2001), signed by Cardinal Ratzinger, shows for me very convincingly that in a mere historical perspective and interpreted with mere historical methods both readings and both interpretations, the Jewish rabbinical and the Christian one, are possible and legitimate. What reading we choose depends on what faith we have chosen.

For both of us this sacred text is an open text pointing out to a future which will be determined by God alone at the end of time. Both our faiths are open towards this future. So together we can give witness to the incompleteness of the world and to its non-completeness by human efforts, and together against the pessimism, skepticism and nihilism in our midst we can witness to the openness of history towards the future and to the unwavering hope of completion which God alone can and will fulfill at the end of time. But in their differences Jews and Christians are, to put it in a paradoxical way – hopeless witnesses of hope. To give witness to this common and yet distinctly perceived hope is a compelling urgency in our world today, so in need of hope and so devoid of its consolation.

But whilst Jews expect the coming of the Messiah, who is still unknown, Christians believe that he has already shown his face in Jesus of Nazareth, whom we as Christians therefore confess as the Christ, he who at the end of time will be revealed as the Messiah for Jews and for all nations. The universality of Christ's redemption for Jews and for Gentiles is so fundamental throughout the

entire, New Testament (Eph. 2:14-18; Col. 1:15-18; 1 Tim 2:5 and many others) and even in the same Letter to the Romans (Rom. 3:24; 8:32) that it cannot be ignored or passed over in silence. So from the Christian perspective the covenant with the Jewish people is unbroken (Rom. 11:29), for we as Christians believe that these promises find in Jesus their definitive and irrevocable Amen (2 Cor. 1:20) and at the same time that in him, who is the end of the law (Rom 10:4), the law is not nullified but upheld (Rom 3:31).

This does not mean that Jews in order to be saved have to become Christians; if they follow their own conscience and believe in God's promises as they understand them in their religious tradition they are in line with God's plan, which for us comes to its historical completion in Jesus Christ.

I well appreciate, despite the distress it causes me, that it must be painful for Jews to listen to such words, in the same way as it is painful for Christians too to listen to some words of rabbinical tradition and experience that Jews use to express that by their very conscience they cannot accept our faith in Jesus Christ who for us is the way, the truth and the life (John 14:6). Our Jewish friends may say, as they do; you look on us with your Christian eyes. Yes, we do and how could we do otherwise? Jews, too, look on us with their eyes and out of the perspective of their faith, and they too cannot do otherwise. We must endure and withstand this difference, because it constitutes our respective identities. We must respect each other in our respective otherness.

Thus, in any discussion on mission the well-known text in the Pauline Letter to the Romans chapters 9-11 and the affirmation of the unbroken covenant (Rom. 11:29) cannot be the only and isolated points of reference. We must interpret these passages, as we must interpret all biblical passages, in the context of the whole New Testament. In a similar way we must interpret the fourth chapter of *Nostra Aetate* in the context of the other Conciliar documents and the use Pope John Paul II makes of it in the context of his many other affirmations on mission, especially in his encyclical *Redemptoris Missio* (1990).

Still much is yet to be undertaken. For the question of mission can only be solved in the wider context of the overall Christian theology of Judaism. Here we are only at the beginning and still far from a definitive understanding. The long period of anti-Judaistic theology cannot be overcome in only forty years. "*Nostra Aetate*" was only the beginning of a new beginning.

In another setting, Cardinal Kasper spoke a very positive note about what we can do together. "In today's world, we, Jews and Christians, have a common mission: together we should give an orientation. Together we must be ambassadors of peace and bring about Shalom."

I must be candid to admit we Catholics have much to do to render our speech, both unofficially and officially, much more consistent and clear than it now is. But, just as deeply, I am persuaded that the doctrinal understanding outlined by Cardinal Kasper represents a helpful first step for the future of Catholic teaching. As I mentioned at the beginning of my presentation, the Cardinal has noted that we are "at the beginning of the beginning . . ."

We must see our relationships also in the context of the world stage, in which differences of faith have too often been used as excuses for violence.

With respect to the Middle East, I quote now from a recent talk of Cardinal Theodore McCarrick, Archbishop of Washington, and for many years one who has been intimately involved in the International Policy Committee of our Bishops' Conference. Several weeks ago, speaking to the Anti-Defamation League, he said:

Israelis rightly see the failure of some Palestinians to demonstrate full respect for Israel's right to exist and to flourish within secure borders as a fundamental cause of the conflict. . . . Palestinian leaders must clearly and unequivocally renounce terrorist violence and terrorist acts against

innocent civilians and must show the Israeli people that they are fully committed to prepare their people to live in peace with Israel.

Palestinians see the occupation as a central underlying cause of the present crisis. This becomes unfortunately more problematic when it is cemented by the growth and expansion of settlements and is maintained by force and marked by daily indignities, abuse and violence. As difficult as it may be, we are convinced that both Israelis and Palestinians are called to be partners in an historic peace. Despite the current crisis, the elements of a just and lasting peace remain the same (and here we are echoing our statement of 1989): real security for the State of Israel, a viable state for Palestinians, just resolution of the refugee problem, an agreement on Jerusalem which protects religious freedom and other basic rights, and implementation of relevant United Nations resolutions and other provisions of international law.

In November 2000 at the death camp at Majdanik, just outside of Lublin, I witnessed a deeply moving service inspired by the teaching of the Pope. The Romanian Orthodox Patriarch, the Chief Rabbi of Rome, the Muslim Imam of Poland and the ranking Protestant clergyman of the land helped lead the service. I had a part, reading in English the psalm with the words, "Pray for the peace of Jerusalem." The hour and a half program was televised live through all of Poland. All could hear the testimony of survivors that the loudspeakers carried as we walked, some 4000 strong, from station to station in the camp. By the end all felt the seriousness and the weight of the sad memories of the camp and I was reminded of another reality.

When Pope John Paul was born, his land was home to the largest number of Jews in the world. When he was ordained a priest a quarter of a century later – after the Nazis had taken the lives of millions of Jews only a pitiful remnant remained. This priest from Poland has now seized the opportunity not just of a lifetime but of a millennium. The world will be forever better for it.

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