Joint Declaration of the 21st International Catholic-Jewish Liaison Committee Meeting Paris

31/10/2012

The 21st meeting of the International Catholic-Jewish Liaison Committee (ILC) was held in Paris, France from February 27 – March 2, 2011.

ILC is a partnership between the Holy See's Commission for Religious Relations with the Jews and the International Jewish Committee on Interreligious Consultations (IJCIC), a coalition of Jewish organizations. The conference was hosted by the French Catholic Bishops Conference, the Collège des Bernardins and the Conseil Représentatif des Institutions Juives de France (CRIF). Co-chairs of the meeting were Cardinal Kurt Koch (President of the Holy See's Commission for Religious Relations with the Jews) and Rabbi Richard Marker (Chairman of IJCIC). The gathering marked a return to Paris on the 40th anniversary of the first ILC organizational meeting held there in December of 1971.

The opening session at College des Bernardins included greetings from Cardinal Koch, Rabbi Marker, Dr. Richard Prasquier, President of the CRIF, Cardinal Andre Vingt Trois, President of the French Catholic Bishops Conference, Grand Rabbin Gilles Bernheim, Chief Rabbi of France, and Henry De Raincourt, French Minister of Cooperation.

The conference, titled "Forty Years of Dialogue – Reflections and Future Perspectives" addressed the past, present and future of Catholic-Jewish dialogue in its international settings. The event began with a review of the 40 year history of the ILC, which was begun in 1970. For the current conference, delegates came from the United States, Europe, Israel, Australia, Latin America and Africa. The conference highlighted the positive relationship that began with the Second Vatican Council and the promulgation of Nostra Aetate (the declaration on the relationship of the Church to non-Christian Religions) in 1965.

Outside of the formal sessions, the delegates and observers visited the synagogue of the community of Raincy where they planted a tree in memory of Ilan Halimi, a victim of contemporary anti-Semitism. They remembered the victims of the Shoah by visiting the Drancy Internment Camp. The delegation toured Notre Dame Cathedral and visited La Grande Synagogue de la Victoire de Paris where they met with the Consistoire.

Working groups analyzed the plight of religious communities in the Middle East, changes in Catholic and Jewish education regarding each other's religious traditions, as well as emerging issues both communities are facing in bio-medical ethics.

The ILC sponsored a special three-day pre-conference called the "Emerging Leadership Delegation", which brought together young people from both faith communities to discuss the challenges of the future and to help expand the dialogue to involve more young people around the world. These delegates were invited to participate fully in the ILC plenary sessions where their insights and fresh ideas contributed positively to the proceedings.

A principal outcome of the conference was the deepening of personal relationships and of a shared desire to confront together the enormous challenges facing Catholics and Jews in a world in rapid

and unpredictable transformation. Also acknowledged was a common religious duty to help relieve the global consequences of poverty, injustice, discrimination and the denial of universal human rights. Participants were especially sensitive to the call of the younger generation for true freedom and full participation in their societies.

The conference acknowledged contemporaneous events taking place in parts of Northern Africa and the Middle East where millions of human beings are expressing their thirst for dignity and freedom. In many parts of the world, minorities, especially religious minorities, are discriminated against, threatened by unjust restrictions of their religious liberty, and even subjected to persecution and murder. Speakers expressed a profound sadness at repeated instances of violence or terrorism “in the name of God”, including the increased attacks against Christians, and calls for the destruction of the State of Israel. The conference deplores every act of violence perpetrated in the name of religion as a complete corruption of the very nature of a genuine relationship with God.

In celebrating 40 years of dialogue and reconciliation, with great gratitude to the Almighty, the ILC committed itself to the next phase of its journey pledging to work for a peaceful future for the people in the Middle East region and the world, outreach to Jewish-Christian dialogue groups in Europe and Latin America, collaboration on social and ethical issues, and supporting the next generation of young leaders so they can build on the historic achievements of the last four decades. The participants are deeply convinced of the importance of encouraging good relations between Christians and Jews at every level and in all situations as a paradigm for other dialogues.

International Jewish Committee on Interreligious Consultations (IJCIC)

Holy See’s Commission for Religious Relations with the Jews

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