

International Catholic - Jewish Liaison Committee 17th Meeting

New York City, May 1-3, 2001

Joint Communiqué

Following the Second Vatican Council in 1965, the Catholic Church and international groups representing the Jewish People both in Israel and in the Diaspora determined to establish together a mechanism to follow through on the extraordinary moment in history represented by the Council's Declaration, *Nostra Aetate* ("In Our Time"). After nearly two millennia of polemical relations, a window was opened to allow dialogue to replace the disputations of the past. The result was the establishment of the International Catholic - Jewish Liaison Committee ("ILC") between the Holy See's Commission for Religious Relations with the Jews and the International Jewish Committee for Interreligious Consultations ("IJCIC") IJCIC is comprised of the American Jewish Committee, the Anti-Defamation League, B'nai B'rith International, the Central Conference of American Rabbis, Israel Jewish Council for Interreligious Relations, the Rabbinical Assembly, the Rabbinical Council of America, the Union of American Hebrew Congregations, the Union of Orthodox Jewish Congregations of America, the United Synagogue of America, and the World Jewish Congress. The 17th meeting occurred May 1-3, 2001 in New York City.

In the years following the 16th meeting (which was held in Vatican City in March of 1998) tensions arose between the Holy See's Commission and IJCIC. The Catholic side was frustrated by the lack of theological dialogue. The Jewish side responded that it wanted to deepen the dialogue in a way Jews and Catholics could learn about each other and project our communities accurately without risking theological disputations.

We affirm that our partnership is secure and that the vital work of the ILC continues and promises to flourish, now and in the years ahead, As official representatives of our organized religious communities, we are determined to engage our leadership and laity in dialogue and cooperation. Together, we will work to combat antisemitism and anti-Catholicism whenever they occur.

In the Spring of 2000, IJCIC and the Holy See agreed to pursue a broader dialogue. Now, as we concluded our meetings in New York we affirm that we have accomplished our goal, We engaged in probative dialogue that sharpened greatly our understanding of the differences and similarities of our religious faiths.

The main theme of our gathering, Repentance and Reconciliation, was prompted by a desire to review the past eleven years, since Cardinal Edward I Cassidy's remarkable statement made in Prague 1990 on *Teshuva*. This was a powerful declaration on the need for remorse and contrition and served as the basis for a groundbreaking call by the ILC for Catholic renunciation of antisemitism as "a sin against God and humanity." This theme was subsequently given worldwide attention by Pope John Paul II. Much has occurred since that meeting in Prague: the diplomatic normalization in 1994 between the Holy See and the State of Israel, the publication of "We Remember" in 1998, the visit of Pope John Paul II to Israel in 2000, and the review by Catholic and Jewish scholars of published Vatican archival material on events during World War II in 2000. Yet, there were also moments of tension, including the canonization of Edith Stein, the beatification of Pius IX and the possible beatification of Pius XII and the publication of [*Dominus Iesus*](#). These issues produced intensive discussion.

We began our conference with a reading in Hebrew from the Book of Psalms (Ps. 85) by Msgr. Pier Francesco Fumagalli of Milan with an English translation by Professor Jean Halperin of the World Jewish Congress, Geneva. IJCIC's Program Chair, Rabbi Garry M. Bretton-Granatoor gave a brief review of the subject area of our meeting and introduced Cardinal Walter Kasper, the recently appointed President of the Holy See's Commission and Seymour D. Reich, the Chairman of IJCIC.

Cardinal Kasper welcomed all and in his statement said, "I am committed to work together with you for the reconciliation of our two faith communities, on the basis of a total mutual respect for our respective traditions and convictions. This mutual respect has, unfortunately, often been lacking in the past. *Teshuva*, therefore, is an indispensable step on our path. For us Catholics, Pope John Paul II has set the example." He continued, "At this point in the history of our relations, our Commission indeed convinced of the need for a dialogue which goes beyond the discussion of problems, and enters into the very heart of what constitutes our identities as faith communities, in order to allow us to proceed - on that basis - along the path of common action in today's society." He concluded his remarks, "I believe that the discovery, or the re-discovery, of this covenantal link between both our religious traditions, is basically the agenda for our dialogue. As one of my predecessors, Cardinal Johannes Willebrands, has once put it, 'we are linked for good.'"

Mr. Reich stated that "the quite remarkable aspect of Catholic-Jewish partnership is that despite differences and disagreements, fundamental relationships have undergone a sea change, converting the hatred and distrust of centuries into a positive dialogue between two faiths linked by historic threads." He noted the negative impact of the beatification of Pope Pius IX on Catholic - Jewish relations, especially in Italy because of the Edgardo Mortara affair, in which a Jewish child was forcibly taken from his parents to be raised as a Catholic within the Vatican. The ILC affirms that this episode exemplifies the historical problem which *Nostra Aetate* and subsequent statements of the Holy See have solved "in our time."

Rabbi Joel Zaiman, Chair of the National Council of Synagogues introduced Cardinal Cassidy and Rabbi Leon Klenicki, former Director of Interreligious Affairs for the ADL. Cardinal Cassidy, reflecting on the past eleven years, stated, "Dialogue is the exchange of gifts." He suggested that there was still much to do in our dialogue; we must "press forward ... there will be no turning back." But, he did suggest that if not vigilant, there could be a lessening of interest in our dialogue. Cardinal Cassidy referred to the 1990 ILC meeting in Prague as a "milestone that gave new life to the relationship and led to important work in the fields of education and formation. Several old problems," he said, "were subsequently solved and new impetus was given to Catholic-Jewish relations when the Holy See and Israel entered into formal diplomatic relations. Despite new questions that caused some tension, progress continued to be made and the Commission published in 1998 a Catholic document on the Holocaust, [*We Remember: a Reflection on the Shoah*](#). The period came to a resounding climax with the visit of Pope John Paul II to Israel in March, 2000."

Introducing the main theme, Repentance and Reconciliation, Rabbi Klenicki argued that each of our communities needs to overcome its own form of triumphalism. "Christianity must overcome theological triumphalism; the conviction that it is the only way of salvation and has to be imposed everyone. On our side, Judaism needs to overcome the triumphalism of pain and memories. We are obligated to respond to history with new affirmations of God's covenant and with new dimensions of faith in humanity despite human evil's potential." He pointed to the Jewish statement, [*Dabru Emet*](#) (To Speak Truth), signed last year by some 200 American rabbis and scholars, as an example of this Jewish response to Christian outreach for reconciliation.

We then turned to the substantive papers suggested by the main theme. Cardinal Kasper chaired the afternoon session which featured presentations from Fr. Lawrence Frizzell, Professor, Institute of Judaean-Christian Studies, Seton Hall University, and Rabbi Dr. Michael Signer, Professor, Department of Theology, University of Notre Dame. Fr. Frizzell reminded us that "Pope John Paul II called Catholics, 'to progress by means of daily conversion of heart, or teshuva in repentance, fasting and works of mercy (Address to Jewish Leaders in Budapest, August 18, 1991)." The experience of Christian repentance and return to God's plan for humanity is rooted in the Jerusalem Temple liturgy, especially for the Day of Atonement. "In faith, Christians are challenged to become instruments or ambassadors of reconciliation among human beings and between people and God. How can Christians and Jews become a blessing to each other so that they can become a blessing to world?"

Professor Signer offered his perspective on *Darke Shalom* (the Paths of Peace). There is much to be learned about a society from its rituals of greeting. When we greet someone we receive them into our presence and take a risk that we will be received. The Jewish greeting "Shalom" indicates that we bring the other into our presence, wishing them a sense of well-being and wholeness. In the rabbinic tradition the idea of peace is part of the nature of God. It is a unique gift of divine mercy and grace. Equally true is the fact that Jews are commanded to fill their daily lives with the pursuit of peace by establishing a sound network of peace and harmony,

One of the difficult issues addressed by this 17th ILC meeting was the publication of *Dominus Iesus*. "D*ominus Iesus*," Cardinal Kasper said, "is an intra-Catholic document about interreligious dialogue addressed to Catholic theologians concerning problems with relativism, syncretism, universalism and indifferentism, It does not enter into the Jewish-Catholic dialogue. It must be noted first that the relationship between the church and the Jewish people is unique. Second, *Dominus Iesus* does not call into question the salvation of Jews. Third, the Jewish covenant has not been revoked and remains salvifically effective for Jews. Fourth, *Dominus Iesus* must be understood properly within the context of *Nostra Aetate*, papal encyclicals and other official documents of the church regarding Judaism, Fifth, there is no missionary activity on the part of the church directed toward converting the Jews. *Dominus Iesus* is not the end of our dialogue. It is a challenge for our dialogue."

Professor David Berger addressing the issue of *Dominus Iesus* noted the concerns of some in the Jewish community who hold a belief that it asserted that followers of other religions are in a gravely deficient situation with respect to salvation, that interreligious dialogue is part of the Church's "mission" to the nations, and that equality in dialogue refers to the dignity of the participants but not doctrinal content. He argued that the contention that Jews are excluded from these controversial assertions appears inconsistent with the language of both the declaration itself and other writings of Cardinal Joseph Ratzinger, head of the Congregation for Faith, which issued the declaration. Berger argued further, however, that there are no legitimate grounds for Jewish objections to *Dominus Iesus'* passages about salvation and equality. To proffer such objections is to invite reciprocal demands for revisions of Jewish theology and to transform dialogue into an instrument of religious intimidation. He suggested, on the other hand, the passage about mission creates a major problem for dialogue, especially on doctrinal issues, and vindicates the concerns of Orthodox Jews who have largely avoided such discussions,

Discussion then ensued. Fr. John Pawlikowski, OSM, stated that the document does not speak about post-biblical Judaism. Cardinal Kasper noted that the document does not fully reflect the doctrine of The Catholic Church or other relevant Papal statements concerning relations with the Jewish faith. Cardinal Cassidy noted that *Dominus Iesus* was not the final word on the subject.

The evening of May 1 was a most profound experience of fellowship as the ILC honored Cardinals Cassidy and the late John J. O'Connor; Rabbis Mordecai Waxman, Leon Klenicki and A. James Rudin; Sr. Rose Thering, O.P., and Msgr, George G. Higgins for their example, witness and love for Catholic-Jewish dialogue. The ILC is deeply grateful to Rabbi Gary Bretton-Granatoor and the Stephen Wise Free Synagogue for hosting the event.

The next day (Wednesday May 2, 2001), Fr. James Loughran, S.A., the newly appointed Secretary of the Pontifical Commission for Religious Relations with the Jews, presented the Catholic tradition on repentance as it is practiced on a pastoral level through the sacrament of penance and the liturgical life of the Church. His main theme was *metanoia*, the complete "turning around" of the heart away from sin and towards God. The motivation for this conversion of the heart is love, not fear of condemnation. The discussion that followed further clarified the distinction in Catholic theology between the Church instituted by Christ being sinless and the human assembly of the Church being sinful.

Professor David Novak of the University of Toronto presented a paper on "The Evolution of Jewish Attitudes Towards Non-Jews." He said that the Torah ordains that Jews must respect those of a different religion who recognize God as the Creator and do not worship idols. These people must be respected for "*Darke Shalom*" (the paths of peace) as long as they do not threaten Jews or Judaism.

Fr. Gerald P. Fogarty of the University of Virginia and Dr. Michael R. Marrus of the University of Toronto, two members of the panel of scholars charged by the Holy See and IJCIC (previously authorized at the 1998 ILC meeting in Rome) to review the published Vatican documents relating to the World War II period, discussed their preliminary report. Drawing upon their reading of the eleven volumes of the *Acts and Documents of the Holy See during World War II*, the scholars have submitted a preliminary evaluation of the collection and expressed their appreciation for the efforts of the editors at objectivity. They reported that the team concluded that it makes a valuable contribution to the historical record. Along with the evaluation the scholars submitted forty seven specific questions illustrating the need to continue an examination of this complex and difficult subject. While differing among themselves, as scholars regularly do, they agree that the question of the role of the papacy during the war remains unresolved. While the opening of the Vatican archives will not definitely put this matter to rest, opening the archives will help to remove the aura of suspicion and will contribute to a more mature level of understanding. The ILC takes note of the importance of this issue to both of our communities, and encourages a discourse on the subject that is characterized by mutual respect, and appreciation for legitimately held points of view.

Discussion ensued. Fr. Pawlikowski said that while the issue is not yet settled, the reference to the "silence" of Pius XII is an unfair characterization and should be removed from the debate. Dean Marrus stated that we need a positive response to the interim report and the "ball is in the Vatican's court." He further said that we need movement on the issue of the archives and "access to the archives would be salutary."

Our attention then turned to the first draft of a joint statement on [Protecting Religious Freedom and Holy Sites](#). After much debate and discussion over two days, our ILC adopted the resolution that is attached. The ILC also issued a ["Recommendation on Education in Catholic and Jewish Seminaries and Schools of Theology"](#) which is also attached to this communiqué.

The third day of meetings began with a brief memorial for Cardinal John J. O'Connor, on the first anniversary of his passing. Rabbi Bretton-Granatoor read the words of the

Hebrew poet, Hannah Senesh entitled *Yesh Kochavim* (There are Stars). We then turned to the third session of papers.

Dr. Eugene Fisher, of the U.S. Conference of Catholic Bishops surveyed the vast array of episcopal statements, educational programs, improvements in teaching materials, academic institutions of Jewish and Christian studies attached to Catholic Universities, dialogues and joint social action on all levels that have advanced the prophetic vision of *Nostra Aetate* and embedded its spirit deeply and inextricably into the life of the Catholic Church worldwide. "The theological challenge issued the Second Vatican Council and so carefully built upon by subsequent statements," he said, "has come an edifice of doctrinal stone that will last the centuries."

Seymour Reich spoke about the remarkable changes that have taken place in the course of our dialogue. He made important suggestions about education in Jewish schools that have been incorporated into the aforementioned resolution on Education in Catholic and Jewish Seminaries. He also called to the attention of Church leaders the need to understand that for virtually all Jews, the survival and welfare of the State of Israel is a "litmus test" that reflects the self-image and sense of survival a people. It is important, he said, for Catholics to comprehend the emotional ties of the Jewish community to the Jewish State and to recognize that tenor and tone are almost as important as substance in matters affecting that nation.

During a discussion concerning on-going projects in local communities a number of interesting reports were offered. For the first time, the Ambassador of Israel to the Holy See, Neville Lamdan, together with the Minister for Interreligious Affairs at the Israeli Embassy in Washington, Moshe Fox, took part in the meeting as observers. Ambassador Lamdan reported on the efforts being made by his embassy together with the Holy See to advance Catholic-Jewish relations, such as educational work at Pontifical Universities, "people to people" experiences such as pilgrimages, student exchanges, international developmental cooperation, cultural events.

Rabbi Ron Kronish of Israel spoke about projects in Israel and the Palestinian Authority that bring together Jews, Christians and Muslims. Professor Georges Schneck of Brussels spoke about ongoing work in his country and Rabbi Henry Sobel of Brazil shared experiences from Latin America.

With regard to Jedwabne, a World War II massacre of Jews by Poles, Bishop Stanislaw Gadecki of Poland made three points. "First, I must stress Polish responsibility in the crime committed in Jedwabne. I do not justify the Polish conduct at all. Second, during wartime many people looked for a scapegoat to explain their own misfortunes. Too many found it in the stereotype that the Jews collaborated with the Communist regime. We know that the Jews were used and abused - as were other minorities - by the Soviets, as were the Poles by the Germans. The demonization of the Jews, and the traditional antisemitism grounded on Christian stereotypes, also influenced the anti-Jewish pogrom. Third, what we Poles want is to acknowledge our own sin and to repent."

A suggestion was made and adopted by consensus that there should be more representation by women in the planning and the programming of ILC meetings.

The meeting concluded with Psalm 133 offered in Hebrew, Latin and English by Betty Ehrenberg of the Orthodox Union, Dr. Hans Hermann Henrix of Germany and Lisa Palmieri-Billig of the ADL in Italy. Final reflections were offered by Cardinal Edward Cassidy and Seymour Reich. Cardinal Edward Egan of New York hosted the ILC at his home on May 3. His kindness and warm welcome to us was deeply appreciated.

The International Catholic - Jewish Liaison Committee expressed appreciation for the hard work and dedication of the staff of the Union of American Hebrew Congregations whose space and facilities were conducive to a pleasant and productive environment.

We extend our appreciation to the Secretary of IJCIC, Rabbi Dr. Leon Feldman and to Reva Kaiser Zeesy and Joel Schnur of Schnur Associates for their labors in the coordination of the conference.