

**The Delegation of the Holy See's Commission for Religious Relations with the
Jews and the Chief Rabbinate of Israel's Delegation for Relations with the
Catholic Church – Bilateral Commission Meeting, Jerusalem, June 26-28, 2005;
19-21 Sivan 5765**

I.

The opening evening was graced by the presence of the Rishon L'Zion, Rabbi Shlomo Moshe Amar, Chief Rabbi of Israel, who expressed his fervent support for the dialogue to emphasize profound shared values of the two Traditions while not ignoring the distinctions that make us different faith communities. Above all, the purpose of the dialogue is to promote the principles of sanctity and dignity of all human beings and to advance our cooperation for these goals.

In their welcome, the heads of the respective delegations, Chief Rabbi Shear Yashuv Cohen and Cardinal Jorge Mejia expressed their profound satisfaction at the depth of understanding and friendship that had developed through the meetings of the bilateral committee.

II.

Opening the deliberations – as this was the first meeting since the passing of Pope John Paul II of blessed memory - the chairmen made special mention of his historic contribution to Catholic-Jewish reconciliation and to the fact that this bilateral committee was the fruit of his initiative. Cardinal Mejia noted in addition, the remarkable reference to the former Chief Rabbi of Rome in Pope John Paul II's will. Appreciation was expressed for the commitment to continue to promote these bilateral relations, on the part of his successor Pope Benedict XVI.

III.

The theme of this fifth meeting was *The Relationship between Religious and Civil Authority in the Jewish and Christian Traditions*. Based on the Biblical vision of the distinct roles of Priest, Prophet and King, as well as their respective relationships with the people of God, the following key points were made:

- 1.) Religious values are crucial for the wellbeing of the individual and society
- 2.) The purpose of civil authority is to serve and provide for the welfare of the people through respecting the life and dignity of every individual
- 3.) While emphasizing the importance of democracy in this regard, at the same time it is essential to legally protect society from extreme individualism, exploitation by vested interest groups and insensitivity to the cultural and moral values of religious tradition

- 4.) Freedom of religion must be guaranteed to both individuals and communities by the religious and civil authorities
- 5.) The relationship between religion and state must be based on reciprocity, mutual respect and cooperation
- 6.) Legislation for the promotion of particular religious values is legitimate when done in harmony with the principles of human rights
- 7.) We have an ethical obligation to demonstrate religious responsibility in these regards, and especially to educate future generations through engaging media opinion makers as well as through conventional educational channels

IV.

Discussion focussed on the responsibility of the state to guarantee the rights of all religious communities giving special attention to the situation and needs of the Christian communities in the Holy Land, as well as the needs of Jewish communities around the world, facilitating full social and political equality without undermining particular identities.

Jerusalem, June 28th 2005 – 21 Sivan 5765

Chief Rabbi Shear Yashuv Cohen
(Chairman of the Jewish Delegation)

Chief Rabbi Ratson Arussi

Chief Rabbi Yossef Azran

Chief Rabbi David Brodman

Chief Rabbi David Rosen

Mr Oded Wiener

Ambassador Shmuel Hadas

Cardinal Jorge Mejia

(Chairman of the Catholic Delegation)

Cardinal Georges Cottier O.P.

Bishop Giacinto-Boulos Marcuzzo

Archimandrite Elias Chacour

Msgr. Pier Francesco Fumagalli

Fr. Norbert Hofmann S.D.B.

Nuncio Pietro Sambì