



Monthly Highlights

December 2015-January 2016

International Interreligious Affairs

Rome Dec.10

On December 10th, the Holy See's Commission for Religious Relations with the Jewish People released a new document entitled "The gifts and the calling of God are irrevocable (Rom 11:29)" - a reflection on theological questions pertaining to Catholic-Jewish relations on the occasion of the 50th anniversary of "Nostra Aetate" (no.4)

This document was issued with the endorsement of Pope Francis, the Pontifical Council for Doctrine and Faith and the Vatican Secretariat of State.

I was honored to be invited by Cardinal Koch, President of the Commission, to share the podium with him and Father Hofmann, the Commission's Secretary, together with Dr. Edward Kessler of Cambridge University and to present our perspectives on the document.

This was the first time ever that Jews had been invited to participate in the press conference releasing a Vatican document and to critique it. The texts had been prepared in advance, made available for distribution and were also published in the Vatican newspaper Osservatore Romano.



In addition to AJC's statement:

<http://www.ajc.org/site/apps/nlnet/content2.aspx?c=7oJILSPwFfJSG&b=8479733&ct=14806745>

there was wide international press coverage:

Reuters [http://www.reuters.com/article/us-pope-jews-](http://www.reuters.com/article/us-pope-jews-idUSKBN0TT1BK20151210#ok5SjghADkWKjeop.97)

[idUSKBN0TT1BK20151210#ok5SjghADkWKjeop.97;](http://www.reuters.com/article/us-pope-jews-idUSKBN0TT1BK20151210#ok5SjghADkWKjeop.97)

NYT http://www.nytimes.com/2015/12/11/world/europe/vatican-says-catholics-should-not-try-to-convert-jews.html?smprod=nytcore-iphone&smid=nytcore-iphone-share&_r=0;

WSJ [http://www.wsj.com/articles/new-vatican-document-says-church-doesn-t-look-for-conversion-of-the-jews-1449784616;](http://www.wsj.com/articles/new-vatican-document-says-church-doesn-t-look-for-conversion-of-the-jews-1449784616)

RNS http://www.religionnews.com/2015/12/10/vatican-catholic-jews-jewish-anti-semitism/?utm_medium=email&utm_campaign=RNS%20Daily%20Report%20--%20Thursday%20Dec%2010%202015&utm_content=RNS%20Daily%20Report%20--%20Thursday%20Dec%2010%202015+CID_96a598409357a674fd930ab18a37b515&utm_source=Campaign%20Monitor&utm_term=VIEW%20STORY%20AT%20WWWRELIGIONNEWSCOM;

CRUX http://www.cruxnow.com/church/2015/12/10/vatican-document-on-jews-proves-that-revolution-is-the-new-routine/?s_campaign=crux:rss?s_campaign=crux:email:ja;

Vatican Insider <http://www.lastampa.it/2015/12/11/vaticaninsider/eng/inquiries-and-interviews/there-is-no-relation-no-matter-how-bad-that-cannot-be-transformed-eCqTrwstLTinIzkyEWPvNM/pagina.html>;

La Stampa <http://www.lastampa.it/2015/12/13/vaticaninsider/eng/documents/the-gifts-and-calling-of-god-are-irrevocable-a-jewish-perspective-NImEjsOAHpoPWsLjzeUXDO/pagina.html> ;

Commonweal <https://www.commonwealmagazine.org/blog/new-vatican-statement-catholic-jewish-relations>;

AMERICA <<http://americamagazine.org/content/dispatches/rabbi-rosen-pope-francis-should-make-new-peace-initiative-holy-land>>

Interview <http://www.dailymail.co.uk/video/news/video-1236047/Rabbi-David-Rosen-reacts-Vatican-statement-Jews.html>

Tel Aviv, Dec.14/15

The Israeli celebration of the 50th anniversary of the “Nostra Aetate” with the participation of the Holy See’s Commission for Religious Relations with the Jewish People and the heads of the Catholic Church in Israel was co-hosted by AJC’s Department for International Interreligious Affairs (with Avril Promislow, the department’s assistant director, coordinating logistics and operation) together with Tel Aviv University , consisting of an opening gala event followed by a full day symposium. The former was addressed by Cardinal Kurt Koch, President of the Pontifical Commission for Religious Relations with the Jews; Deputy Chief Justice of Israel’s Supreme Court Elyakim Rubinstein; The Latin Patriarch of Jerusalem and the Holy land, Fouad Twal; TAU President Joseph Klafter; Jerry Biederman, past chairman of AJC’s Interreligious Affairs Commission; and the organizers of the symposium, Professors Dina Porat and Aviad Kleinberg, and myself.

The following day, Jewish and Catholic experts from Israel and the Vatican discussed teaching about Christianity in Israeli schools, education in the Catholic world about Jews and Judaism, and current challenges for Catholic-Jewish relations. The symposium also marked the publication of the new TAU book, “In Our Time: Documents and Articles on the Catholic Church and the Jewish People in the wake of the Shoah.”



See more at:

<http://www.ajc.org/site/apps/nlnet/content3.aspx?c=7oJILSPwFfJSG&b=8452175&ct=14807629>

A number of interviews were given during the symposium, including to the CNA

<http://www.catholicnewsagency.com/news/rabbi-from-john-xxiii-to-francis-catholic-relations-with-judaism-have-improved-65886/>

Jerusalem, Dec.16/17

As a member of the delegation of the Chief Rabbinate of Israel on the bilateral committee with the Holy See's Commission for Religious Relations with the Jews, I participated in the thirteenth meeting of the committee that was held in Jerusalem at the offices of the Konrad Adenauer Stiftung on the subject of "Migrants and Refugees – threat or opportunity?" AJC's Assistant Director of International Interreligious Affairs Avril Promislow, helped facilitate the meeting. See:

<http://press.vatican.va/content/salastampa/it/bollettino/pubblico/2015/12/18/1010/02250.html>

Rome, January 17/18

I was honored to be invited to attend the visit of Pope Francis to the great synagogue of Rome - the third such visit of a pontiff since Pope John Paul II's historic groundbreaking visit in 1986.

While in Rome I was privileged to be granted a private meeting with Emeritus Pope Benedict XVI and also had meetings with Vatican leaders. AJC's representative to the Vatican Lisa Billig accompanied me at these meetings.



See:

<http://americamagazine.org/content/dispatches/pope-rome-synagogue-calls-jews-and-catholics-work-together-peace-and-justice>

<http://azjewishpost.com/2016/what-pope-francis-synagogue-visit-says-about-catholic-jewish-relations/>

<http://www.haaretz.com/jewish/news/1.697928>

<http://news.yahoo.com/does-pope-synagogue-visit-mean-jews-christians-192928543.html>

<http://www.csmonitor.com/World/Global-News/2016/0117/What-does-the-Pope-s-synagogue-visit-mean-for-Jews-and-Christians>

<http://www.dailymail.co.uk/news/article-3402447/Pope-Francis-Catholic-leader-visit-Rome-s-main-synagogue-latest-effort-boost-relations-Jewish-community.html>

<http://www.jta.org/2016/01/15/news-opinion/world/what-pope-francis-synagogue-visit-says-about-catholic-jewish-relations>

<http://www.nwaonline.com/news/2016/jan/17/francis-sets-visit-to-synagogue-in-rome/>

http://www.dispatch.com/content/stories/national_world/2016/01/16/pope-francis-to-visit-rome-synagogue-at-time-of-progress-friction-in-relations.html

<http://www.ynetnews.com/articles/0,7340,L-4753554,00.html>

<http://www.chron.com/news/world/article/Pope-to-visit-synagogue-in-sign-of-friendship-6763487.php>

<http://thedpost.com/Pope-visits-synagogue-amid-quest>

<https://www.ksl.com/?nid=1016&sid=38152715&title=pope-to-visit-synagogue-in-sign-of-friendship-amid-questions>

<http://www.njherald.com/article/20160116/AP/301169921>

Davos, January 19-23

I was invited once again by the World Economic Forum to be part of its world religious leaders group attending its Annual Meeting in Davos. In addition to sessions dealing with Religions and Society I was also interviewed by the “in-house” media, Talking Davos, see <http://shapingdavos.org/#home>

Marrakech, January 23-25

Under the auspices of the King of Morocco Mohammed VI and the renowned Muslim scholar Sheikh Abdullah bin Bayyah, President of the Forum for Peace in Muslim lands, some three hundred Muslim leaders from across the Muslim world gathered together in Marrakech to discuss the future and wellbeing of non-Muslim minorities in Islamic lands. A few score representatives of other religions were invited as observers. These included Christians of different denominations and Yazidis. In addition to the local Moroccan Jewish leaders, Professor Burton Visotsky of JTS and I were invited to attend this notable conference.



Dr. Ahmed Toufiq Moroccan Minister of Religious Affairs addresses the closing session of the Marrakech Declaration meeting.

Also on the dais are Sheikh Abdullah Bin Bayyah of the Islamic Peace Forum; Jordan's minister of Islamic Affairs Hayil Abdelhafeez Dawoud ; and Cardinal Theodor McCarrick of the USA

The Marrakech Declaration issued at the end of the conference expressed the commitment to protect the rights and promote the wellbeing of religious minorities in the Muslim world and combat violent extremism in the name of Islam.

It affirmed inter alia that the UN Declaration on Human Rights is in keeping with the Prophet Mohammed's Charter of Medina .See:-

<http://www.jpost.com/Middle-East/Rabbis-to-attend-Morocco-panel-on-religious-minorities-in-Muslim-countries-442422>

<http://jliflc.com/2016/01/muslims-advance-consensus-for-citizenship-for-all-through-marrakesh-declaration/>

<http://www.moroccoworldnews.com/2016/01/178185/king-mohammed-vis-message-to-conference-on-rights-of-religious-minorities-in-muslim-countries/>