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COMMISSION FOR RELIGIOUS RELATIONS WITH THE JEWS

Editor: Vladimiro Caroli, OP

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We take this opportunity to thank all those who follow our bulletin which offers news regarding the ecumenical activities of the Holy Father and the Pontifical Council for Promoting Christian Unity.

With warmest regards.

The Editorial Staff
POPE BENEDICT XVI AND ECUMENISM*

January-June, 2012

GENERAL AUDIENCE

25 January 2012

After the General Audience on 25 January, Pope Benedict XVI greeted a group of students from the Ecumenical Institute of Bossey, Switzerland with the following words.

TO SPECIAL GROUPS

I offer a warm welcome to the students of the Bossey Graduate School of Ecumenical Studies in Switzerland, and I offer prayerful good wishes for their work. Upon all the English-speaking pilgrims and visitors present at today’s Audience I cordially invoke God’s blessings of joy and peace!

ORE, 1 February 2012

DISCOURSE OF THE POPE AT THE PLENARY MEETING OF THE CONGREGATION FOR THE DOCTRINE OF THE FAITH

27 January 2012

Benedict XVI spoke to participants in the Plenary Assembly of the Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith on Friday, 27 January, in the Vatican’s Clementine Hall. The following is a translation of the Pope’s Address which was given in Italian.

Your Eminences,
Venerable Brothers in the Episcopate
and in the Priesthood,
Dear Brothers and Sisters,

It is a cause of joy to me to meet with you on the occasion of the Plenary Assembly and to express to you my appreciation of the service you carry out for the Church and, in a special way, for the Successor of Peter in his ministry of strengthening the brethren in the faith (cf. Lk 22:32). I thank Cardinal William Levada for his cordial greeting, in which he recalled several important tasks that the Dicastery has carried out in recent years. And I am particularly grateful to the Congregation which, in collaboration with the Pontifical Council for Promoting the New Evangelization, is preparing for the Year of Faith, seeing it as a favourable moment to re-propose to all the gift of faith in the Risen Christ, through the enlightened teaching of the Second Vatican Council and the precious doctrinal synthesis offered by the Catechism of the Catholic Church.

As we know, in vast areas of the earth faith risks being extinguished, like a flame that is no longer fed. We are facing a profound crisis of faith, a loss of the religious sense that constitutes the greatest challenge to the Church today. The renewal of faith must therefore take priority in the commitment of the entire Church in our time. I hope that the Year of Faith will contribute, with the cordial cooperation of all the members of the People of God, to making God present in this world once again and to giving men and women access to the faith to entrust themselves to the God who loved us to the very end (cf. Jn 13:1), in Jesus Christ, Crucified and Risen.

The theme of Christian unity is closely linked to this task. I would therefore like to reflect on several doctrinal aspects concerning the ecumenical path of the Church, which has been the object of deep reflection at this Plenary Meeting, which coincides with the conclusion of the annual Week of Prayer for Christian Unity. In fact, the impetus of the ecumenical endeavour must spring from “spiritual ecumenism”, the “soul of the whole ecumenical movement” (Unitatis Redintegratio, n. 8), which is found in the spirit of the prayer that “they may all be one” (Jn 17:21).

The coherence of the ecumenical endeavour with the teaching of the Second Vatican Council and with the entire Tradition, has been one of the areas to which the Congregation has always paid attention, in collaboration with the Pontifical Council for Promoting Christian Unity. Today we can note the many good fruits yielded by ecumenical dialogue. However, we must also recognize that the risk of a false irenism and of indifferentism — totally foreign to the thinking of the Second Vatican Council — demands our vigilance.

This indifferentism is caused by the increasingly widespread opinion that truth is not accessible to man; hence it is necessary to limit oneself to finding rules for a praxis that can better the world. And like this, faith becomes substituted by a moralism without deep foundations. The centre of true ecumenism is, on the contrary, the faith in which the human

* Sources of the texts are designated as follows: OR: L’Osservatore Romano, daily edition in Italian; ORE: L’Osservatore Romano, weekly edition in English. If texts come from sources other than L’Osservatore Romano, this will be noted. When translation is made by the Information Service it is indicated by the abbreviation: IS.
being finds the truth which is revealed in the Word of God. Without faith the entire ecumenical movement would be reduced to a form of “social contract” to which to adhere out of common interest, a “praxeology”, in order to create a better world. The logic of the Second Vatican Council is quite different: the sincere search for the full unity of all Christians is a dynamic inspired by the Word of God, by the divine Truth who speaks to us in this word.

The crucial problem which marks ecumenical dialogue transversally is therefore the question of the structure of revelation — the relationship between Sacred Scripture, the living Tradition in Holy Church and the Ministry of the Successors of the Apostles as a witness of true faith. And in this case the problem of ecclesiology which is part of this problem is implicit: how God’s truth reaches us.

Fundamental here is the discernment between Tradition with a capital “T” and traditions. I do not want to go into detail but merely to make an observation. An important step in this discernment was made in the preparation and application of the provisions for groups of the Anglican Communion who wish to enter into full communion with the Church, in the unity of our common and essential divine Tradition, maintaining their own spiritual, liturgical and pastoral traditions which are in conformity with the Catholic faith (cf. Constitution Anglicanorum Coetibus, art. III). Indeed, a spiritual richness exists in the different Christian denominations which is an expression of the one faith and a gift to share and to seek together in the Tradition of the Church.

Today, moreover, one of the fundamental questions is the problem of the methods adopted in the various ecumenical dialogues. These too must reflect the priority of faith. Knowing the truth is a right of the conversation partner in every true dialogue. It is a requirement of love for one’s brother or sister. In this sense, it is necessary to face controversial issues courageously, always in a spirit of brotherhood and in reciprocal respect. It is also important to offer a correct interpretation of that order or “hierarchy” which exists in Catholic doctrine, observed in the Decree on Ecumenism, Unitatis Redintegratio (n. 11), which in no way means reducing the deposit of the faith but rather bringing out its internal structure, the organic nature of this unique structure. The study documents produced by the various ecumenical dialogues are very important. These texts cannot be ignored because they are an important, if temporary, fruit of our common reflection developed over the years. Nevertheless their proper significance should be recognized as a contribution offered to the competent Authority of the Church, which alone is called to judge them definitively. To ascribe to these texts a binding or as if they were definitive solution to the thorny questions of the dialogues without the proper evaluation of the ecclesial Authority, would ultimately hinder the journey toward full unity in faith.

Finally, I would like to mention one last matter: the moral problem, which is a new challenge to the ecumenical process. In the dialogue we cannot ignore the great moral questions regarding human life, the family, sexuality, bioethics, freedom, justice and peace. It will be important to speak about these topics with one voice, drawing from the foundations in Scripture and in the living Tradition of the Church. This Tradition helps us to decipher the language of the Creator in his creation. In defending the fundamental values of the Church’s great Tradition, we defend the human being, we defend creation.

At the end of these reflections, my hope is that a close and fraternal collaboration of the Congregation with the competent Pontifical Council for Promoting Christian Unity, may effectively further the reestablishment of full unity among all Christians. Indeed, the division among Christians, “openly contradicts the will of Christ, scandalizes the world, and DAMAGES that most holy cause, the preaching of the Gospel to every creature” (Decree on Ecumenism, Unitatis Redintegratio, n. 1).

Unity is therefore not only the fruit of faith but also a means and as it were a presupposition for proclaiming the faith ever more credibly to those who do not yet know the Saviour. Jesus prayed: “that they may all be one; even as you, Father, are in me, and I in you, that they also may be in us, so that the world may believe that you have sent me” (Jn 17:21).

As I once again express to you my gratitude for your service, I assure you of my constant spiritual closeness and cordially impart to all of you the Apostolic Blessing. Many Thanks.

ORE, 1 February 2012

TELEGRAM ON THE DEATH OF POPE SHENOUDA III

17 March 2012

Pope Shenouda III, Coptic Orthodox Patriarch of Alexandria, died on Saturday 17 March. The Holy Father Benedict XVI was represented at the funeral by Cardinal Kurt Koch and sent a telegram expressing his condolences. The following is a translation of the message originally written in French.

Learning with sadness of the passing away to God, our common Father, of His Holiness Shenouda III, Patriarch of Alexandria and the See of St Mark, I wish to express to the members of the Holy Synod, to the priests and to the faithful of the entire Patriarchate my sincere condolences and fraternal compassion. I remember with gratitude his commitment to Christian unity, his memorable visit to my Predecessor Pope Paul VI and their signing of the Joint Declaration of Faith in the Incarnation of the Son of God, on 10 May 1973 in Rome, as well as his meeting with Pope John Paul II during the Great Jubilee of the Incarnation, on 24 February 2000 in Cairo. I can say that the entire Catholic Church shares in the mourning of the Orthodox Copts, and I pray fervently, asking the One who is the Resurrection and the Life to welcome to his house his faithful servant. May the God of all mercy receive him in his joy, peace and light.

BENEDICT PP. XVI

ORE, 21 March 2012
LETTER TO CATHOLICOS PATRIARCH MAR DINKHA IV ON THE 50th ANNIVERSARY OF HIS EPISCOPAL CONSECRATION

On the occasion of the 50th anniversary of the Episcopalian consecration of His Holiness Mar Dinkha IV, Catholicos Patriarch of the Assyrian Church of the East, Benedict XVI sent a congratulatory Message in which he recalled the fruitful theological dialogue between the Catholic Church and the Assyrian Church which began in 1994 with the signing of a Common Declaration on Christology. This commitment was renewed by the Holy Father when he met Mar Dinkha IV on 21 June 2007. The following is the Holy Father's letter written in English.

The Golden Jubilee of the Episcopalian consecration of Your Holiness, which has culminated in your distinguished ministry as Catholicos Patriarch of the Assyrian Church of the East, offers me the opportunity to extend my congratulations and prayerful good wishes to you.

I thank the Lord for the many blessings he has bestowed on the Assyrian Church of the East through your ministry, and I am grateful for your commitment to promoting constructive dialogue, fruitful cooperation and growing friendship between our Churches. I recall your presence at the funeral of John Paul II and, previously, your 1994 visit to Rome to sign a Common Declaration on Christology. The subsequent Joint Commission for Theological Dialogue between the Catholic Church and the Assyrian Church of the East has borne many fruits. I renew the hope which I expressed during your visit to Rome in June 2007, that “the fruitful labour which the Commission has accomplished over the years can continue, while never losing sight of the ultimate goal of our common journey towards the re-establishment of full communion”.

I wish also to reiterate my solidarity with the Christian communities in Iraq and throughout the Middle East, praying that effective forms of common witness to the Gospel and pastoral collaboration in the service of peace, reconciliation and unity may be deepened between the Catholic and Assyrian faithful.

Your Holiness, on this significant anniversary, I pray that the love of God the Father may enfold you, the wisdom of the Son enlighten you and the fire of the Holy Spirit continue to inspire you.

With sentiments of respect, I extend to Your Holiness a fraternal embrace in Jesus Christ our Saviour.

BENEDICTUS PP.XVI

ORE, 30 May 2012
Christian unity should also be achieved even in ethical and anthropological issues, in a way that can “help society and politicians to make wise and just decisions”. The Pope said this to an ecumenical delegation from Finland, which he received in audience on Thursday morning, 19 January on the Feast of St Henry, Patron of Finland. The following is the Pope’s Address.

Dear Bishop Sippo,
Dear Bishop Häkkinen,
Distinguished friends from Finland,

It is with great joy that I welcome you, the members of the Finnish delegation, on the occasion of your annual ecumenical pilgrimage to Rome in order to celebrate once more today’s feast of Saint Henrik, the patron saint of Finland. In remembering our patron Saints we give thanks for the action of the Holy Spirit, informing and transforming the lives of those who have left us an outstanding example of fidelity to Christ and to the Gospel.

The annual visit of an ecumenical delegation from Finland testifies to the growth of communion among the Christian traditions represented in your country. It is my profound hope that this communion may continue to grow, bearing rich fruit among Catholics, Lutherans and all other Christians in your beloved homeland. Our deepened friendship and common witness to Jesus Christ — especially before today’s world, which so often lacks true direction and longs to hear the message of salvation — must hasten our progress towards the resolution of our remaining differences, and indeed of all matters on which Christians are divided.

In recent times, ethical questions have become one of the points of difference among Christians, especially with regard to the proper understanding of human nature and its dignity. There is a need for Christians to arrive at a profound agreement on matters of anthropology, which can then help society and politicians to make wise and just decisions regarding important questions in the area of human life, family and sexuality.

In this regard, the recent ecumenical bilateral dialogue document in the Finnish-Swedish context not only reflects a rapprochement between Catholics and Lutherans over the understanding of justification, but it urges Christians to renew their commitment to imitate Christ in life and action. We trust in the power of the Holy Spirit to make possible what may still seem beyond our reach: a widespread renewal of holiness and public practice of Christian virtue, after the example of the great witnesses who have gone before us.

In this year’s Week of Prayer for Christian Unity, the second reading from today’s suggested texts recalls the patience of faithful believers like Abraham (Heb 6:15) who were rewarded for their faith and trust in God. The realization that God lovingly intervenes in our history teaches us not to place undue emphasis on what we can accomplish through our own efforts. Our longing for the full, visible unity of Christians requires patient and trustful waiting, not in a spirit of helplessness or passivity, but with deep trust that the unity of all Christians in one Church is truly God’s gift and not our own achievement. Such patient waiting, in prayerful hope, transforms us and prepares us for visible unity not as we plan it, but as God grants it.

It is my fervent hope that your visit to Rome will help to deepen the fraternal relations that exist between Lutherans and Catholics in Finland. Let us thank God for all that he has granted us so far and let us pray that he may fill us with the Spirit of truth to guide us towards ever greater love and unity. Upon you and all your fellow-citizens, I invoke God’s abundant blessings.

ORE, 25 January 2012

ADDRESS OF BISHOP SEppo HAKKINEN
Bishop of the Diocese of Mikkeli

Your Holiness!

Exactly 570 years ago, on January 19th in 1442 in Finland, 15 men met Maunu Tavast, the bishop of Turku. The meeting was concluded with a written agreement on hiring a pastor and founding a parish in the hinterland of Finland. The parish of Juva that was thus established celebrated its 570th anniversary last Sunday. Together we thanked God for his faithfulness and goodness that has lasted for centuries.

Five hundred years later, in 1942, Your predecessor, Pius XII met in the Vatican Finland’s Ambassador Georg Achates Gripenberg, who presented his
credentials. Therefore, this year marks the 70th anniversary of the diplomatic relations between Finland and the Holy See. Addressing the ambassador, the bishop of Rome named Bishop Maunu Tavast as the greatest medieval Finnish bishop; he served as bishop of Turku for nearly 40 years. Maunu Tavast developed a vibrant life of divine services, founded the Brigittine Abbey in Naantali and also acted as statesman.

These two meetings I have mentioned tell us about the common roots of the Roman Catholic Church and the Evangelical Lutheran Church of Finland. The Lutheran Church also continues the Apostolic Church and the old church tradition in Finland. This offers natural basis for furthering unity. A practical example of this is this annual pilgrimage to Rome of a Catholic and Lutheran bishop. Together we will celebrate common ecumenical mass today on the day commemorating our national patron Saint Henrik, in the Santa Maria sopra Minerva basilica. As Lutherans and Catholics we want to honour together the memory of Finland’s first bishop, Saint Henrik. His life calls us to work and pray for the unity of the church.

There are many more factors uniting our churches than there are those that separate them. In the last decades, we have progressed in understanding each other and have become closer in many ways. We can be grateful for that. However, we must not stay in this situation. The objective of ecumenism is the visible unity of the church and joint participation in the sacraments of the altar. We must continue to struggle toward this goal in order to be obedient to Christ’s prayer (Jn 17:21, NIV). We people will not be able to create unity. Our task is to create the prerequisites for it. Unity is given to us. That is why we need incessant prayer and the work of the Holy Spirit.

Holy Father, the diocese of Mikkeli has been named after Archangel Michael. The coat of arms of the diocese depicts a dove carrying an olive branch in its beak. Both of these themes are in the glass plate I present to You as a gift. According to the calling received from God, the mission of Michael was to fight against evil and to defend people. He is a befitting role model to all who work in the church of Christ. The dove as a symbol of the Holy Spirit reminds us of God’s actions in our midst. He gives peace and blessing. With this gift I pray that God blesses You, Holy Father.
WEEK OF PRAYER FOR CHRISTIAN UNITY

Rome, 18-25 January 2012

Saint Paul understood his life as a “gradual process of conformation” to Christ or, rather, conformity to the unique and universal “victory” of Christ over sin and death. While the personal transformation of Paul bears the most intimate and profound relation to the “mystery”, it is at the same time the most universal of experiences, eventually to be proclaimed to the world “in a moment, in the twinkling of an eye, at the last trumpet”. The Holy Father reflects that it is only in contemplating the nature of this event, its graduality in us, and its intimate relation to “God’s own time”, that “our prayers and our daily commitment to Christian unity find their full meaning”.

The Holy Father thus disassociates the idea of “victory” from that of “instant success”, understanding it as an experience that occurs in a precise moment within a personal process of “gradual conformation” to Christ. That moment for every Christian is the very moment of communion with the final victory, when “the dead will be raised imperishable, and we shall be changed”.

It is in this perspective that the Holy Father expresses his conviction that the commitment to Christian unity must relinquish the aim of an easy victory as it is perceived in today’s “dominant culture”. The goal of full unity must be undertaken in “active hope” and prayer, which are the true wellsprings of its efficacy.

This does not mean passive resignation, as when hope in one’s goals and mission is lost because “instant success” has not rewarded one’s efforts. On the contrary, for the Holy Father, it means a “prompt and attentive response to every possibility of communion and brotherhood that the Lord gives us”. This response is not founded on success at all costs, but on the victory emanating from the gradual and growing communion with “God’s goodness” that “conquers evil... and death”.

It is in this “spiritual climate” that we recognise that those who pray and work together for unity are also those who seek personal conformity to Christ, and who seek the full and final victory of Christ over death, sin and divisions.

With these reflections Pope Benedict XVI addressed the faithful gathered in the Basilica of St Paul Outside-the-Walls on 25 January for the celebration of Vespers at the conclusion of the Week of Prayer for Christian Unity. We publish here the various homilies and prayers pronounced by the Holy Father throughout the week, as they reiterate the significance of the Week of Prayer for Christian Unity.

ANGELUS
15 January 2012

Speaking to the faithful gathered in St Peter’s Square for the recitation of the Marian prayer, the Holy Father reminded them of the Week of Prayer for Christian Unity, with the closing ceremony annually held at the Basilica of St Paul Outside-the-Walls in Rome. The following is an extract of his words following the Angelus.

Dear Brothers and Sisters,

(...) I wish to remind you that the Week of Prayer for Christian Unity will be taking place from 18 to 25 of this month of January. I invite everyone, personally and as a community, to join it in spirit and, where possible, also in practice, in order to invoke from God the gift of full unity among Christ’s disciples. (...)

ORE, 18 January 2012

GENERAL AUDIENCE
18 January 2012

“How can we give a convincing witness if we are divided?”. The Holy Father asked this question regarding the New Evangelization during the General Audience on Wednesday morning, 18 January, marking the first day of this year’s Week of Prayer for Christian Unity. The Pope emphasized that Christian Unity is an important challenge for the New Evangelization, “which will be more fruitful when all Christians proclaim together the truth of the Gospel of Jesus Christ and give a common response to the spiritual thirst of our times”. The following is a translation of the Pope’s Catechesis, which was given in Italian.

Dear Brothers and Sisters,

The Week of Prayer for Christian Unity begins today. For more than a century it has been cele-
brated every year by Christians of all Churches and ecclesial communities in order to invoke the extraordinary gift for which the Lord Jesus himself prayed at the Last Supper, before his Passion: “that they may all be one; even as you, Father, are in me, and I in you, that they also may be in us, so that the world may believe that you have sent me” (Jn 17:21).

The practice of the Week of Prayer for Christian Unity was introduced in 1908 by Fr Paul Wattson, the founder of an Anglican religious community who later entered the Catholic Church. The initiative received the blessing of Pope St Pius X and was later promoted by Pope Benedict XV, who encouraged its celebration throughout the Catholic Church with the Brief Romanorum Pontificum of 25 February 1916.

The Octave of Prayer was developed and perfected in the 1930s by Abbé Paul Couturier of Lyons, who supported the prayer “for the unity of the Church as Christ wants her and in conformity with the instruments that he desires”. His last writings show that Abbé Couturier saw this Week as a means which enables Christ’s universal prayer “to enter and penetrate the entire Body of Christians”; it must grow until it becomes “an immense, unanimous cry of the entire People of God”, asking God for this great gift. Moreover the Week of Prayer for Christian Unity is in itself one of the most effective expressions of the impetus the Second Vatican Council gave to the search for full communion among all Christ’s disciples.

May this spiritual event that unites Christians of all traditions increase our awareness that the true unity for which we strive cannot be solely the result of our own efforts but, rather, will be a gift from on high, to be ceaselessly prayed for.

Every year the booklets for the Week of Prayer are compiled by an ecumenical group from a different region of the world. I would like to reflect here on this point. This year the texts have been proposed by a joint group of representatives of the Catholic Church and of the Polish Ecumenical Council, comprised of various Churches and ecclesial communities of the country. The documentation was then revised by a committee made up of members of the Pontifical Council for Promoting Christian Unity and of the Faith and Order Commission of the World Council of Churches. This work done in two phases, is a further sign of the desire for unity that motivates Christians and of the awareness that prayer is the main way to attain full communion since if we are united in our orientation to the Lord we are on our way to unity.

The theme of this year’s Week — as we have heard — was taken from the First Letter to the Corinthians: “We shall all be changed ... by the victory of our Lord Jesus Christ” (cf. 1 Cor 15:51-58), his victory will transform us. This theme was suggested by the large Polish ecumenical group, as I mentioned, which, reflecting on its experience as a nation, chose to emphasize how strong the support of the Christian faith is in trials and upheavals, such as those that have marked the history of Poland. After much discussion, a theme was chosen which focuses on the transforming power of faith in Christ and in particular in the light of its importance to our prayers for the visible unity of the Church, the Body of Christ.

The inspiration for this reflection was drawn from St Paul’s words to the Church in Corinth. He speaks of the transitory nature of what belongs to our life in the present, marked too by the experience of the “defeat” of sin and death, in comparison with what Christ’s “victory” over sin and death in his Paschal Mystery brings to us.

The particular history of the Polish nation which experienced periods of democratic coexistence and religious freedom, as in the 16th century, was marked in the last centuries by invasions and defeats, the constant struggle against oppression and the thirst for freedom. It was all this that led the ecumenical group to reflect more deeply on the true meaning of “victory” — what victory is — and of “defeat”. Concerning “victory” understood in triumphalistic terms, Christ suggests to us a very different road that does not pass through dominance and power. Indeed, he says: “If anyone would be first, he must be last of all and servant of all” (Mk 9:35).

Christ speaks of a victory through suffering love, reciprocal service, help, new hope and practical comfort given to the lowliest, to the forgotten, to the outcast. For all Christians the loftiest expression of this humble service is Jesus Christ himself, the total gift that he makes of himself, the victory of his love over death, on the cross, that shines in the light of Easter morning.

Only if we let ourselves be transformed by God, only if we undertake to convert our life and if the transformation is brought about in the form of conversion can we share in this transforming “victory”. This is the reason why the Polish ecumenical group considered St Paul’s words: “We shall all be changed by the victory of our Lord Jesus Christ” (cf. 1 Cor 15:51-58) particularly appropriate for the theme of its meditation.

The full and visible Christian unity that we long for demands that we let ourselves be transformed and that we conform ever more perfectly to the image of Christ. The unity we pray for requires an inner conversion that is both common and personal. It is not merely a matter of cordiality or cooperation, it is necessary above all to strengthen our faith in God, in the God of Jesus Christ, who spoke to us and made himself one of us. It is necessary to enter into new life in Christ, who is our true and definitive victory; it is necessary to open ourselves to one another, understanding all the elements of unity that God keeps for us and gives us ever anew; it is necessary to be aware of the urgent need to bear witness among the people of our time to the living God, who made himself known in Christ.
The Second Vatican Council made the ecumenical search the centre of the Church’s life and activity: “The Sacred Council exhorts all the Catholic faithful to recognize the signs of the times and to take an active and intelligent part in the work of ecumenism” (Unitatis Redintegratio, n. 4). Blessed John Paul II underlined the essential nature of this task, saying, “This unity, which the Lord has bestowed on his Church and in which he wishes to embrace all people, is not something added on, but stands at the very heart of Christ’s mission. Nor is it some secondary attribute of the community of his disciples. Rather, it belongs to the very essence of this community” (Encyclical Ut Unum Sint, n. 9).

Hence the ecumenical task is a responsibility of the entire Church and of all the baptized, who must develop the partial communion that already exists among Christians and make it grow into full communion in truth and in charity. The prayer for unity is consequently not restricted to this Week of Prayer but must become an integral part of our prayers, of the life of prayer of all Christians, in every place and in every time, especially when people of different traditions meet and work together for the victory, in Christ, over all that is sin, evil, injustice and the violation of human dignity.

Since the birth of the modern ecumenical movement, more than a century ago, there has always been a clear awareness that the lack of unity among Christians is an obstacle to a more effective proclamation of the Gospel, because it endangers our credibility. How can we give a convincing witness if we are divided?

Of course, the fundamental truths of the faith unite us far more than they divide us. Yet the divisions remain, and also concern various practical and ethical issues, giving rise to confusion and diffidence, undermining our ability to transmit the saving word of Christ. In this sense, we should remember the words of Blessed John Paul II who spoke in his Encyclical Ut Unum Sint of the damage to Christian witness and to the proclamation of the Gospel that is caused by the lack of unity (cf. nn. 98, 99). This presents an important challenge to the New Evangelization, which will be all the more fruitful when all Christians proclaim together the truth of the Gospel of Jesus Christ and give a common response to the spiritual thirst of our time.

The Church’s journey, like that of the peoples, is in the hands of the Risen Christ, victorious over death and over the injustice that he suffered in the name of all. He makes us share in his victory. He alone can transform us and change us from weak and hesitant people into strong and courageous in doing good. He alone can save us from the negative consequences of our divisions. Dear brothers and sisters, I invite everyone to join together more intensely in prayer during this Week for Unity, so that the common witness, solidarity and collaboration among Christians may increase, in the expectation of the glorious day on which we shall profess together the faith handed down by the Apostles and celebrate together the sacraments of our transformation in Christ. Many thanks.

TO SPECIAL GROUPS

I cordially invite everyone to join in the prayer that Jesus addressed to the Father on the eve of his Passion: ‘that they may all be one… so that the world may believe’. The Holy Father commented on these words before leading the recitation of the Angelus with the faithful gathered in St Peter’s Square at noon on 22 January, in the middle of the Week of Prayer for Christian Unity. The following is a translation of the Pope’s Reflection, which was given in Italian.

Dear Brothers and Sisters,

This Sunday falls in the middle of the Week of Prayer for Christian Unity which is celebrated from 18 to 25 January. I cordially invite everyone to join in the prayer that Jesus addressed to the Father on the eve of his Passion: “that they may all be one… so that the world may believe” (Jn 17:21). This year in particular our meditation during the Week of Prayer for Unity refers to a passage of St Paul’s First Letter to the Corinthians, from which the theme was formulated: “We will all be changed by the victory of our Lord Jesus Christ” (cf. 1 Cor 15:51-58). We are called to contemplate Christ’s victory over sin and death, that is, his Resurrection, as an event that radically transforms all who believe in him and gives them access to incorruptible and immortal life. In addition, recognizing and accepting the transforming power of faith in Jesus Christ sustains Christians in the search for full unity among themselves.

This year the resource material for the Week of Prayer for Unity has been prepared by a Polish group. Indeed Poland has lived through a long history of courageously fighting various adversities and time and again has given proof of great determination, motivated by faith. For this reason the words of the above-mentioned theme have special resonance and effectiveness in Poland. Down the centuries Polish Christians have spontaneously perceived a spiritual dimension in their desire for free-
dom and have understood that true victory can only be achieved if it is accompanied by a profound inner transformation. They remind us that our quest for unity can be realistically conducted if the change takes place within us first of all and if we let God act, if we let ourselves be transformed into the image of Christ, if we enter into new life in Christ who is the true victory.

The visible unity of all Christians is always a task that comes from on high, from God, a task that demands the humility of recognizing our weakness and of receiving the gift. However, to use a phrase which Blessed John Paul II liked to repeat, every gift also becomes a commitment. The unity that comes from God therefore demands of us the daily commitment to open ourselves to each other in charity.

The Week of Prayer for Christian Unity has been a central feature in the Church's ecumenical activity for many decades. The time that we devote to prayer for the full communion of Christ's disciples will enable us to understand more deeply that we will be transformed by his victory, by the power of his Resurrection.

Next Wednesday, as is the custom, we shall conclude the Week of Prayer with the solemn celebration of Vespers on the Feast of the Conversion of St Paul, in the Basilica of St Paul Outside-the-Walls at which representatives of other Churches and Christian Communities will also be present. I expect many of you to come to this liturgical encounter to renew together our prayer to the Lord, the source of unity, with filial trust, to the intercession of the Blessed Virgin Mary, Mother of the Church.

**AFTER THE ANGELUS**

**Dear Brothers and Sisters,**

In these days, various countries in the Far East are joyfully celebrating the lunar New Year. In the present global situation of economic and social crisis I express to all those peoples the hope that the New Year will be concretely marked by justice and peace, that it will bring relief to the suffering and, especially, that young people will offer new hope to the world with their enthusiasm and their idealism.

I greet all the English-speaking pilgrims and visitors present at today's Angelus. This week, Christians throughout the world mark the Week of Prayer for Christian Unity. We are confident that, as St Paul says, “We will all be changed by the victory of our Lord Jesus Christ” (cf. 1 Cor 15:51-58). Let us renew our prayer for the unity of all of Christ's followers, and deepen our resolve to be one in him. Upon each of you and your loved ones at home, I invoke God's blessings of peace and joy.

I address a cordial greeting to the Italian-speaking pilgrims, in a special way to the parish groups and families, and I wish everyone a good Sunday. A good Sunday, a good week to you all!

ORE, 25 January 2012

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**GENERAL AUDIENCE**

**25 January 2012**

The Church is born from Jesus' prayer, and thus becomes “the place in which Christ's same mission continues”, the Holy Father said at the General Audience in the Paul VI Hall on Wednesday 25 January, continuing his Catechesis on Christian prayer. The following is a translation of the Pope's Catechesis, which was given in Italian.

**Dear Brothers and Sisters,**

In today's Catechesis let us focus our attention on the prayer that Jesus raises to the Father in the "Hour" of his exaltation and glorification (cf. Jn 17:1-26). As the *Catechism of the Catholic Church* says: "Christian Tradition rightly calls this prayer the 'priestly' prayer of Jesus. It is the prayer of our High Priest, inseparable from his sacrifice, from his "passing over" (Passover) to the Father to whom he is wholly 'consecrated'” (n. 2747).

The extreme richness of Jesus’ prayer can be understood especially if we set it against the backdrop of the Jewish feast of expiation, *Yom Kippur*. On that day the High Priest makes expiation first for himself and then for the category of priests, and, lastly, for the whole community of the people. The purpose is to restore to the People of Israel, after a year’s transgressions, the awareness of their reconciliation with God, the awareness that they are the Chosen People, a “holy people”, among the other peoples. The prayer of Jesus, presented in Chapter 17 of the Gospel according to John, returns to the structure of this feast. On that night Jesus addresses the Father at the moment when he is offering himself. He, priest and victim, prays for himself, for the Apostles and for all those who will believe in him and for the Church of all the time (cf. Jn 17:20).

The prayer that Jesus prays for himself is the request for his glorification, for his “exaltation” in his "Hour". In fact, it is more than a prayer of petition, more than the declaration of his full willingness to enter, freely and generously, into the plan of God the Father, which is fulfilled in his being consigned and in his death and resurrection. This “Hour” began with Judas’ betrayal (cf. 13:31) and was to end in the ascension of the Risen Jesus to the Father (Jn 20:17).

Jesus comments on Judas’ departure from the Upper Room with these words: “Now is the Son of man glorified, and in him God is glorified” (Jn 13:31). It is not by chance that he begins his priestly prayer saying: “Father, the hour has come; glorify your Son that the Son may glorify you” (Jn 17:1).

The glorification that Jesus asks for himself as High Priest, is the entry into full obedience to the Father, an obedience that leads to his fullest filial condition: “And now, Father, glorify me in your own presence with the glory which I had with you before the world was made” (Jn 17:5). This readi-
ness and this request are the first act of the new priesthood of Jesus, which is a total gift of himself on the Cross and on the Cross itself — the supreme act of love — he is glorified because love is the true glory, the divine glory.

The second moment of this prayer is the intercession that Jesus makes for the disciples who have been with him. They are those of whom Jesus can say to the Father: “I have manifested your name to the men whom you gave me out of the world; yours they were, and you gave them to me, and they have kept your word” (Jn 17:6). This “manifesting God’s name to men” is the fulfilment of a new presence of the Father among the people, for humanity. This “manifesting” is not only a word, but is reality in Jesus; God is with us, and so his name — his presence with us, his being one of us — is “fulfilled”. This manifestation is thus realized in the Incarnation of the Word. In Jesus God enters human flesh, he becomes close in a new and unique way. And this presence culminates in the sacrifice that Jesus makes in his Pasch of death and Resurrection.

At the centre of this prayer of intercession and of expiation in favour of the disciples is the request for consecration; Jesus says to the Father: “They are not of the world, even as I am not of the world. Sanctify them in the truth; your word is truth. As you did send me into the world, so I have sent them into the world. And for their sake I consecrate myself, that they also may be consecrated in truth” (Jn 17:16-19).

I ask: what does “consecrate” mean in this case? First of all it must be said that really only God is “consecrated” or “holy”. “To consecrate” therefore means “to transfer” a reality — a person or a thing — to become the property of God. And two complementary aspects are present in this: on the one hand, removing them from ordinary things, segregating, “setting them apart” from the context of personal human life so that they may be totally given to God; and on the other, this segregation, this transference into God’s sphere, has the very meaning of “sending”, of mission: precisely because he or she is given to God, the reality, the consecrated person, exists “for” others, is given to others. Giving to God means no longer existing for oneself, but for everyone. Whoever, like Jesus, is segregated from the world and set apart for God with a view to a task is for this very reason, fully available to all. For the disciples the task will be to continue Jesus’ mission, to be given to God and thereby to be on mission for all. The Risen One, appearing to his disciples on Easter evening, was to say to them: “Peace be with you. As the Father has sent me, even so I send you” (Jn 20:21).

The third part of this priestly prayer extends to the end of time. In it Jesus turns to the Father in order to intercede for all those who will be brought to the faith through the mission inaugurated by the Apostles and continued in history: “I do not pray for these only, but also for those who believe in me through their world”. Jesus prays for the Church of all time, he also prays for us (Jn 17:20).

The Catechism of the Catholic Church comments: “Jesus fulfilled the work of the Father completely; his prayer, like his sacrifice, extends until the end of time. The prayer of this hour fills the endtimes and carries them toward their consummation” (n. 2749).

The central request of the priestly prayer of Jesus dedicated to his disciples of all epochs is that of the future unity of those who will believe in him. This unity is not a worldly product. It comes exclusively from the divine unity and reaches us from the Father, through the Son and in the Holy Spirit. Jesus invokes a gift that comes from Heaven and has its effect — real and perceptible — on earth. He prays “that they may all be one; even as you, Father are in me, and I in you, that they also may be in us, so that the world may believe that you have sent me” (Jn 17:21).

Christian unity, on the one hand, is a secret reality that is in the heart of believers. But, at the same time, it must appear with full clarity in history, it must appear so that the world may believe, it has a very practical and concrete purpose, it must appear so that all may really be one. The unity of future disciples, in being united with Jesus — whom the Father sent into the world — is also the original source of the efficacity of the Christian mission in the world.

“We can say that the founding of the Church takes place” in the priestly prayer of Jesus... In this very place, in the act of the Last Supper, Jesus creates the Church. “For what else is the Church, if not the community of disciples who through faith in Jesus Christ as the one sent by the Father”, receives his unity and is involved in Jesus’ mission to save the world, leading it to knowledge of God? Here we really find a true definition of the Church. “The Church is born from Jesus’ prayer. But this prayer is more than words; it is the act by which he ‘sanctifies’ himself, that is to say, he ‘sacrifices’ himself for the life of the world” (cf. Jesus of Nazareth, II, p. 101).

Jesus prays that his disciples may be one. By virtue of this unity, received and preserved, the Church can walk “in the world” without being “of the world” (cf. Jn 17:16) and can live the mission entrusted to her so that the world may believe in the Son and in the Father who sent him. Therefore the Church becomes the place in which the mission of Christ itself continues: to lead the “world” out of man’s alienation from God and out of himself, out of sin, so that it may return to being the world of God.

Dear brothers and sisters, we have grasped a few elements of the great richness of the priestly prayer of Jesus, which I invite you to read and to meditate on so that it may guide us in dialogue with the Lord and teach us to pray. Let us too, therefore, in our prayers, ask God to help us to enter, more fully, into the design he has for each one of us. Let us ask him to be “consecrated” to him, to belong to him more
and more, to be able to love others more and more, those who are near and far; let us ask him to be able always to open our prayer to the dimensions of the world, not closing it to the request for help with our problems but remembering our neighbour before the Lord, learning the beauty of interceding for others; let us ask him for the gift of visible unity among all believers in Christ — we have invoked it forcefully in this Week of Prayer for Christian Unity — let us pray to be ever ready to answer anyone who asks us to account for the hope that is in us (cf. 1 Pt 3:15). Many thanks.

ORE, 1 February 2012

CELEBRATION OF VESPERS FOR THE CONCLUSION OF THE WEEK OF PRAYER FOR CHRISTIAN UNITY

25 January 2012

Here below is a translation from Italian of the Pope’s Homily in the Basilica of St Paul Outside-the-Walls, at the traditional celebration of Second Vespers of the Apostle’s Conversion for the conclusion of the 45th Week of Prayer for Christian Unity.

Dear Brothers and Sisters,

With great joy I address my warm greeting to all of you who are gathered in this Basilica on the liturgical Feast of the Conversion of St Paul for the conclusion of the Week of Prayer for Christian Unity this year, in which we shall be celebrating the 50th anniversary of the opening of the Second Vatican Council. It was in this Basilica that Blessed John XXIII announced the Council on 25 January 1959. The theme that has been offered for our meditation in the Week of Prayer which we are concluding today is “We Will All Be Changed by the Victory of Our Lord Jesus Christ” (cf. 1 Cor 15:51-58).

The meaning of this mysterious transformation, of which the brief Second Reading speaks to us this evening, is wonderfully demonstrated in St Paul’s personal experience. After the extraordinary event that occurred on the road to Damascus, Saul, who was zealous in his persecution of the nascent Church, was transformed into a tireless apostle of the Gospel of Jesus Christ.

It is clear from what happened to this extraordinary evangelizer that his transformation was not the result of long inner reflection nor even the fruit of personal effort. It was first and foremost a work of the grace of God who acted in his own inscrutable ways. This explains why, in writing to the community of Corinth a few years after his conversion, St Paul affirms, as we heard in the first passage of this Vespers: “by the grace of God I am what I am, and his grace toward me was not in vain” (1 Cor 15:10).

In addition, in considering attentively what happened to St Paul, one understands that the transformation he experienced in his life is not limited to the ethical level — such as conversion from immorality to morality — nor to the intellectual level — such as a change in his way of understanding reality — but, rather, is a matter of the radical renewal of his being, similar in many aspects to a rebirth. This transformation is founded on participation in the mystery of the death and Resurrection of Jesus Christ and is described as a gradual process of conformation to him. In the light of this awareness, when St Paul was subsequently called to defend the legitimacy of his apostolic vocation and of the Gospel he proclaimed, he was to say: “I have been crucified with Christ; it is no longer I who live, but Christ who lives in me; and the life I now live in the flesh I live by faith in the Son of God, who loved me and gave himself for me” (Gal 2:20).

St Paul’s personal experience enables him to expect with well-founded hope the fulfilment of this mystery of transformation that will concern all who have believed in Jesus Christ, as well as all humanity and the whole of creation. In the short Second Reading proclaimed this evening, St Paul, after developing a long case aimed at strengthening the hope of the Resurrection in the faithful, describes in a few lines, employing the traditional imagery of the apocalyptic literature of his time, the great day of the Last Judgement in which humanity’s destiny will be fulfilled: “In a moment, in the twinkling of an eye, at the last trumpet... the dead will be raised imperishable, and we shall be changed” (1 Cor 15:52).

On that day all believers will be brought into conformity with Christ and all that is perishable will be transformed by his glory. St Paul says: “For this perishable nature must put on the imperishable, and this mortal nature must put on immortality” (v. 53).

Then the triumph of Christ will at last be complete, because, St Paul tells us further, showing how the ancient prophesies of Scripture are brought about, death will be overcome once and for all and with it sin which caused it to enter the world and the Law that establishes sin without providing the power to overcome it: “‘Death is swallowed up in victory’. / ‘O death where is your victory? / O death, where is your sting?’ / The sting of death is sin, and the power of sin is the Law” (vv. 54-56).

St Paul tells us, therefore, that every man and woman, through baptism in the death and Resurrection of Christ, participates in the victory of the One who defeated death first, setting out on a journey of transformation that is manifested from this moment in a newness of life that will reach its fullness at the end of time.

It is indeed significant that the passage ends with an expression of gratitude: “thanks be to God, who gives us the victory through our Lord Jesus Christ” (v. 57). The song of triumph over death changes into a hymn of thanksgiving raised to the Victor. This evening, in celebrating vespers in praise of God, let us too join our voices, minds and hearts in this hymn of thanksgiving for what divine grace
worked in the Apostle to the Gentiles and for the wonderful saving plan which God the Father brings about in us through the Lord Jesus Christ.

As we raise our prayers we are confident that we too will be transformed and brought into conformity with the image of Christ. This is particularly true in the prayer for Christian unity. Indeed, when we implore the gift of the unity of Christ’s disciples, we make our own the desire expressed by Jesus Christ on the eve of his Passion and death in the prayer he addressed to the Father: “that they may all be one” (Jn 17:21). The prayer for Christian unity for this reason is nothing other than participation in the realization of the divine plan for the Church and the active commitment to re-establishing unity is a task and a great responsibility for all.

Although in our day we are experiencing the sorrowful situation of division, we Christians can and must look to the future with hope, since Christ’s victory means surmounting all that prevents us from sharing the fullness of life with him and with others. The Resurrection of Jesus Christ confirms that God’s goodness conquers evil and love conquers death. He accompanies us in the fight against the destructive power of sin that damages humanity and God’s entire creation.

The presence of the Risen Christ calls all of us Christians to act together in the cause of good. United in Christ, we are called to share his mission, which is to bring hope to wherever injustice, hatred and desperation prevail. Our divisions dim our witness to Christ. The goal of full unity, which we await in active hope and for which we pray trustingly, is no secondary victory but an important one for the good of the human family.

In the dominant culture today, the idea of victory is often associated with instant success. In the Christian perspective, on the contrary, victory is a long, and in our human eyes, not always uncomplicated process of transformation and growth in goodness. It happens in accordance with God’s time, not ours, and requires of us deep faith and patient perseverance. Although the Kingdom of God bursts definitively into history with Jesus’ Resurrection, it has not yet come about fully. The final victory will only be won with the Second Coming of the Lord, which we await with patient hope.

Our expectation of the visible unity of the Church must also be patient and trusting. Only in this frame of mind do our prayers and our daily commitment to Christian unity find their full meaning. The attitude of patient waiting does not mean passivity or resignation but rather a prompt and attentive response to every possibility of communion and brotherhood that the Lord gives us.

In this spiritual climate I would like to extend special greetings, first to Cardinal Monterisi, Archpriest of this Basilica, and to the Abbot and the community of Benedictine monks for hosting us. I greet Cardinal Koch, President of the Pontifical Council for Promoting Christian Unity, and all the co-workers of this Dicastery. I address my cordial and brotherly greetings to His Eminence Metropolitan Gennadios, Representative of the Ecumenical Patriarchate, and to Reverend Canon Richardson, Personal Representative in Rome of the Archbishop of Canterbury, and to all the Representatives of the various Churches and Ecclesial Communities gathered here this evening.

In addition, I am particularly glad to greet several members of the Working Group composed of spokespeople of the various Churches and Ecclesial Communities present in Poland, who prepared the booklets for the Week of Prayer this year. I would like to express my gratitude to them and my hope that they will continue on the way of reconciliation and fruitful collaboration. I am also pleased to greet the members of the Global Christian Forum who are in Rome in these days to reflect on increasing the number of participants in the ecumenical movement to include new members. Further, I greet the group of students from the Ecumenical Institute of Bossey of the World Council of Churches.

I would like to entrust to St Paul’s intercession all those who, with their prayers and their commitment, are sparing no effort in the cause of Christian unity. Although, at times, one has the impression that there is still a long way to go to reach the reestablishment of communion and that the road is fraught with obstacles, I invite all to renew their determination to pursue, with courage and generosity, the unity which is God’s will, after the example of St Paul who, in the face of every kind of difficulty always firmly kept his trust in God which led to the fulfillment of his work.

Moreover, on this journey there is no lack of positive signs of rediscovered brotherhood and of a shared sense of responsibility for the great problems that are afflicting our world. All this is a cause of joy and of great hope and must encourage us to continue in our endeavour to reach the final goal all together, knowing that in the Lord our effort is not in vain (cf. 1 Cor 15:58). Amen.

ORE, 1 February 2012
GREETINGS OF THE HOLY FATHER

"Glorify the Lord with me, let us together exalt his name" (Ps 34 [33]:4)

Dear Brothers in Christ,

In this joyful circumstance of the Feast of Sts Peter and Paul, patrons of the city and of the Church of Rome, I am particularly glad to welcome you with the words of the Psalm that will be sung during the solemn Eucharistic liturgy in honour of these two great Apostles and Martyrs. In addressing a warm welcome to you, I ask you to convey to His Holiness Bartholomew I and to the Holy Synod, my sentiments of fraternal affection and deep gratitude for having deigned to send, this year too, worthy representatives to take part in our celebration, and to pass on a cordial greeting to the clergy, monks and all the faithful of the Ecumenical Patriarchate.

Your presence here in Rome on the occasion of the liturgical Feast of Sts Peter and Paul affords us a special opportunity to raise our hymn of praise to God for the wonders that divine grace — from which all good comes — brought about in the life of the two Apostles, making them worthy to enter heavenly glory triumphant, having passed through the regeneration of martyrdom. In addition, the Feast of Sts Peter and Paul gives us the possibility of thanking the Lord together for the extraordinary feats he has accomplished and continues to accomplish through the Apostles in the life of the Church. It is their preaching, sealed by the witness of their martyrdom, which forms the solid, everlasting basis on which the Church is built. Moreover it is in fidelity to the deposit of the faith transmitted by them that we find the roots of the communion between us which we are already experiencing.

Venerable Brothers, in our meeting today, as we entrust to the intercession of the glorious Apostles and Martyrs Peter and Paul our entreaty that the Lord, rich in mercy, will grant us to arrive soon at the blessed day when we will be able to share in the Eucharistic banquet, we raise our voices in the hymn to God for the journey of peace and reconciliation that he has granted us to make together.

This year marks the 50th anniversary of the opening of the Second Vatican Ecumenical Council which will be solemnly celebrated next 11 October. And it is in conjunction with this Council — at which, as you know well, certain representatives of the Ecumenical Patriarchate were present as Fraternal Delegates — that a new and important phase in relations between our Churches began.

Let us praise the Lord first of all for the rediscovery of the deep brotherhood that binds us and also for the ground covered in the past few years by the Joint International Commission for Theological Dialogue between the Catholic Church and the Orthodox Church (as a whole), in the hope that progress may also be made in the current phase.

In remembering the anniversary of the Second Vatican Council, it seems to me fitting to commemorate the figure and activity of the unforgettable Ecumenical Patriarch Athenagoras, the 40th anniversary of whose death is in a few days’ time. Patriarch Athenagoras, together with Blessed Pope John XXIII and the Servant of God Pope Paul VI, inspired by this passion for the unity of the Church which springs from faith in Christ the Lord, made them-
selves promoters of courageous initiatives that paved the way to renewed relations between the Ecumenical Patriarchate and the Catholic Church. It is a cause of special joy to me to note that His Holiness Bartholomew I is following with renewed fidelity and fruitful creativity the way marked out by his predecessors, Patriarch Athenagoras and Patriarch Dmitrios, and is distinguishing himself at the international level for his openness to inter-Christian dialogue and for his commitment to the service of Gospel proclamation in today's world.

Your Eminence, dear Members of the Delegation, as I thank you once again for your presence among us, I assure you of my prayers that the Lord will grant holiness and strength to His Holiness Bartholomew I and prosperity and peace to the Ecumenical Patriarchate. May Almighty God grant us the gift of ever fuller communion, so that “of one heart and soul” (Acts 4:32), we may always exalt his name.

ORE, 4 July 2012

MESSAGE OF THE ECUMENICAL PATRIARCH
BARThOLOMEW I

We publish our English translation from the original French of the message of Patriarch Bartholomew I of Constantinople to Pope Benedict XVI, which was presented to him by his Eminence Emmanuel, Metropolitan of France.

To His Beatitude and Holiness

The Pope of Ancient Rome Benedict XVI

Beloved brother in the Lord

rejoice in the strength of the all-powerful God

Continuing a longstanding tradition, the Most Holy Church of Constantinople renews contact again this year with the venerable Church of Rome on the occasion of the anniversary of Saints Peter and Paul, its patron feast day commemorating the first Coryphaei.

The commemoration of the saints always fills our hearts with joy, as we draw from their memory the certainty of God's love for us. The remembrance of Peter, the first Coryphaeus apostle, and of Paul, the apostle of the Nations, which the Church of Rome under the care of Your Most Venerable Holiness celebrates this year with great solemnity, is certainly not an exception.

Our most humble personage, together with the entire Holy Synod, always rejoices when others rejoice, in keeping with the words of the Gospel: “Rejoice with those who rejoice, weep with those who weep” (Rom 12:15). Moreover, the apostle saints Peter and Paul are loved and commemorated by all Christians, Orthodox and Roman Catholics alike, and thus the joy of this celebration permeates all of Christianity.

The memory of these apostle saints, who often between themselves debated questions concerning their apostolic struggles, reminds us of the dialogue between our Churches and our duty to promote it in order to achieve the longed-for unity in faith, peace and love. As Saint John Chrysostom, our predecessor in the See of Constantinople, reflected: “God speaks to us continually. He never ceases to admonish us. He never ceases, although we disobey Him in many things” (Commentary on the Gospel of Saint Matthew, Homily 59, 6 PG 58, 581). Surely, we have the unique privilege of the use of the word. This prerogative distinguishes human beings from other living creatures, and enables them to trace a path to the very source of the Word, the Triune God. The greater the dialogue between us, the further we move towards the truth, as it is through dialogue that we are able to assess points of view, to review opinions, to identify points of agreement as well as disagreement, and to arrive ultimately at witnessing “the truth in love” (Eph 4:15).

Even if during the course of dialogue points of view are presented by participants who seem to be on different sides of a divide, it is never useless to continue, for the goodwill of the participants will be known to God, and He will ultimately guide them to the truth they seek.

While we tend to articulate the truth using expressions, that is formulas, that define limits beyond which error occurs, the truth itself cannot be limited to any given expression, for it actually transcends such formulation. For this reason, there will always be the possibility of a more pertinent formulation. Yet at the same time, human language does not have an infinite range of expressions, and even the most precise formulation expresses only imperfectly what participants seek to express in dialogue.

The words of our Lord Jesus Christ affirming that He is the Truth, and at the same time the Way and the Life (cf. Jn 14:6), are extremely significant. Since the Truth is the Person of Christ, any formulation that seeks to circumscribe the truth will be inferior to this Person and His reality.

Thus, in order to identify the dogmatic truth of our faith regarding questions that over the centuries have been subject to different outlooks and formulations will require us to adopt an approach that conforms more closely to the Person of Christ.

If we carry the life of Christ in our hearts as if it were our very own life, our ideas regarding the truth will acquire secondary importance, for we will experience the truth in all its immediacy, discerning the person of Christ, not so much so that we may know him, but that — and above all — we may be known by Him, recalling the words of the Apostle “now you have come to know God, or rather to be known by God” (Gal 4:9).

Through the dialogues and through the prayer to Christ before and during the dialogues asking that our hearts may radiate the pure light of knowing Him, it is our hope that the Lord may grant that the truth of His Person may be revealed to participants so that we achieve the unity of faith sought incontestably in Christ. Any failure in our shared efforts must not discourage us from pursuing the Dialogue of Charity and Truth, for the hope of success must
always prevail, since our Lord clearly desires that his disciples be one.

Through my humble person, the Orthodox Church of the East affirms that it is always ready for dialogue, and above all for the theological dialogue between our two sister Churches, in the hope that the resumption of the dialogue — be it seventy times seven — will be crowned by our longed-for consensus, and that His Church will thus be what He wanted it to be: one flock and one shepherd.

Furthermore, we believe that within the heart of Christianity, and particularly in our two sister Churches, there are always interlocutors of goodwill, thanks to whom the dialogue must proceed without grievance or inertia, as suggested also by our Father among the Saints, John Climacus (Homily XXVI, b, 119). In such a way, we will achieve the unity of Christianity that constitutes the proof of the divine Mission of our Lord Jesus Christ.

Inspired by these thoughts and by this expectation, and experiencing already a foretaste of that long-awaited time when Christian unity will be fulfilled through our common discernment of our Lord Jesus Christ, we express the wish, beloved Holiness, that you may joyfully celebrate the patron feast day of the venerable Church of Rome, among Your bishops, Your clergy and Your people.

The Most Holy Church of Constantinople will be represented on this great day for your Church according to a fraternal tradition that has arisen in recent years. Our patriarchal delegation, comprising His Eminence Metropolitan Emmanuel of France, His Excellency Bishop Ilias of Philomelion, and Reverend Deacon Paisios Kokkinakis, official codicographer of our Holy Synod, will personally convey the greeting and fraternal embrace of the See of the Holy Apostles Andrew. In expressing these words, we convey our profound love in the Lord, our embrace, our fraternal wishes, our exalted esteem.

Phanar, 25 June 2012

Your Venerable Holiness’s Brother in Christ

*+BARTHOLOMEW OF CONSTANTINOPLE*

Is translation from french

DISCOURSE OF HIS EMINENCE METROPOLITAN EMMANUEL OF FRANCE

29 June 2012

Your Holiness,

Today again we have been granted the distinct honour to stand here before You, on behalf of Your brother the Ecumenical Patriarch Bartholomew, to express his benevolent greetings on the occasion of the feast of the Holy Apostles Peter and Paul, the patronal feast of the Church of Rome.

On this occasion, it is appropriate to recall the importance of dialogue between our two Sister Churches, as it constitutes the fermenting agent for the communion we wish to re-establish, and to which we dedicate ourselves by intensifying our encounters, in the perspective — so crucial to our common progress — of restoring the Eucharistic bond which we still so painfully lack.

Just as bread is made of many grains of wheat, so we “all of us, together, and with Christ, are one. Indeed, it is not that one is nourished by one body and another is nourished by some other body; it is the same body that nourishes all”. Thus, St John Chrysostom defines union through the Eucharist, commenting on a passage from Saint Paul the Apostle.¹

The preacher continues with an exhortation on charity, which judging from the tenor of the homily seemed to be lacking among his listeners: “now if we all share the same bread, and become this same substance, why do we not manifest the same charity? Why, for the same reason, do we not become one also in this?” This charity should prevail among the communicants since they constitute the one body of Christ. The bond between Eucharistic participation and charity is more than a moral exhortation, for Eucharist is considered here as a power of charity and of cohesion suitable for overcoming contrasts between members of the same assembly. This is also in agreement with the Johannic injunction: the theologian apostle closely associates love of God to that towards the brothers.²

To the same effect, commenting on the Old Testament first offering of bread (Num. 15,16s.), Saint Cyril applies the image of the sheaves of wheat to the communicants who represent the first fruits of humanity offered to Christ and already lifted by the Eucharist to Heaven. Through Christians, this lifting up is promised to all mankind. Wheat gathered in bunches is an expression of union between the members of the Church. Thus: “the wheat is not to be considered on its own, ... but rather offered in sheaves, as one bunch is bound up from many ears (...). Jesus Christ is one, even if we consider him under the appearance of a sheaf, and indeed he is since he embraces all believers within him, according to a spiritual union”.³ “As ears are bound up to be offered together, so should Christians participate in the Eucharist together in order to form the one Body of Christ.

The image of corn gathered in sheaves may be applied to a local community, but also to the universal Church, because each community, through the Eucharist, is in communion with the other ecclesial communities gathered around the same confession of faith. I would dare to think that such perspectives have been made more possible thanks to the Second

¹ Hom s. 1 Cor., 24, 2; L’Eucharistie dans l’antiquité chrétienne, Paris, 1981, p. 185.
² Cf. 1 Jn 4, 20-21.
Vatican Council, of which we are celebrating the fiftieth anniversary this year.

However, the reality of the Church’s catholicity is to be discovered time and again, acknowledged and recognized in the other since he is called brother.

Thus, once catholicity is discovered by each in his own Church, thanks to a genuinely rooted traditional patristic belief, it becomes possible to extend the principle of unity to other communities, dioceses, and finally to all humankind, to whom Christ promises a heavenly home.

This is particularly applicable to ecumenical dialogue, where each participant can and should develop a sound understanding of the Church, whereby communion with the Body and Blood of Christ cannot be reduced to an individual act. The more this sense of the Church is deepened and spread by each member, the more ecclesial communities can come closer in order to discover and understand each other around an inclusive vision of the Church.

Charity is then an ecclesial and eschatological dimension that can be placed in relation to Eucharistic communion. Beyond the ephemeral nature of our material possessions, charity, through alms, witnesses to the everlasting nature of the Kingdom to come. Material possessions are offered to the poor to prepare our passage to the heavenly Kingdom, which is not ephemeral but rather our ultimate dwelling. Charity is also a kind of communion between the giver and the receiver. In my opinion, these reflections reveal a dynamism which is present today in the dialogue carried on between our two Sister Churches where charity nourishes the dialogue of truth.

Therefore, we can not sufficiently assert the ecumenical reality of the themes here discussed: charity is manifested towards our brothers who confess the same faith and share the same chalice. This remains an essential condition in considering charity also on an interfaith level, where it consists of being open to others and of discovering the differences. Charity is also inseparable from the truth, for which our theological and dogmatic conscience is accountable before God, but also to ourselves and others. As for alms, far from being limited to material goods, it could as well be a nourishment, as in this case, drawn from the rich tradition of the Fathers, to be shared with those who are in need. This nourishment is offered to enrich anyone who has a genuine desire for truth, to seek together and without ceasing this unity which we still lack.

Your Holiness,

With this spirit of apostolic charity symbolized by the two Coryphaei of the Apostles Peter and Paul, we transmit to You, the wishes of your brother of Constantinople, the Ecumenical Patriarch Bartholomew.

IS translation from French
Visi_7T0ROME OF THE ARCHBISHOP OF CANTERBURY FOR THE MILLENNIUM OF THE CAMALDOLESE ORDER

10-13 March 2012

On the occasion of the visit to Rome from 10 to 13 March, of the Archbishop of Canterbury, His Grace Dr Rowan Williams, for the Millennium of the Sacred Hermitage of the Camaldolese Order, Pope Benedict XVI, in the presence of the Anglican Primate, presided at Vespers on Saturday evening 10 March, recalling St Gregory the Great’s ‘radiant witness’.

After a private meeting, the Archbishop and the Pope travelled to the Cælian Hill to join the resident monastic Community there for Vespers, during which the Pope and the Archbishop each delivered a homily, and lit candles in the Chapel of St Gregory the Great.

Saturday’s Vespers marks the third time in recent decades that the Bishop of Rome and the Archbishop of Canterbury have shared a liturgical celebration in this historic setting. The previous occasions were both during the pontificate of Pope John Paul II — during the September 1989 visit of Archbishop Robert Runcie, and the December 1996 visit of Archbishop George Carey.

A transcript of the Pope’s and the Archbishop’s homilies follow.

The Pope’s Homily

10 March 2012

Your Grace,
Dear Brother Bishops and Priests,
Dear Monks and Nuns of Camaldoli,
Dear Brothers and Sisters,

It gives me great joy to be here today in this Basilica of San Gregorio al Celio for Solemn Vespers on the liturgical commemoration of the death of Saint Gregory the Great. With you, dear Brothers and Sisters of the Camaldolese family, I thank God for the thousand years that have passed since the foundation of the Sacred Hermitage of Camaldoli by Saint Romuald. I am delighted to be joined on this occasion by His Grace Dr Rowan Williams, Archbishop of Canterbury. To you, my dear Brother in Christ, and to each one of you, dear monks and nuns, and to everyone present, I extend cordial greetings.

We have listened to two passages from Saint Paul. The first, taken from the Second Letter to the Corinthians, is particularly appropriate for the current liturgical season of Lent. It contains the Apostle’s exhortation to seize the favourable moment for receiving God’s grace. The favourable moment is naturally when Jesus Christ came to reveal and to bestow upon us the love that God has for us, through his incarnation, passion, death and resurrection. The “day of salvation” is the same reality that Saint Paul in another place describes as the “fullness of time”, the moment when God took flesh and entered time in a completely unique way, filling it with his grace. It is for us, then, to accept this gift, which is Jesus himself: his person, his word, his Holy Spirit. Moreover, in the first reading, Saint Paul tells us about himself and his apostolate — how he strives to remain faithful to God in his ministry, so that it may be truly efficacious and may not prove instead a barrier to faith. These words make us think of Saint Gregory the Great, of the radiant witness that he offered the people of Rome and the whole Church by a blameless ministry full of zeal for the Gospel. Truly, what Saint Paul wrote of himself applies equally to Gregory: the grace of God in him has not been fruitless (cf. I Cor 15:10). This, indeed, is the secret for the lives of every one of us: to welcome God’s grace and to consent with all our heart and all our strength to its action. This is also the secret of true joy and profound peace.

The second reading was taken from the Letter to the Colossians. We heard those words — always so moving for their spiritual and pastoral inspiration — that the Apostle addressed to the members of that community in order to form them according to the Gospel, saying to them: “whatever you do, in word or deed, do everything in the name of the Lord Jesus” (Col 3:17). “Be perfect”, the Master said to his disciples; and now the Apostle exhorts his listeners to live according to the high measure of Christian life that is holiness. He can do this because the brothers he is addressing are “chosen by God, holy and beloved”. Here too, at the root of everything, is the grace of God, the gift of the call, the mystery of the encounter with the living Jesus. But this grace demands a response from those who have been baptized: it requires the commitment to be re-clothed in Christ’s sentiments: tenderness, goodness, humility, meekness, magnanimity, mutual forgiveness, and above all, as a synthesis and a crown, agape, the love that God has given us through Jesus, the love that the
Holy Spirit has poured into our hearts. And if we are to be re-clothed in Christ, his word must dwell among us and in us, with all its richness and in abundance. In an atmosphere of constant thanksgiving, the Christian community feeds on the word and causes to rise towards God, as a song of praise, the word that he himself has given us. And every action, every gesture, every service, is accomplished within this profound relationship with God, in the interior movement of Trinitarian love that descends towards us and rises back towards God, a movement that finds its highest expression in the Eucharistic sacrifice.

This word also sheds light upon the happy circumstances that bring us together today, in the name of Saint Gregory the Great. Through the faithfulness and benevolence of the Lord, the Congregation of Camaldolese monks of the Order of Saint Benedict has completed a thousand years of history, feeding daily on the word of God and the Eucharist, as their founder Saint Romuald taught them, according to the *triplex bonum* of solitude, community life and evangelization. Exemplary men and women of God, such as Saint Peter Damian, Gratian — author of the *Decretum* — Saint Bruno of Querfurt and the five brother martyrs, Rudolph I and II, Blessed Gerhardesca, Blessed Giovanna da Bagno and Blessed Paolo Giustiniani; men of art and science like Brother Maurus the Cosmographer, Lorenzo Monaco, Ambrogio Traversari, Pietro Delfino and Guido Grandi; illustrious historians like the Camaldolese Annalists Giovanni Benedetto Mittarelli and Anselmo Costadoni; zealous pastors of the Church, among whom Pope Gregory XVI stands out, have revealed the horizons and the great fruitfulness of the Camaldolese tradition.

Every phase of the long history of the Camaldolese has produced faithful witnesses of the Gospel, not only in the hidden life of silence and solitude and in the common life shared with the brethren, but also in humble and generous service towards others. Particularly fruitful was the hospitality offered by Camaldolese guest-houses. In the days of Florentine humanism, the walls of Camaldoli witnessed the famous *disputationes*, in which great humanists such as Marsilio Ficino and Cristoforo Landino took part. In the turbulent years of the Second World War, those same cloisters were the setting for the birth of the famous *Codex of Camaldoli*, one of the most significant sources of the Constitution of the Italian Republic. Nor were the years of the Second Vatican Council any less productive, for at that time individuals of high calibre emerged among the Camaldolese, enriching the Congregation and the Church and promoting new initiatives and new houses in the United States of America, Tanzania, India and Brazil. In all this activity, a guarantee of fruitfulness was the support of monks and nuns praying constantly for the new foundations from the depths of their “withdrawal from the world”, lived at times to a heroic degree.

On 17 September 1993, during his meeting with the monks of the Sacred Hermitage of Camaldoli, Blessed John Paul II commented on the theme of their imminent General Chapter, “Choosing hope, choosing the future”, with these words: “Choosing hope and the future in the last analysis implies choosing God ... It means choosing Christ, the hope of every human being.” And he continued, “This particularly occurs in that form of life which God himself brought about in the Church, inspiring Saint Romuald to found the Benedectine family of Camaldoli, with its characteristic complementarity of hermitage and monastery, solitary life and cenobitic life in harmony with each other.” Moreover, my blessed Predecessor emphasized that “choosing God also means humbly and patiently cultivating, according to God’s design, ecumenical and interreligious dialogue”, always on the basis of fidelity to the original charism received from Saint Romuald and transmitted through a thousand years of varied tradition.

Encouraged by the visit from the Successor of Peter, and by his words, all of you Camaldolese monks and nuns have pursued your path, constantly seeking the right balance between the eremitical and the cenobitic spirit, between the need to dedicate yourselves totally to God in solitude, the need to support one another in communal prayer, and the need to welcome others so that they can draw upon the wellsprings of spiritual life and evaluate the events of the world with a truly Gospel-formed conscience. In this way you seek to attain that *perfecta caritas* that Saint Gregory the Great considered the point of arrival of every manifestation of faith, a commitment that finds confirmation in the motto of your coat of arms: “Ego Vobis, vos mihi”, a synthesis of the covenant formula between God and his people, and a source of the perennial vitality of your charism.

The Monastery of *San Gregorio al Celio* is the Roman setting for our celebration of the millennium of Camaldoli in company with His Grace the Archbishop of Canterbury who, together with us, recognizes this Monastery as the birthplace of the link between Christianity in Britain and the Church of Rome. Today’s celebration is therefore marked by a profoundly ecumenical character which, as we know, is part and parcel of the modern Camaldolese spirit. This Roman Camaldolese Monastery has developed with Canterbury and the Anglican Communion, especially since the Second Vatican Council, links that now qualify as traditional. Today, for the third time, the Bishop of Rome is meeting the Archbishop of Canterbury in the home of Saint Gregory the Great. And it is right that it should be so, because it was from this Monastery that Pope Gregory chose Augustine and his forty monks and sent them to bring the Gospel to the Angles, a little over 1,400 years ago. The constant presence of monks in this place, over such a long period, is already in itself a testimony of God’s faithfulness to his Church, which we are happy to be able to proclaim to the whole world. We hope that the sign of our presence here together in front of the holy altar, where Gregory himself celebrated the Eucharistic sacrifice, will remain not only as a reminder of our fraternal encounter, but also as a stimulus for all the faithful
— both Catholic and Anglican — encouraging them, as they visit the glorious tombs of the holy Apostles and Martyrs in Rome, to renew their commitment to pray constantly and to work for unity, and to live fully in accordance with the "ut unum sint" that Jesus addressed to the Father.

This profound desire, that we have the joy of sharing, we entrust to the heavenly intercession of Saint Gregory the Great and Saint Romuald. Amen.

ORE, 14 March 2012

THE ARCHBISHOP’S HOMILY
10 March 2012

Your Holiness,

Dear brothers and sisters in Christ,

It is a privilege to stand here, where my predecessors stood in 1989 and 1996, and to offer once again, as we did most recently in Westminster and Assisi, the sacrifice of praise that we owe to the One Lord in whose name we are baptized; the One Lord who by his Spirit, brings to recognisability in each member of his sacramental Body, the image and abundant life of Christ his Son, through the temptations and struggles of our baptismal calling.

Saint Gregory the Great had much to say about the peculiar temptations and struggles of those called to office in the Church of God. To be called to this service is to be called to several different kinds of suffering — the torment of compassion, as he puts it (Moralia 30.25.74), the daily awareness of urgent human needs, bodily and spiritual, and the torment of praise, flattery and status (ib. 26.34.62). This latter is a torment because those called to this ministry know so clearly their own inner weakness and instability. But that knowledge is a saving knowledge, which among other things helps us minister effectively to others in trouble; and it reminds us that we find stability, soliditas, only in the life of the Body of Christ, not in our own achievement (Homilies on Ezekiel 2.5.22).

These are insights deeply rooted in St Gregory’s formation as a monk. Humility is the key to all faithful ministry, a humility that constantly seeks to be immersed, involved, in the life of Christ’s Body, not looking for an individual heroism or holiness. And it is this humility which the writer of the first life of St Gregory, written in England in the early eighth century, places at the head of the list of his saintly virtues, associating it with the ‘prophetic’ gift which allowed him to see what the English people needed and to respond by sending the mission of St Augustine from this place. That association of humility and prophecy is indeed one that St Gregory himself makes in the Dialogues. The true pastor and leader in the Church is one who, because he is caught up in the eternal self-offering of Jesus Christ through the sacramental mysteries of the Church, is free to see the needs of others as they really are. This may be ‘tormenting’, because those needs can be so profound and tragic; but it also stirs us to action to address such needs in the name and the strength of Christ.

And here lies the heart of Gregory’s monastic vision, the vision which the brothers and sisters of Camaldoli — whose millennium we celebrate with sincere joy here today — still seek to live out. To be immersed in the sacramental life of Christ’s Body requires the daily immersion of contemplation; without this, we cannot see one another clearly; without it we shall not truly recognize and love one another; and grow together in his one holy catholic and apostolic Body. The balance in the monastic life of solitude and common work and worship, a balance particularly carefully worked out in the life of Camaldoli, is something that seeks to enable a clear, even ‘prophetic’ vision of the other — seeing them, as the Eastern Christian tradition represented by Evagrius suggests, in the light of their authentic spiritual essence, not as they relate to our passions or preferences. The inseparable labour of action and contemplation, of solitude and community, is to do with the constant purification of our awareness of each other in the light of the God whom we encounter in silence and self-forgetting.

Your Holiness, dear brothers and sisters, it would be wrong to suggest that we enter into contemplation in order to see one another more clearly; but if anyone were to say that contemplation is a luxury in the Church, something immaterial for the health of the Body, we should have to say that without it we should be constantly dealing with shadows and fictions, not with the reality of the world we live in. The Church is called upon to show that same prophetic spirit which is ascribed to St Gregory, the capacity to see where true need is and to answer God’s call in the person of the needy. To do this, it requires a habit of discernment, penetration beyond the prejudices and clichés which affect even believers in a culture that is so hasty and superficial in so many of its judgements; and with the habit of discernment belongs a habit of recognizing one another as agents of Christ’s grace and compassion and redemption.

And such a habit will develop only if we are daily learning the discipline of silence and patience, waiting for the truth to declare itself to us as we slowly set aside the distortions in our vision that are caused by selfishness and greed. In recent years, we have seen developing a vastly sophisticated system of unreality, created and sustained by acquisitiveness, a set of economic habits in which the needs of actual human beings seem to be almost entirely obscured. We are familiar with a feverish advertising culture in which we are persuaded to develop unreal and disproportionate desires. We are all — Christians and their pastors included — in need of the discipline that purges our vision and restores to us some sense of the truth of our world, even if that can produce the ‘torment’ of knowing more clearly how much people suffer and how little we can do for them by our unaided labours.

Your Holiness, ‘certain yet imperfect’ was how our predecessors of blessed memory, Pope John Paul II and Archbishop Robert, here in Rome in 1989,
characterised the communion that our two churches share. ‘Certain’ because of the shared ecclesial vision to which both our communions are committed as being the character of the Church both one and particular — a vision of the restoration of full sacramental communion, of a Eucharistic life that is fully visible, and thus a witness that is fully credible, so that a confused and tormented world may enter into the welcome and transforming light of Christ. And ‘yet imperfect’ because of the limit of our vision, a deficit in the depth of our hope and patience. Our recognition of the one Body in each other’s corporate life is unstable and incomplete; yet without such ultimate recognition we are not yet fully free to share the transforming power of the Gospel in Church and world.

‘The truth will set you free’, says Our Lord. In the disciplines of contemplation and stillness, we are brought closer to the truth, and so also closer to the cross of the Lord. We learn our weakness and we learn something of the mystery of how God deals with our weakness — not by ignoring or rejecting it but by embracing its consequences in the incarnation and the passion of Christ. His self-emptying calls out our own self-denial — an appropriate theme for this Lenten season. We learn how to set on one side our busy and self-serving agendas and allow the self-giving Christ to live in us, to open our eyes and to empower us for service. Today, as we give thanks for a millennium of monastic witness, we celebrate the gifts of true and clear vision that have been made possible through this witness. And we pray for all who are called to public service in Christ’s Church that they may be given the grace of contemplative discipline and prophetic clarity in their own witness, so that the glory of Christ’s cross will shine forth in our world even in the midst of our own weaknesses and failures.

ORE, 14 March 2012
ADDRESS OF THE POPE

10 May 2012

Dear Jewish friends,

I am very pleased to welcome this delegation of the Latin American Jewish Congress. Our meeting is a particularly significant one, since you are the first group representing Jewish organizations and communities in Latin America which I have met here in the Vatican. Throughout Latin America there are vibrant Jewish communities, especially in Argentina and Brazil, which live side by side with a great majority of Catholics. In the years since the Second Vatican Council, relations between Jews and Catholics have been strengthened also in your region, and various initiatives continue to deepen our mutual friendship.

As you know, this October marks the 50th anniversary of the beginning of the Second Vatican Council, whose Declaration Nostra Aetate remains the charter and guide in our efforts to promote greater understanding, respect and cooperation between our two communities. The Declaration not only took up an unambiguous position against every form of anti-Semitism; it also laid the groundwork for a theological reassessment of the Church’s relationship with Judaism and it expressed confidence that an appreciation of the spiritual heritage shared by Jews and Christians would lead to ever greater mutual understanding and esteem (n. 4).

As we consider the progress which has been made over the past fifty years in Jewish-Catholic relations throughout the world, we can only give thanks to the Almighty for this evident sign of his goodness and providence. With the growth of trust, respect and good will, groups which initially approached one another with some hesitation have step by step become reliable partners and even good friends, capable of coping with crises together and overcoming conflicts positively. Certainly, much remains to be done in overcoming the burdens of the past, fostering better relations between our two communities, and meeting the challenges which believers increasingly face in today’s world. Yet it is cause for thanksgiving that we are committed to walking together the path of dialogue, reconciliation and cooperation.

Dear friends, in a world which is increasingly threatened by the loss of the spiritual and moral values which alone can guarantee respect for human dignity and lasting peace, a sincere and respectful dialogue between religions and cultures is crucial for the future of our human family. It is my hope that our visit today will be a source of encouragement and renewed hope in taking up the challenge of building ever stronger bonds of friendship and cooperation, and in bearing prophetic witness to the power of God’s truth, justice and reconciling love, for the welfare of all mankind.

With these sentiments, dear friends, I ask the Thrice-Holy to bless you and your families with every spiritual gift and to guide your steps in the way of peace. Shalom aleikhem!

ORE, 16 May 2012

GREETING OF THE PRESIDENT OF THE LATIN AMERICAN JEWISH CONGRESS

10 May 2012

Your Holiness

First of all the Latin American Jewish Congress wishes to thank you for the opportunity to hold this very meaningful meeting, for it marks a deep historical and personal dimension: it is the first time the members of the Latin American Jewish Congress Board attend a meeting with a Pope.

We live in countries with a clear preponderance of Catholic population, where the Church plays an important religious and social role, but where our communities enjoy a vibrant Jewish life, and the relationship between Jews and Catholics is an example not only of positive coexistence, but of friendship and cooperation. No doubt, agreement among religions is not the only prerequisite but certainly means a major step forward.

We know that together, as brothers, we can send out a strong message to society at large: i.e.: working to help the neediest, and defending family, pluralism and democracy, always under the umbrella
of the common values revered by our religious traditions. Working with the leadership of the Church is a priority for the Latin American Jewish Congress, especially in the context of the Latin American Episcopal Conference — CELAM, an organization with which it has established strong links. The Latin American Jewish Congress was invited to the CELAM General Assembly at Aparecida, Brazil, in 2008; was asked to organize a meeting between its leaders and CELAM in Mexico in 2009; invited to participate together representing Latin America at the International Catholic-Jewish Liaison Committee session in Paris in 2011, and this year, to the 50th anniversary of the Second Vatican Council, which with *Nostra Aetate* changed the relations between our communities. Also for the first time a joint publication was produced on Jewish-Catholic relations along the past 40 years, and our organization invited a group of young priests from different countries to visit Israel.

We strongly believe in a pluralistic society, that respects diversity, harbors no prejudice or discrimination, and rejects anti-Semitism and all forms of discrimination, because neither faith or religious tradition may be grounds for exclusion, nor an other aspects or dimensions of human beings.

ORE, 16 May 2012
LECTURE OF CARDINAL KURT KOCH
AT THE PONTIFICIAL UNIVERSITY OF ST THOMAS AQUINAS, ROME:

BUILDING ON “NOSTRA AETATE”: 50 YEARS OF CHRISTIAN-JEWISH DIALOGUE

16 May 2012

I am honoured to be here today to present the John Paul II Lecture on Interreligious Understanding, the fifth in a series of prestigious annual lectures organised by the John Paul II Center for Interreligious Dialogue held at the Angelicum University. In a special way, this University is committed to fostering ecumenical and interreligious dialogue at the academic level. The John Paul II Center is a partnership between the Angelicum and the Russell Berrie Foundation, and I am very pleased to acknowledge the presence of Angelica Berrie, President of the Foundation, whose name seems to reflect the joint aspirations that motivated the creation of the Center. I would like also to mention in this context the Russell Berrie Fellowship Program, which aims to develop the exchange of insights and the bonds of friendship and mutual understanding that we hope will resonate well beyond the academic environment. The focus of this presentation will be the historical developments in the Jewish-Catholic dialogue made possible by the Conciliar document “Nostra aetate”.

1. “NOSTRA AETATE”: YES TO OUR JEWISH ROOTS, NO TO ANTI-SEMITISM

On the Catholic side, the Declaration of the Second Vatican Council on the relationship of the church to the non-Christian religions, “Nostra aetate”, can be considered the beginning of a systematic dialogue with the Jews. Still today it is considered the “foundation document” and the “Magna Charta” of the dialogue of the Roman Catholic Church with Judaism, so my tour d’horizon of the Jewish-Catholic conversation must begin there.

It did not develop in a vacuum, since on the Christian side there had already been approaches to Judaism both within and outside the Catholic Church before the Council. But after the unprecedented crime of the Shoah above all, an effort was made in the post-war period towards a theologically reflected re-definition of the relationship with Judaism. Following the mass murder of the European Jews planned and executed by the National Socialists with industrial perfection, a profound examination of conscience was initiated about how such a barbaric scenario was possible in the Christian-oriented West. Must we assume that anti-Jewish tendencies present within Christian-
In the Christian sphere, coming to terms with the Shoah is certainly one of the major motivations leading to the drafting of “Nostra aetate”. But other reasons can surely also be identified: Within Catholic theology following the appearance of the encyclical “Divino afflante spiritu” by Pope Pius XII in 1943, biblical studies were opened up — though with cautious beginners’ steps — to historical — critical biblical interpretation, which implies that one began to read the biblical texts in their historic context and within the religious traditions prevailing in their time. This process ultimately found its doctrinal expression in the Conciliar decree on divine revelation “Dei verbum”, or more precisely in the instruction that the exegete should carefully research what the authors of the biblical texts really intended to say: “Those who search out the intentions of the sacred writers must among other things have regard for literary forms. For truth is proposed and expressed in a variety of ways, depending on whether a text is history of one kind or another, or whether its form is that of prophecy, poetry or some other form of speech”.1 The precise observation of historical religious traditions reflected in the texts of sacred scripture had as a consequence that the figure of Jesus of Nazareth was located ever more clearly within the Judaism of his time. In this way the New Testament was placed entirely within the framework of Jewish traditions, and Jesus was perceived as a Jew of his time who felt an obligation to these traditions. This view also found its way into the Council declaration “Nostra aetate”, when it states with reference to the Letter to the Romans (9:5), that “Jesus stems according to the flesh from the people of Israel, and the church recalls the fact that the apostles, her foundation stones and pillars, sprang from the Jewish people, as well as most of the early disciples who proclaimed Christ to the world”.2 Since “Nostra aetate” it has therefore become part of the canus firmus of Jewish-Christian dialogue to call to mind and to emphasise the Jewish roots of the Christian faith. During his visit to the Roman synagogue on 13 April 1986 Pope John Paul II expressed this in the vivid and impressive words: “The Jewish religion is not something ‘extrinsic’ to us but in a certain way is ‘intrinsic’ to our own religion. With Judaism we therefore have a relationship we do not have with any other religion. You are our dearly beloved brothers and in a certain way it could be said, our elder brothers”.3

However, it was not only theological insights which led the Christian side to seek theoretical and practical rapprochement with Judaism. In fact, political and pragmatic reasons also played a not inconsequential role in this. Since the foundation of the State of Israel in 1948, the Catholic Church sees itself confronted in the Holy Land with the reality that it has to develop its pastoral life within a state which decidedly understands itself as Jewish. Israel is the only land in the world with a majority Jewish population, and for that reason alone the Christians living there must necessarily engage in dialogue with them. In this regard the Holy See has consistently pursued two goals, that is enabling on the one hand unhindered pastoral activity of the Catholic congregations in the Holy Land, and on the other, free access to the sacred sites of Christians for Christian pilgrims. That requires in the first instance political dialogue with the ruling executive of the State of Israel, which from the Jewish perspective must naturally always be embedded in a dialogue with the religious authorities of Judaism. Christians seem to be rather inclined to differentiate and delimit political and religious affairs from one another, while Judaism strives to converge and integrate the two dimensions.

Whatever motives and factors may have individually led to the drafting of “Nostra aetate”, the declaration remains the crucial compass of all endeavours towards Jewish-Catholic dialogue, and after 47 years we can claim with gratitude that this theological re-definition of the relationship with Judaism has directly brought forth rich fruits throughout its reception history. It seems that as far as content is concerned the Council fathers at that time took into consideration almost everything which has since proved to be significant in the history of the dialogue. On the Jewish side it is particularly positively emphasised that the Conciliar Declaration took up an unambiguous position against every form of anti-Semitism. It is not least on that basis that the Jews are and remain borne up by the hope that they can rest assured that in the Catholic Church they have a reliable ally in the struggle against anti-Semitism.

With regard to the reception history of Conciliar documents, one can without doubt dare to assert that “Nostra aetate” is to be reckoned among those Council texts which have in a convincing manner been able to effect a fundamental re-orientation of the Catholic Church following the Council. This of course only becomes clear to us when we consider that previously there was in part a great reluctance regarding contacts between Jews and Catholics, arising in part from the history of Christianity with its discrimination against Jews extending even to forced conversions. The fundamental principle of respect for Judaism expressed in “Nostra aetate” has over the course of recent decades made it possible for groups who initially confronted one another with scepticism to step by step become reliable partners and even good friends, capable of coping with crises together and overcoming conflicts positively.

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1 Dei verbum, No. 12.
2 Nostra aetate, No. 4.

2. OTHER VATICAN DOCUMENTS AS FOLLOW-UPS OF “NOstra aetate”

The dialogue endeavours which developed gradually after the Council were entrusted in the Roman Curia to the Secretariat for Promoting Christian
Unity, for the understandable reason that the leader of this Secretariat, the German Curia Cardinal Augustin Bea, had in the year 1960 — before the Council — been commissioned by Pope John XXIII to prepare with his staff a draft for a Council document dealing with the new relationship of the Catholic Church with Judaism. As is well known, this project led to the Council Declaration “Nostra aetate”, which of course focussed on the relationship of the Church with all non-Christian religions. This means that Article 4 of “Nostra aetate”, which deals with relations with Judaism, forms both the starting-point and the heart of this Declaration. Towards the end of the Council, a special secretariat was formed for inter-religious dialogue, with the task of promoting relations with Islam, Hinduism and Buddhism and other non-Christian religions, so that today in the Roman Curia there is a Pontifical Council for Inter-religious Dialogue, and within the Council for Promoting Christian Unity a Commission for Religious Relations with the Jews. While this special Commission, which was founded by Pope Paul VI on 22 October 1974, is organisationally aligned with the Pontifical Council for Promoting Christian Unity, it is structurally independent and entrusted with the task of accompanying and promoting the religious dialogue with Judaism. This structure is in general positively assessed by the Jewish dialogue partners. It also makes good sense from a theological point of view to combine this Commission with the Council for Promoting Christian Unity, since the separation of Church and Synagogue can be considered the first schism in the history of the church, or as the Catholic theologian Erich Przywara has called it, “the primal rift”, from which he derives the later progressive loss of wholeness of the Catholic: “The rift between the Eastern and the Western church, the rift between the Roman church and the pluriversum of the Reformations (the countless churches and sects) form part of the primal rift between Judaism (the non-Christian Jews) and Christianity (the ‘Gentiles’ in the language of the Pauline letters”).

Already in the year it was founded, on 1 December 1974, the Commission published its first official document with the title “Guidelines and Suggestions for Implementing the Conciliar Declaration “Nostra aetate” (No. 4)”. The crucial concern of this document consists in giving expression to the high esteem in which Christianity holds Judaism and stressing the great significance of dialogue with the Jews for the church, as stated in the words of the document: “On the practical level in particular, Christians must therefore strive to acquire a better knowledge of the basic components of the religious tradition of Judaism: they must strive to learn by what essential traits the Jews define themselves in the light of their own religious experience.” On the basis of the testimony of faith in Jesus Christ, the document reflects on the specific nature of the dialogue with Judaism, reference is made to reciprocal connections existing in the liturgy, new possibilities for rapprochement in the spheres of teaching, education and training, and finally suggestions are made for common social action.

Eleven years later on 24 June 1985, the Commission was able to present a second document with the title “Notes on the correct way to present the Jews and Judaism in preaching and catechesis in the Roman Catholic Church”. This document has a stronger theological-exegetical orientation in so far as it reflects on the relationship of the Old and New Testaments, demonstrates the Jewish roots of Christian faith, explicates the manner in which “the Jews” are represented in the New Testament, points out the commonalities in liturgy, above all in the great festivals of the church year, and alludes to the relationship of Judaism and Christianity in history. As the title indicates, the focus of this document lies on the way Judaism is handled as a subject in preaching and catechesis in the Catholic Church. Of particular interest is the fact that this document also makes reference to the State of Israel, which has a special significance for observant Jews, but at the same time again and again provokes political tensions. With regard to this “land of the forefathers” the document emphasises: “Christians are invited to understand this religious attachment which finds its roots in biblical tradition without however making their own any particular religious interpretation of this relationship. The existence of the State of Israel and its political options should be envisaged in a perspective which is not in itself religious, but in their reference to the common principles of international law”. The permanence of Israel is however to be perceived as an “historical fact” and as a “sign to be interpreted within God’s design”.

The third and latest document of the Commission for Religious Relations with the Jews was presented to the public on 16 March 1998. It deals with the Shoah under the title “We remember: A reflection on the Shoah”. The major impetus for this text came from the Jewish side. It delivers the harsh judgement that the balance of the 2000 year relationship between Jews and Christians is rather negative, it recalls the attitude of Christians towards the anti-Semitism of the National Socialists and focuses on the duty of Christians to remember the human cata-

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4 Cf. A. Cardinal Bea, Die Kirche und das jüdische Volk (Freiburg i. Br. 1966), esp. 21-25: Hinweise zur Geschichte und Entwicklung des Konsilsdokuments.
7 Published in French in: AAS 67 (1975) 73-79.
8 Published in French in: La Documentation Catholique 76 (1985) 733-738.
9 No. 25, (VI, 1).
Cenreat on the institutiondialologues which the Holy S ee’s Commiss ion for Religious Relations with the Jews assists in organising and conducting. This involves the exegetically and theologically most weighty document of the Jewish-Catholic conversation and represents a rich treasure-trove of common topics which have their basis in the scriptures of Judaism and Christianity. The Sacred Scripture of the Jewish people is considered as “the fundamental component of the Christian bible”, the fundamental themes of the Scripture of the Jewish people and their adoption in the faith in Christ are discussed, and the manner in which Jews are represented in the New Testament is illuminated in detail. In the Foreword the Prefect of the Congregation of the Doctrine of the Faith at that time, Cardinal Josef Ratzinger, advocates a “new respect for the Jewish interpretation of the Old Testament. On this subject the document says two things. First it declares that the Jewish reading of the Bible is a possible one, in continuity with the Jewish Scriptures of the Second Temple period, a reading analogous to the Christian reading, which developed in parallel fashion” (no. 22). It adds that Christians can learn a great deal from Jewish exegesis practised for more than 2000 years; in return Christians may hope that Jews can profit from Christian exegetical research.

3. Institutional dialogues at global level and their lines of development

Texts and documents, as important as they are, cannot replace personal encounters and dialogues face to face. In the first instance mention must be made of the many initiatives by individual Episcopal Conferences, local churches and academic institutions, which cannot of course be considered in detail here, although it is precisely in these places that concrete steps towards positive collaboration between Jews and Catholics are undertaken. The Holy See’s Commission is however happy to support such initiatives which assist in intensifying our friendship with Judaism. In the present context I must however concentrate on the institutional dialogues which the Holy See’s Commission for Religious Relations with the Jews assists in organising and conducting.

Even before the establishment of the Holy See’s Commission, there were contacts and links with various Jewish organisations which were of course located within the Secretariat for Promoting Christian Unity. Since Judaism is multi-faceted and not presented as an organisational unity, the Catholic side was faced with the difficulty of deciding with whom one should take up actual dialogue, because it was not possible to conduct individual and independent dialogue with all Jewish groupings and organisations who had declared their readiness to dialogue.

To resolve this problem the Jewish organisations took up the suggestion by the Catholic side to establish a single organisation for the religious dialogue. The so-called International Jewish Committee on Interreligious Consultations (IJCIC) represents on the Jewish side the official partner for the Holy See’s Commission for Religious Relations with the Jews. It comprises almost all large Jewish organisations, of which not a few have their seat in the USA.

The IJCIC was able to commence its work in 1970, and organised already one year later the first joint conference in Paris. The conferences which have been conducted regularly since then are the expression of the so-called International Catholic-Jewish Liaison Committee (ILC), and they shape the collaboration between the IJCIC and the Holy See’s Commission. In February of 2011 at the 21st Conference of the ILC we were able to look back with gratitude on 40 years of institutional dialogue and celebrate this jubilee once more in Paris. Much has developed over the past 40 years; confrontation has turned into successful collaboration, the previous conflict potential has become positive conflict management, and the co-existence of the past has been replaced by a load-bearing friendship. The bonds of friendship forged in the meantime have proved to be stable, so that it has become possible to tackle even controversial subjects together without the danger of permanent damage being done to the dialogue. This was all the more necessary because over the past decades the dialogue had not always been free of tensions.

We need only recall the crises provoked in the eighties by the so-called “Waldheim affair” or the planned “Carmel in Auschwitz”. In most recent times one thinks of the so-called “Williamson affair” or also the very divergent opinions regarding a beatification of Pope Pius XII, whereby the attentive observer can hardly avoid the conclusion that on the part of the Jews the verdicts on this Pope have changed from the original profound gratitude to profound anxiety only since the drama by Hochhuth. In general however one can observe with appreciation that in Jewish-Catholic dialogue since the turn of the millennium above all, intensive attempts have been made to deal with any arising differences of opinion and conflicts openly and with a positive goal in mind, so that in this way the mutual relations have become stronger and the proverbial wisdom has been confirmed that when a torn bond is joined together again, the distance between the two ends becomes shorter.

Beside the dialogue with the IJCIC the institutional conversation with the Chief Rabbinate in Jerusalem should also be mentioned, which is clearly to be soon as a fruit of the encounter of Pope John Paul II with the Chief Rabbis in Jerusalem during his visit to Israel in March 2000. The first meeting was organised in June 2002 in Jerusalem, and since then
a total of 11 such meetings have been conducted, which have taken place in Rome and Jerusalem alternately. The two delegations are relatively small so that a very personal and intensive discussion on various subjects is possible such as on the sanctity of life, the status of the family, the significance of the sacred scriptures for communal life, religious freedom, the ethical foundations of human behaviour, the ecological challenge, the relationship of secular and religious authority and the essential qualities of religious leadership in secular society. Since those taking part in the meetings on the Catholic side are bishops and priests and on the Jewish side almost exclusively rabbis it is hardly surprising that the individual subjects are also examined from a religious perspective. This statement is astonishing because normally within Orthodox Judaism the tendency prevails to avoid religious and theological questions. The dialogue with the Chief Rabbinate has in this regard enabled a further opening of Orthodox Judaism with Roman Catholic Church at a global level. After each meeting a joint declaration is published which in each instance testifies how rich the common heritage of Judaism and Christianity is and what valuable treasures are still to be unearthed. In reviewing ten years of the dialogue we can gratefully affirm that an intensive friendship has resulted which represents a firm foundation for the path into the future.

The dialogue efforts of the Holy See’s Commission for Religious Relations with the Jews cannot of course be restricted to these two institutional dialogues. It is in fact intent on being open to all streams within Judaism and maintaining contact with all Jewish groupings and organisations that wish to establish links with the Holy See. The Jewish side shows a particular interest in private audiences with the Pope, which are in every instance prepared by us. Besides the direct contacts with Judaism the Commission also strives to provide impulses within the Catholic Church for dialogue with Judaism and to work together with individual Bishops’ Conferences to support them locally in the promotion of Jewish-Christian conversation. The introduction of the “Dies Judaicus” is a good example of this.

Over the past decades both the “dialogue ad extra” and the “dialogue ad intra” have led with increasing clarity to the awareness that Christians and Jews are dependent on one another and the dialogue between the two is as far as theology is concerned not a matter of choice but of duty. Jews and Christians are precisely in their difference the one people of God who can enrich one another in mutual friendship. I do not have the right to judge what Judaism may gain from this dialogue for its own purposes. I can only join Cardinal Walter Kasper in expressing the wish that it recognise that “separating Judaism from Christianity” would mean “robbing it of its universality”, which was already promised to Abraham. ¹¹ For the Christian church however it is certainly true that without Judaism it is in danger of losing its location with salvation history and in the end declining into an unhistorical Gnosis.

4. Pope John Paul II and Jewish-Catholic Dialogue

When one envisages the ramifications of Jewish-Christian dialogue, it becomes apparent that it must again and again be testified by concrete and authentic persons in order to remain vital. Certainly the documents and dialogues which have already been mentioned were inspired, prepared and realised by authoritative witnesses to Jewish-Christian dialogue. But it was always their goal that they should be translated into concrete reality by the personal engagement of further witnesses. One is reminded of John M. Oesterreicher, who as a convert dedicated his whole life and work to Jewish-Christian dialogue and also participated decisively in the drafting of “Nostra aetate”. Many fruitful initiatives towards the promotion of Jewish-Christian conversation which took place after the Council in various local churches must also be mentioned with gratitude. But for the Roman Catholic Church the signal effect emanating from the papacy is and remains of particular significance. ¹²

Although Pope Paul VI had already taken decisive steps towards rapprochement with Judaism, the engagement in this issue by the leadership of the Catholic Universal Church was only really appre- hend by the wider public in the form of Pope John Paul II. His passionate endeavours for Jewish-Christian dialogue surely have their roots initially in his personal biography. Karol Wojtyla grew up in the small Polish town of Wadowice which consisted of at least one quarter of Jewish. Since everyday contact and friendship with Jews was taken for granted already in his childhood it was for him as Pope an important concern to maintain his friendship with a Jewish school friend, and to intensify the bonds of friendship with Judaism in general.

Beyond that, John Paul was able to give visible expression to his concern for reconciliation with Judaism through grand public gestures. Already in the first year of his pontificate on 7 June 1979 he visited the former concentration camp of Auschwitz-Birkenau, where in front of the memorial stone with its Hebrew inscription he recalled the victims of the Shoah in a particular manner with the moving words: “This inscription awakens the memory of the People whose sons and daughters were intended for total extermination. This People draws its origin from Abraham, our Father in faith (cf. Rom 4:12) as was expressed by Paul of Tarsus. The very People that received from God the commandment “Thou shalt

¹¹ CARDINAL WALTER KASPER, Zwei Hinweise zu einer Theologie des Volkes Gottes, in: Pontificia Università Lateranense (Ed.), Fests-
not kill” itself experienced in a special measure what is meant by killing. It is not permissible for anyone to pass by this inscription with indifference”. Even more attention was paid by the public media to the visit by Pope John Paul II to the Roman synagogue on 13 April 1986, which is also accorded special significance because there was a Jewish community in Rome long before the Christian faith was brought to Rome. The historical significance of this event however is based above all on the fact that it was the first time in history the Bishop of Rome has visited a synagogue, to bear testimony to his respect for Judaism before the whole world. The gesture of the embrace of the Chief Rabbi Elio Toaff and Pope John Paul II remains an indelible memory.

Also to be seen against the background of the document “We remember. A reflection on the Pope on 12 March in the Holy Year 2000 prayed for Shoah “ is the prayer for forgiveness with which the Pope on 12 March in the Holy Year 2000 prayed for forgiveness of guilt towards the people of Israel in a public liturgy: “We are deeply saddened by the behaviour of those who in the course of history have caused these children of yours to suffer, and asking your forgiveness we wish to omit ourselves to genuine brotherhood with the people of the Covenant”. In a slightly altered form Pope John Paul inserted this prayer for forgiveness as a written petition between the stones of the Wailing Wall in Jerusalem during his visit to Israel on 26 March 2000. The visit to the State of Israel by the Pope must therefore be evaluated not simply as an historic event, especially since the diplomatic recognition of the State of Israel by the Holy See had taken place in December 1993. The pope’s visit to Israel represented instead a unique stimulus for the promotion of Jewish-Catholic conversation. As the Pope visited the Holocaust Memorial Yad-Vashem, he commemorated the victims of the Shoah and prayed for them, he met with survivors of this incomparable tragedy and he entered into contact for the first time with the Jerusalem Chief Rabbinate. Later he met the two Chief Rabbis once more on 16 January 2004 in the Apostolic Palace. In addition, John Paul II repeatedly received Jewish personalities and groups, and during his numerous pastoral journeys his obligatory program always included an encounter with a local Jewish delegation wherever there was a sizeable Jewish community.

When one reviews in retrospect the great engagement of Pope John Paul II for Jewish-Catholic dialogue, one can without hesitation pronounce the judgement that during his long pontificate the course was set for the future of this necessary conversation and there can be no going back behind that which was then achieved. It is therefore not surprising that to this day John Paul II is held in high esteem by the Jewish dialogue partners and the admiration for him and his work of reconciliation remains unbroken.

5. Pope Benedict XVI and dialogue with the Jews

There can be no doubt that the great endeavours by Pope John Paul II for Jewish-Catholic dialogue was theologically legitimated and supported by the then Prefect of the Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith, Cardinal Joseph Ratzinger. In the course of his duties at that time he himself maintained personal contact with Jews and published groundbreaking articles on the specific relationship of Christianity to Judaism within the context of world religions. The foundation for this view of Ratzinger the theologian lies in his conviction that Sacred Scripture can only be understood as one single book as he explains himself in a biographical note: “So the decisive step for me was to learn to understand the connection between the Old and the New Testament, which is the foundation of all patristic theology. This theology depends on the interpretation of the scripture, the core of patristic exegesis is the concordia testamentorum mediated by Christ in the Holy Spirit”. On this basis it is axiomatic for Joseph Ratzinger that there can be no access to Jesus and therefore no entry of the nations into the people of God without the acceptance in faith of the revelation of God who speaks in the Sacred Scripture which Christians term the Old Testament. It is therefore a core concern for him to demonstrate the profound connections of New Testament themes with Old Testament message, so that both the intrinsic continuity between the New and the Old Testament and the innovation of the New Testament message are clearly illuminated. Joseph Ratzinger’s verdict on the trial of Jesus in his book on Jesus of Nazareth for example, which has been acknowledged with particular gratitude on the part of the Jews, namely that the biblical report of the trial of Jesus cannot serve as the basis for any assertion of collective Jewish guilt, was already clearly perceived by the theologian Ratzinger: “Jesus’ blood raises no call for retaliation but calls all to reconciliation. It has become as the letter to the Hebrews shows, itself the permanent Day of Atonement of God”.

Against the background of these theological convictions it cannot surprise us that Pope Benedict XVI

carries on and progresses the conciliatory work of his predecessor with regard to Jewish-Catholic conversation. He not only addressed the first letter in his pontificate to the Chief Rabbi in Rome but also gave an assurance at his first encounter with a Jewish delegation on 9 June 2005 that the church was moving firmly on the fundamental principles of “Nostra aetate” and he intended to continue the dialogue in the footsteps of his predecessors. In reviewing the seven years of his pontificate we find that he has in this short space of time taken all those steps which Pope John Paul took in his 27-year pontificate: Pope Benedict XVI visited the former concentration camp Auschwitz-Birkenau on 28 May 2006; during his visit to Israel in May 2009 he too stood before the Wailing Wall, he met with the Chief Rabbinate of Jerusalem and prayed for the victims of the Shoah in Yad Vashem; and on 17 January 2010 he was warmly received by the Jewish community in Rome in their synagogue. His first visit to a synagogue was of course made already on 19 August 2005 in Cologne on the occasion of World Youth Day, and on 18 April 2008 he visited the Park East Synagogue in New York. So we can claim with gratitude that no other Pope in history has visited as many synagogues as Benedict XVI.

All of these activities are indeed marked by his own personal style. While Pope John Paul II had a refined sense for grand gestures and strong images, Benedict XVI relies above all on the power of the word and humble encounter. That was given particularly clear expression during his visit to the memorial Yad Vashem when he deliberately referred to the name of this place and meditated on the God-given inalienability of the name of each individual person: “One can weave an insidious web of lies to convince others that certain groups are undeserving of respect. Yet try as one might, one can never take away the name of a fellow human being.” Also deserving of special mention is the inimitable spiritual meditation by Pope Benedict XVI on the Decalogue, which he acknowledged as the “pole star of faith and of the morality of the people of God”, during his visit to the Chief Synagogue in Rome. In this way Pope Benedict XVI endeavours again and again through the power of his words and his spiritual profundity to highlight the multi-faceted riches of the common spiritual heritage of Judaism and Christianity and to add theological depth to the guidelines set down by the declaration “Nostra aetate”, to which we will return again in conclusion.

6. OPEN THEOLOGICAL QUESTIONS IN JEWISH-CATHOLIC DIALOGUE

The Declaration of the Second Vatican Council on Judaism, that is the fourth Article of “Nostra aetate”, stood, as has surely become clear, in a decidedly theological framework. That is not meant to claim that all theological questions which arise in the relationship of Christianity and Judaism were solved there. They did receive there a promising stimulus, but require further theological reflection. That is also indicated by the fact that this Council document, unlike all other texts of the Second Vatican Council, could not in its notes refer back to preceding doctrinal documents and decisions of previous councils. Of course there had been earlier magisterial texts which focussed on Judaism, but “Nostra aetate” provides the first theological overview of the relationship of the Catholic Church to the Jews.

Because it was such a breakthrough, the Council text is not infrequently over-interpreted, and things are read into it which it does not in fact contain. To name an important example: That the covenant that God made with his people Israel persists and is never invalidated — although this confession is true — cannot be read into “Nostra aetate”. This statement was instead first made with full clarity by Pope John Paul II when he said during a meeting with Jewish representatives in Mainz on 17 November 1980 that the Old Covenant had never been revoked by God: “The first dimension of this dialogue, namely the encounter between God’s people of the Old Covenant which has never been revoked by God and that of the New Covenant is at the same time a dialogue within our church, as it were between the first and second book of her bible.”

This statement too has given rise to misunderstandings, for example the implication that if the Jews remain in a valid covenant relationship with God, there must be two different ways of salvation, namely the Jewish path of salvation without Christ and the path of salvation for all other people, which leads through Jesus Christ. As obvious as this answer seems to be at first glance, it is not able to solve satisfactorily at least the highly complex theological question how the Christian belief in the universal salvific significance of Jesus Christ can coherently be conceptually combined with the equally clear conviction of faith in the never-revoked covenant of God with Israel. That the church and Judaism cannot be represented as “two parallel ways to salvation”, but that the church must “witness to Christ as the Redeemer for all” was established already in the second docu-

ment published by the Holy See’s Commission for Religious Relations with the Jews in 1985. The Christian faith stands or falls by the confession that God wants to lead all people to salvation, that he follows this path in Jesus Christ as the universal mediator of salvation, and that there is no “other name under heaven given to the human race by which we are to be saved” (Acts 4:12). The concept of two parallel paths of salvation would in the least call into question or even endanger the fundamental understanding of the Second Vatican Council that Jews and Christians do not belong to two different peoples of God, but that they form one people of God.

On the one hand, from the Christian confession there can be only one path to salvation. However, on the other hand, it does not necessarily follow that the Jews are excluded from God’s salvation because they do not believe in Jesus Christ as the Messiah of Israel and the Son of God. Such a claim would find no support in the soteriological understanding of St Paul, who in the Letter to the Romans definitively negates the question he himself has posed, whether God has repudiated his own people: “For the grace of God has brought you salvation, through faith in our Lord Jesus Christ. This salvation is for the Jewish people first and foremost, and also for the Gentiles” (Rom 11:29). That the Jews are participants in God’s salvation is theologically unquestionable, but how that can be possible without confessing Christ explicitly, and remains an unfathomable divine mystery. It is therefore no accident that Paul’s soteriological reflections in Romans 9-11 on the irrevocable redemption of Israel against the background of the Christ-mystery culminate in a mysterious doxology: “Oh, the depth of the riches and wisdom and knowledge of God! How inscrutable are his judgments and how unsearchable his ways” (Rom 11:33). It is likewise no accident that Pope Benedict XVI in the second part of his book on Jesus of Nazareth allows Bernard of Clairvaux to say in reference to the problem confronting us, that for the Jews “a determined point in time has been fixed, which cannot be anticipated”.24

This complexity is also attested by the re-formulation of the Good Friday Prayer for the Jews in the extraordinary form of the Roman rite which was published in February 2008. Although the new Good Friday prayer in the form of a plea to God confesses the universality of salvation in Jesus Christ within an eschatological horizon (“as the fullness of the peoples enters your church”),25 it has been vigorously criticised on the part of Jews — and of course also of Christians — and misunderstood as a call to explicit mission to the Jews.26 It is easy to understand that the term ‘mission to the Jews’ is a very delicate and sensitive matter for the Jews because in their eyes it involves the very existence of Israel itself. On the other hand however, this question also proves to be awkward for us Christians too, because for us the universal salvific significance of Jesus Christ and consequently the universal mission of the church are of fundamental significance. The Christian church is naturally obligated to perceive its evangelisation task in respect of the Jews, who believe in the one God, in a different manner from that to the nations. In concrete terms this means that — in contrast to several fundamentalist and evangelical movements — the Catholic Church neither conducts nor supports any specific institutional mission work directed towards Jews. In his detailed examination of the question of so-called mission to the Jews Cardinal Karl Lehmann rightly discerned that on closer investigation one finds “as good as no institutional mission to the Jews in Catholic mission history”. “We have an abundant share in other forms of inappropriate attitudes towards the Jews and therefore have no right to elevate ourselves above others. But in respect to a specific and exclusive ‘mission to the Jews’ there should be no false constellation or unjustified self-accusation in this regard.”27 The in — principle rejection of an institutional mission to the Jews does not on the other hand exclude that Christians bear witness to their faith in Jesus Christ also to Jews, but they should do so in an unassuming and humble manner, particularly in view of the great tragedy of the Shoah.28

7. Prospects

It must be obvious that within the framework of this conference it is not possible to delve more deeply into these open theological questions. That a good deal more effort in theological reflection is required is also affirmed by the project published in 2011, “Christ Jesus and the Jewish People Today”, produced as an initiative of the Holy See’s Commission for Religious Relations with the Jews by an informally convoked international group of Christian theologians, to which individual Jewish experts and friends were invited to participate as critical observers.29 No matter how worthwhile this attempt may be to examine anew the specific question of how to conceptually reconcile the Christian confession of the universal soteriological significance of Jesus

24 J. RATZINGER – Jesus of Nazareth. Holy Week: From the Entrance into Jerusalem to the Resurrection (San Francisco 2011) 44.
25 Pope Benedict XVI has explained that he altered the Good Friday prayer in such a way “to express our faith that Christ is the Savior for all, that there are not two channels of salvation, so that Christ is also the redeemer of the Jews, and not just of the Gentiles. But the new formulation also shifts the focus from a direct petition for the conversion of the Jews in a missionary sense to a plea that the Lord might bring about the hour of history when we may all be united”. BENEDICT XVI, Light of the World. The Pope, the Church, and the Signs of the Times. A Conversation with Peter Seewald (San Francisco 2010), 107.
26 Vgl. W. HOMOLKA / E. ZENGER (Hrsg.), „... damit sie Jesus Christus erkennen“. Die neue Karfreitagsfürbitte für die Juden (Freiburg i. Br. 2008).
Christ with the equally Christian faith conviction that God steadfastly stands by his covenant with Israel with historical-soteriological faithfulness, Cardinal Walter Kasper states realistically in his preface, that even this conversation has in no way arrived at a conclusion: “We are only standing at the threshold of a new beginning. Many exegetical, historical and systematical questions are still open and there will presumably always be such questions.”

Jewish-Catholic dialogue will therefore never be unemployed, especially at the academic level, particularly since the epoch-making new course set by the Second Vatican Council regarding the relationship between Jews and Christians is naturally constantly being put to the test. On the one hand the scourge of anti-Semitism seems to be ineradicable in today’s world; and even in Christian theology the age-old Marcionism and anti-Judaism re-emerge with a vengeance again and again, and in fact not only on the part of the traditionalists but even within the liberal strands of current theology. In view of such developments the Catholic Church is obliged to denounce anti-Judaism and Marcionism as a betrayal of its own Christian faith, and to call to mind that the spiritual fraternity between Jews and Christians has its firm and eternal foundation in Holy Scripture. On the other hand, the demand by the Second Vatican Council to foster mutual understanding and respect between Jews and Christians must continue to be accorded due attention. That is the indispensable prerequisite for guaranteeing that there will be no recurrence of the dangerous estrangement between Christians and Jews, but that they remain aware of their spiritual kinship. We will therefore be grateful for every contribution made here to expand the dialogue with Judaism on the foundation of “Nostra aetate”, and to arrive at a better understanding between Jews and Christians so that Jews and Christians as the one people of God bear witness to peace and reconciliation in the unreconciled world of today and can thus be a blessing not only for one another but also jointly for humanity.

29 Ibid. XIV.
IN MEMORIAM

Prof. Ralph Del Colle (1954-2012)

Professor Ralph Del Colle, a Roman Catholic systematic theologian, Associate Professor of Theology at Marquette University (Milwaukee, Wisconsin, USA), passed away on 29 July 2012, succumbing to a form of cancer.

We publish here below a tribute to his memory, prepared by the head of the western section of the Pontifical Council for Promoting Christian Unity, Msgr Juan Usma Gómez.

The Pontifical Council for Promoting Christian Unity (PCPCU) has relied on the theological competence of Professor Ralph Del Colle over many years, and he has always generously offered his expertise in the firm conviction that unity is God’s will and the irrevocable path for all Christians.

Since 1998 he has been a member of the Pentecostal/Catholic International Dialogue, and took part in the Informal Conversations with the Seventh-Day Adventists (2001-2002) as well as in the official delegation attending the General Assembly of the World Council of Churches in Harare in 1998.

Professor Del Colle has been particularly appreciated for his faithfulness and his love for the Church, lived in a firm awareness of his Catholic identity.

With his deep knowledge of official Church teaching, he has always striven to make it available as a gift to share among Catholics and other Christians. Theological research and a life of faith are inextricably linked for him.

His analytical skill, his intellectual honesty and his insight have all been put to the service of the truth. At the same time, he has always nurtured a deep spirituality, a profound human sensitivity and a genuine openness. He has drawn from the wellspring of a rich sacramental and devotional life throughout his entire life.

A dedicated spirit and a joyful approach have always marked his contribution to the meetings of the dialogue. Attentive not only to the general discussion but also to its varied nuances, Professor Del Colle has never turned away from any issue, even when his personal life has been touched. While he has retained his lively and perceptive sensitivity, he has succeeded in combining it with his determination to support his positions and beliefs. He has demonstrated the ability both to confront controversial questions and to engage in a challenging exchange with other Christians, as well as the willingness to overcome rifts and tensions in a proactive and constructive way. The bonds of communion, and even deep friendship, that he has been able to create have enabled the dialogue to deal with a range of themes, sometimes very difficult ones, without ever diluting them or diminishing their significance.

In particular, the Catholic/Pentecostal International dialogue is indebted to Professor Del Colle in its last two stages. His expertise and understanding of the Pentecostal world have made him at times a bridge and at other times a challenge that have inspired deeper clarifications on respective positions. From its very beginning, he has been convinced that discernment is the key in this dialogue in particular, affirming that the “Pentecostal distinctiveness... its defining characteristic is the ‘pentecostal outpouring of the Holy Spirit’, which ought not to be considered as a claim, i.e., we have the outpouring, but as a witness, i.e., the Spirit has fallen”. The dialogue, therefore, is part of the process of our discernment of the Spirit’s work, including the possibility of a new outpouring. And, as he has stated on different occasions, “this discernment requires our authentic receptivity to what God is offering”. Always fully aware that unity is God’s gift, he faithfully awaits the surprises of the Spirit.

Prof. Margaret O’Gara

Dr Margaret O’Gara, Professor of Theology at the University of St Michael’s College, Toronto, entered eternal life on 16 August 2012 after two years of illness. A Roman Catholic who specialized in Church teaching authority and ecumenical dialogue, she taught systematic theology to divinity and graduate students from 1976 in the areas of theological foundations, ecumenical dialogue, teaching authority in the Church, the doctrine of the Trinity, human nature and grace, and Catholic social teaching. Active in ecumenical work for over 35 years, Professor O’Gara was appointed to numerous official ecumenical dialogue commissions by the Pontifical Council for Promoting Christian Unity, the Canadian Conference of Catholic Bishops, and the US Conference of Catholic Bishops. She was officially appointed to the Disciples of Christ — Roman Catholic International Commission for Dialogue (1983), the US Lutheran-Roman Catholic Dialogue (1994), and the Evangelical — Roman Catholic Dialogue of Canada (2008). In addition, she also served for 18 years on the Anglican — Roman Catholic Dialogue of Canada (1976-1993) and for 12 years on the Lutheran — Roman Catholic International Commission for Unity (1995-2006).

In October 2001, Margaret O’Gara was theologi-
cal advisor to the delegation of bishops from the Canadian Conference of Catholic Bishops to the World Synod of Bishops meeting in Rome. She was a member of the boards of the Collegeville Institute for Ecumenical and Cultural Research in Collegeville, Minnesota, and of Bridgefolk, an organization for dialogue between Roman Catholics and Mennonites. She served as President of the Catholic Theological Society of America and of the North American Academy of Ecumenists.

With gratitude, the Pontifical Council commends her to our heavenly Father’s eternal love.

INTERNATIONAL REFORMED-CATHOLIC DIALOGUE

Georgia, USA, 27 April – 2 May 2012

The second meeting of the fourth phase of international dialogue between the World Communion of Reformed Churches (WCRC) and the Pontifical Council for Promoting Christian Unity (PCPCU) took place 27 April-2 May, 2012 at the Columbia Theological Seminary in Decatur, Georgia, USA. The WCRC and the PCPCU are especially grateful to Columbia Theological Seminary and its President, Dr. Stephen A. Hayner, for hosting and extending gracious hospitality during the dialogue meeting.

The overall theme of this phase, which is scheduled to be completed by 2017, is *Justification and Sacramentality: The Christian Community as an agent for Justice*. The first meeting of this phase had been held in 2011 in Rome, Italy. Bishop Kevin Rhoades, Diocese of Fort Wayne-South Bend in Indiana, USA, and Rev. Dr. Martha Moore-Keish, of the Columbia Theological Seminary, in Decatur, Georgia, USA, co-chair this dialogue on behalf of the Catholic Church and the World Communion of Reformed Churches respectively. The secretaries for the co-chairs are Rev. Dr. Douwe Visser, Executive Secretary for Theology, Mission and Communion for the WCRC and Rev. Dr. Gregory J. Fairbanks of the Pontifical Council for Promoting Christian Unity.

The Reformed participants for this meeting included Rev. Dr. Reinerio Arce-Valentin (Cuba); Dr. Christopher Dorn (USA); Rev. Dr. George Hunsinger (USA); Rev. Dr. Benebo Fubara-Manuel (Nigeria); Dr. George Sabra (Lebanon) and Rev. Dr. Lindsay Schlüter (Scotland).

The Catholic participants were Dr. Peter Casarella (USA); Dr. Peter De Mey (Belgium); Rev. Dr. William Henn, OFM cap. (USA/Italy); Dr. Annemarie Mayer (Germany) and Rev. Dr. Jorge Scampini, O.P. (Argentina).

The topics discussed during this meeting included Justification: Reformed and Catholic perspectives, (particularly in respect to the Joint Declaration on the Doctrine of Justification), and Justification and Baptism. The meeting had papers delivered by Drs. Scampini, DeMay and Henn for the PCPCU and Drs. Hunsinger and Schlüter for the WCRC.

It is hoped that this phase of international dialogue will build upon agreements already achieved, help Reformed and Catholic Christians grow together in faith, and assist in the discernment of whether the WRC will affiliate with the Joint Declaration on the Doctrine of Justification (JDDJ). The JDDJ is a 1999 common agreement of the Catholic Church and the Lutheran World Federation concerning the nature of justification, which was a central issue of the Protestant Reformation. In 2006 the World Methodist Council affiliated with the JDDJ, highlighting sanctification. Discussion was held during this meeting on the WCRC’s process of consultation to affiliate to JDDJ.

There have been three previous phases of dialogue between the World Alliance of Reformed Churches (WARC) and the Pontifical Council for Promoting Christian Unity (PCPCU). These phases resulted in the reports: “The Presence of Christ in Church and World” (1970-1977); “Towards a Common Understanding of the Church” (1984-1989); and “Church as Community of Common Witness to the Kingdom of God” (1998-2005). The World Communion of Reformed Churches was born through the merger of the World Alliance of Reformed Churches and the Reformed Ecumenical Council in June 2010.

The group will convene for its third meeting of these conversations in 2013 to study Justification and Sacramentality: Justification and Sanctification and The Prophetic Office and Authority in the Church.

PRELIMINARY CONVERSATIONS BETWEEN THE PONTIFICAL COUNCIL FOR PROMOTING CHRISTIAN UNITY AND A GROUP OF LEADERS OF NEW CHARISMATIC CHURCHES

Rome, Italy, 28-29 May 2012

A *Preliminary Conversation* between the Pontifical Council for Promoting Christian Unity and a group of leaders of New Charismatic Churches took place in Rome on 28-29 May 2012. This third meeting of such preliminary conversations focused on an evaluation of past encounters (2007 and 2009) and on preparing a project for the way forward. It was decided that a three-year round of conversations will commence in 2014 on a yearly basis on the theme Authority, Revelation and the Word of God.

The working sessions were preceded by devotions led alternatively by each side.

The Leaders of New Charismatic Churches who attended the Conversations were: Reverend John Cathcart (World Missionary Evangelism Inc., Dallas, TX, USA); Pastor Ulf Ekman (Word of Life, Sweden); Mr John Noble (Engage Church, Pioneer Network, UK); Pastor Patrick Sparrow (Shouts of Grace Church, USA); Dr Richard Roberts (Springdale College, Birmingham, UK) and Dr Lonnie Laughlin (Adullam Outpost Church, Litchfield, USA) who serves as Co-Secretary.

Delegates from the Pontifical Council for Promoting Christian Unity were: Bishop Brian Farrell (Pontifical Council for Promoting Christian Unity, Vatican
CATHOLIC-PENTECOSTAL DIALOGUE: SIXTH ROUND OF CONVERSATIONS

Helsinki, Finland, 28 June-5 July 2012

The International Dialogue between the Pontifical Council for Promoting Christian Unity and some Classical Pentecostal Churches and leaders held its second session of the sixth phase in Helsinki (Finland), from 28 June till 5 July 2012. The general theme for this round is “Charisms in the Church: Their Spiritual Significance, Discernment, and Pastoral Implications”.

The dialogue started in 1972 and is not seeking to establish structural unity. Its goal is to promote mutual respect and understanding in matters of faith and practice. Genuine exchange and frank dialogue concerning the positions and practices of the two traditions have been the guiding practice of the conversations, which include daily prayer services that were led alternatively.

Catholic Co-Chair of the Dialogue is the Most Reverend Michael Burbidge, Bishop of Raleigh, NC, USA. This year, Rev. David Cole, Briercrest College and Seminary, Saskatchewan, Canada (Open Bible Churches) has served as Pentecostal Co-Chair since Rev. Cecil M. Robeck, Fuller Theological Seminary, Los Angeles, USA, (Assemblies of God) was unable to take part in the meeting.

The topic of this second session of the sixth phase was “Charisms in the Church: Discernment”. Reverend Father Ján Dačok, SJ (Slovak Republic), Pontifical Gregorian University (Rome, Italy), presented the paper “Discernment: A Catholic Perspective”. Reverend Dr. Veli-Matti Kärkkäinen (Finland), Fuller Theological Seminary, Los Angeles, USA, presented the paper “Pentecostal Practice and Theology of Discernment: An Interim Report”. In the agenda there remain two more topics: Healing (2013) and Prophecy (2014). It is expected that the Final Report will be ready by 2015.

This year’s session was hosted by the Pentecostal team. The participants were very pleased to attend the Sunday worship at the Helsinki Saalem Church, the largest Pentecostal congregation in Finland. They were also pleased to meet Rev. Pekka Havupalo, Chairperson of the National Board of the Pentecostal Church of Finland (and Senior Pastor of Turku Pentecostal Church) and Rev. Esko Matikainen, General Secretary of the Pentecostal Church of Finland (and Pastor at the Helsinki Saleem Church), as well as Rev. Father Raimo Goyarola, General Vicar of the Catholic Diocese of Finland, and Monsignor Marino Trevisini of Saint Henry’s Cathedral Parish in Helsinki.

Bishop Burbidge stated: “The dialogue allowed for fruitful discussion on the theology of discernment from Catholic and Pentecostal perspectives. Both groups benefited from the biblical resources, scholarly research, spiritual insights and pastoral applications that were presented. There was a spirit of collaboration and mutual respect that typically characterize our gatherings and for which both groups are most grateful”. According to Rev Cole: “Our Dialogue enjoyed the beautiful city of Helsinki, including the hospitality of local members of the Pentecostal Church of Finland. They enjoyed worship in the Saalem Church, and a dinner and time of prayers with local Catholic and Pentecostal leaders. Pentecostals greatly appreciated the opportunity to grow in their understanding of discernment as they studied biblical, historical and pastoral perspectives on the subject. In an atmosphere of mutual respect and collegiality they are grateful to God for their fruitful exchange”.

Other delegates from the Classical Pentecostal churches included: Rev. S. David Moore, (Associate Professor of Theology, Life Pacific College, CA, USA), (International Church of the Foursquare Gospel, USA) and Rev. Opoku Onyinah, Chairman of the Church of Pentecost (Ghana).

Other delegates from the Catholic team included: Sr. Maria Ko, F.M.A. (Holy Spirit Seminary, Hong Kong, China/ Pontifical Faculty Auxili- um, Rome); Prof. Dr. Teresa Francesca Rossi (Centro Pro Unione/ Pontifical University of Saint Thomas Aquinas, Rome); Rev. Fr. Marcial Maçaneiro SCJ, Dehonian Faculty (Sao Paulo, Brazil) and Mgr. Juan Usma Gómez (Pontifical Council for Promoting Christian Unity, Vatican City/ Colombia), who serves as Co-Secretary.
JOINT STATEMENT

1. The Jewish co-chair Rabbi Shear Yashuv Cohen opened the meeting, giving thanks to God for the historic transformation in Catholic-Jewish relations since the Second Vatican Council (1962-65) and for the establishment of the bilateral commission of the Chief Rabbinate of Israel and the Holy See, after the historic visit of Pope John Paul II to Israel.

Cardinal Peter Turkson, the new Catholic co-chair, responded paying tribute to his predecessor Cardinal Jorge Mejía and welcomed the delegations, in particular those who had just joined the bilateral commission. Cardinal Mejía together with Cardinal Cottier, as the former senior members of the Catholic delegation, accompanied by Cardinal Kurt Koch, President of the Holy See’s Commission for Religious Relations with the Jews, visited the delegations and expressed their joy at the continuity of this work as a blessing for both communities and for humanity.

2. The theme of this 11th meeting of the bilateral commission was titled “Religious perspectives on the current financial crisis: vision for a just economic order.” The special guest on the first evening was Prof. Ettore Gotti Tedeschi, President of the Vatican’s Istituto per le Opere di Religione, who provided an analysis of the causes of the financial crisis and shared thoughts on possible ways forward. Papers on the theme were provided by Dr. Meir Tamari, former chief economist of the Bank of Israel, and Prof. Stefano Zamagni from the Economic Science Department of the University of Bologna.

3. Following from the presentations and discussion, the following points were highlighted. While many factors contributed to the financial crisis, at its roots lies a crisis of moral values in which the importance of having, reflected in a culture of greed, eclipsed the importance of being; and where the value of truth reflected in honesty and transparency was sorely lacking in economic activity.

4. At the heart of Jewish and Catholic visions for a just economic order is the affirmation of the sovereignty and providence of the Creator of the world with whom all wealth originates and which is given to humankind as a gift for the common good.

5. Accordingly, the purpose of an economic order is to serve the wellbeing of society, affirming the human dignity of all people, each created in the Divine Image. While this concept of dignity affirms the value of the person, it is antithetical to egocentrism. Rather, it requires the promotion of the well-being of the individual in relation to community and society, emphasizing human obligations and responsibilities accordingly and thereby affirming human solidarity and fraternity.

This posits the obligation to guarantee certain basic human needs, such as the protection of life, sustenance, clothing, housing, health, education and employment.

Particular attention must therefore be given to the vulnerable — the poor, the widow, the orphan, the sick and disabled; and the stranger, which in today’s society is particularly relevant to migrant and foreign workers — whose condition serves as a measure of the moral health of society or lack thereof, and the degree of solidarity within it.

6. Furthermore, just as the Divine gift of wealth places obligations upon the recipient in relation to those less fortunate materially; similarly countries with developed economies have the obligation to recognize their responsibilities and duties towards countries and societies in need — especially in this era of globalization.

7. Concepts highlighted for the promotion of a more just economic order included: the universal destination of the goods of the earth; a culture of “enough” that implies a degree of self-limitation and modesty; responsible stewardship; an ethical system of allocation of resources and priorities; and the critical importance of honesty, transparency, gratuitousness and accountability.

8. Just as the crisis has required partial remission of debts on national and international levels, there is a need to extend this to families and individuals for their economic self-rehabilitation.

9. The members of the bilateral commission underscored the role that the faith communities must play in contributing to a responsible economic order and the importance of their engagement by government, educational institutions, and the media, to this end.
10. In addition to the ethical wisdom drawn from our spiritual heritages, religious communities are an integral part of civil society, which must play a central role together with politics and business, in ensuring the subsidiarity necessary for a just social and economic order.

11. Furthermore the crisis has revealed the profound lack of the ethical component in economic thinking. Hence, it is imperative that institutes and academies of economic studies and policy formation include ethical training in their curricula, similar to that which has developed in recent years in the field of medical ethics; and also ethical counselling to decision makers on a national and international level.

12. The meeting concluded with prayer to the Source of all blessing that the words of the Psalmist will be fulfilled “Mercy and truth are met together; righteousness and peace have kissed (each other). Truth shall spring out of the earth and righteousness shall look down from heaven. Yea, the Lord shall give (that which is) good; and our land shall yield her increase. Righteousness shall go before Him; and shall set (us) in the way of His steps” (Ps 85,11-14).

Rome March 29th, 2012 – Nissan 6th, 5772

Rabbi Shear Yashuv Cohen  
(Chairman of the Jewish Delegation)
Rabbi David Rosen  
Rabbi Prof. Daniel Sperber  
Rabbi Prof. Avraham Steinberg  
Mr. Oded Wiener  
Msgr. Pier Francesco Fumagalli

Peter Cardinal Turkson  
(Chairman of the Catholic Delegation)
Archbishop Elias Chacour  
Archbishop Antonio Franco  
Archbishop Bruno Forte  
Bishop Giacinto-Boulos Marcuzzo  
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