

Chapter IV
Catholic - Jewish Relations

Charles Parr

Catholic - Jewish Relations

Universal

National (USA)

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Resource Addenda:

**The [Chicago] Institute for
Catholic-Jewish Education**

The Rochester Agreement

Catholic - Jewish Relations

Universal

Among all the religions of the world, none is so close to Christianity as Judaism. The Second Vatican Council, in 1964, solemnly declared in the Dogmatic Constitution on the Church (*Lumen Gentium*, 16): “In the first place [of relation] we must recall the people to whom the testament and the promises were given and from whom Christ was born according to the flesh (cf. Rm 9: 4-5). On account of their fathers this people remains most dear to God, for God does not repent of the gifts and the call he issues (Rm 11:28-29).” Furthermore, the Council in 1965 clearly identified the foundation of this relationship by “searching deeply into the mystery of the Church, [and therefore recalling] the bond that spiritually ties the people of the New Covenant to Abraham’s stock” Declaration on the Relation of the Church to Non-Christian Religions (*Nostra Aetate*, 4).

However, this relationship through the centuries has been strained, not appreciated and severely painful. Although Christianity began in Judaism, the history of Christian-Jewish relations has been marked so often as one of contempt, fear, hatred and even violence. The Christian-Jewish relationship is not just a matter of some past history; Judaism is a living religious community, a vital spiritual force in our world today. Even in areas where there may be very few Jews, Catholics must understand Judaism and their relation to it. Thus, as often stated, *Nostra Aetate*, 4 was not merely a “milestone” in the Christian-Jewish relationship, in reality it was a true “turning point.”

On 1 October 1966, Pope Paul VI established the Vatican’s Office for Catholic-Jewish Relations (OCJR), headed by Father Cornelius Rijk, within the Secretariat for Promoting Christian Unity, directed by Cardinal Augustin Bea. During 20-23 December 1970 the OCJR met with the International Jewish Committee for Interreligious Consultations (IJCIC), and eventually formed the International Catholic-Jewish Liaison Committee. This Liaison Committee continued to meet with great regularity and progress through the years.

Nine years following the Conciliar Declaration, on 22 October 1974, the Vatican’s Commission for Religious Relations with the Jews was established by Pope Paul VI. This new Vatican Commission, under the presidency of Cardinal Joannes Willebrands (so long associated with this concern), found its place within the structure of the Secretariat for Promoting Christian Unity. On 3 January 1975 the newly established Commission released its “Guidelines and Suggestions for Implementing the Conciliar Declaration *Nostra Aetate* (no. 4).” The title aptly demonstrated the intended relationship between this document and the conciliar Declaration - to endorse, foster and encourage, on the various local levels throughout the world, the continued implementation of the insights of the Declaration. Prompted by the experiences and insights of the previous decade on the local, national and international levels, “Guidelines” indicated four essential areas of the Church’s life which were particularly challenged in this relationship, and then offered specific practical suggestions for a response by the Church in each of these areas: the notion and nature of dialogue, the liturgy, teaching and education, and joint social action.

On 24 June 1985, ten years after the publication of “Guidelines,” the Vatican’s Commission issued “Notes on the Correct Way to Present Jews and Judaism in Preaching and Catechesis in the Roman Catholic Church,” under the signature of Cardinal Willebrands, the President of the Commission. The “Notes” were rooted in the conciliar Declaration *Nostra Aetate*, 4 and built upon the “Guidelines,” as well as the great treasury of interreligious dialogue and cooperation of the past twenty years. The “Notes,” presented at a Roman press conference, were accompanied by a prepared printed “Note,” of some length. This “Note,” entitled “A Note for the Presentation of the Document of the Commission for Religious Relations with the Jews,” also prepared by the members of the Commission, was delivered at the press conference in printed form by Msgr. Jorge Mejia, secretary of the Commission. As such it serves as an interpretative instrument for the document of the Commission. Because of its significance, the “Notes” has often been identified in some quarters as “The Common Bond: Christians and Jews.”

“Notes” identified six topics or subjects of concern which must be adequately portrayed and presented in and by Roman Catholic preaching and in all aspects of catechesis. Flowing from the third section of “Guidelines,” i.e., Teaching and Education, “Notes” identified: Religious Teaching and Judaism, Relations between the Old and New Testaments, Jewish Roots of Christianity, the Jews in the New Testament, the Liturgy, and Judaism and Christianity in History.

On 30 December 1993 representatives of the two governments of the Vatican and of the State of Israel signed the “Fundamental Agreement Between the Holy See and the State of Israel,” which included, among other provisions, for the exchange of diplomatic envoys.

On 16 March 1998, the Vatican’s Commission for Religious Relations with the Jews, under the presidency of Cardinal Edward Idris Cassidy, published its long-awaited document on the Holocaust: “We Remember: A Reflection on the *Shoah*.” The five sections of this document focus on: I. Tragedy of the *Shoah* [Holocaust] and the Duty of Remembrance; II. What We Must Remember; III. Relations between Jews and Christians; IV. Nazi Antisemitism and the *Shoah*; and, V. Looking Together To a Common Future.

Assuredly, the future of this unique relationship is full of hope, as it is secure in the mind and plan of God: it is not as though the word of God has failed (cf. Rm 9:6; Nb 23:19; Is 55:10-11), for “the gifts and call of God are irrevocable” (Rm 11:29)! The promise of God, spoken through Prophet Zephaniah, perdures: “that they [all peoples] may call upon the name of the LORD, to serve him with one accord” (Zeph 3:9).

RESOURCES:

In addition to readily available Second Vatican Council’s *Nostra Aetate*, “Declaration on the Relationship of the Church to Non-Christian Religions” (28 October 1965), the other Vatican documents chronicled above can be found with ease in the documentary service *Origins*, as noted:

“Guidelines”: *Origins* 4: 30 (16 January 1974); 468, f.

“Notes”: *Origins* 15: 7 (4 July 1985); 102, f.

“Fundamental Agreement”: *Origins* 23: 30 (13 January 1994); 525, 527-528.

“We Remember: A Reflection on the *Shoah*”: *Origins* 27: 40 (26 March 1998); 669, 671-675.

A collection of four Vatican documents (*Nostra Aetate*, “Guidelines,” “Notes” and “We Remember” has recently been published by the Catholic Truth Society and is available in limited quantity from the USCC Publication Services in Washington.

National (USA)

In the United States, the Catholic Bishops established its Committee for Ecumenical and Interreligious Affairs in 1964. In September 1967, at their annual meeting, the bishops created the Secretariat for Catholic-Jewish Relations, and placed it within the framework of its Ecumenical and Interreligious Committee.

Currently this standing Bishops’ Committee for Ecumenical and Interreligious Affairs [BCEIA] of the National Conference of Catholic Bishops is chaired by the Most Reverend Tod D. Brown, the Bishop of Orange in California. The Committee, in its day to day activities, is aided through a Secretariat [SEIA], whose Executive Director is the Reverend John F. Hotchkin. Within this Secretariat, a Section for Catholic-Jewish Relations is staffed by Mr. Eugene J. Fisher, Ph.D.

This Section assists the bishops’ Conference in addressing timely interests and concerns of the on-going Catholic-Jewish relationship. Furthermore, the Section is engaged in continued conversation on the national and international levels, maintaining contact and dialogue with organizations, agencies and representative bodies of the Jewish community. In addition, the Section also aids individual dioceses in establishing secretariats or other agencies within a particular diocese to deepen the work of interreligious dialogue, understanding and interaction.

Cardinal William Keeler of Baltimore is the Episcopal Moderator for Catholic-Jewish Relations for the BCEIA. He is served in this endeavor by an Advisory Committee for Catholic-Jewish Relations, comprised of individuals from throughout the country.

The SEIA, within its own competence and membership, in concord with other Committees of the USCC, or in conjunction with other agencies or institutions (e.g., The Anti-Defamation League), has prepared / published various documents, texts and papers over the years which address concerns and issues of the Catholic-Jewish Relation. Many of these titles have been published and are available from the USCC Office for Publishing and Promotion Services in Washington, DC. Notable among these are:

- USCC, BCEIA. “Criteria for the Evaluation of Dramatizations of the Passion,” 1988;
- USCC Bishops’ Committee on the Liturgy, *God’s Mercy Endures Forever*. Guidelines on the Presentation of Jews and Judaism in Catholic Preaching, 1988;
- _____. (*Alternative*) *Reproaches for Use during the Veneration of the Cross*, 1981;

- USCC Bishops' Committee on the Liturgy Newsletter, "Celebrating the Passover Seder" (March 1980); "Good Friday Reproaches (*Improperia*)" (March 1980); "Days of Remembrance of the Victims of the Holocaust" (March 1988).
- USCC, SEIA. *Guidelines for Catholic-Jewish Relations* (1985 Revision). The BCEIA, on 9 April 1985, approved this revision of a 1967 set of *Guidelines*, prepared by Dr. Eugene Fisher, in consultation with the Advisory Board of the Secretariat and published by the NCCB/USCC.
- USCC, SEIA. *Catholics Remember the Holocaust, 1998*. This volume not only includes the Vatican's document "We Remember" and related statements, but also includes statements by seven (RC) European Episcopal Conferences on the subject.
- USCC, SEIA. *Catholic Teaching on the Shoah: Implementing the Holy See's "We Remember,"* 2001. This practical tool provides reflections and resources which "are intended to help Catholic schools on all levels, including seminaries and universities, to implement the Vatican's 1998 statement *We Remember ...*" This helpful text provides not only the *what*, but also the *why*, for Catholic teaching on the *Shoah*; moreover, it offers ways to frame issues properly and sensitively using historical and theological contexts. A "Bibliography of Resources," includes a section on useful websites as well as print and video media to assist in developing curricula at every level and in fostering dialogue.
- Fisher, Eugene and Leon Klenicki. *Celebrating the 30th Anniversary of the Vatican II Declaration Nostra Aetate (No. 4) on Catholic-Jewish Relations: Programs and Resources*. New York: Anti-Defamation League, 1995. This excellent booklet provides background reflective essays on the relationship by the authors, suggested programs directed to various constituencies in the communities, lists various educational resources available through the ADL, program models for Catholic educators, and offers a helpful popular bibliography.
- Fisher, Eugene and Leon Klenicki, eds. *A New Millennium: From Dialogue to Reconciliation (Catholic and Jewish Reflections)*. New York: Anti-Defamation League, 2000. A collection of essays, documentation, suggested programs for millennium observances and beyond, as well as a Glossary of Terms which offers to assist in the developing Catholic-Jewish relationship.

National (USA) / NADEO Committee

The Catholic - Jewish Relations Committee is a standing committee of NADEO. It is composed of members of NADEO and is directed by a chairperson. As such the Committee has been established and is maintained by NADEO to these ends:

- to promote among the members of NADEO and their constituencies an understanding and appreciation of the depth of the Mystery of the relationship between the Church and the Jewish People (*Nostra Aetate*, 4);
- to foster and develop areas of communication and cooperation between the Catholic

and Jewish communities, on the national and regional levels, e.g., the National Workshop on Christian / Jewish Relations;

- to provide encouragement, assistance and resources to diocesan officers to enhance local Catholic - Jewish endeavors in prayer, study, dialogue and cooperation;
- to assist in the efforts of the Bishops' Committee for Ecumenical and Interreligious Affairs, notably for the Chair of the (NADEO) Christian - Jewish Relations Committee to serve as a member of the Advisory Committee for Catholic - Jewish Relations of the BCEIA;
- to represent the NADEO membership at events and meetings of organizations and other agencies promoting Catholic - Jewish relations.

The NADEO Catholic - Jewish Relations Committee's membership currently includes:

The Reverend Charles Parr, Chair
[The Diocese of Paterson]
737 Valley Road
Clifton, NJ 07013
973.777.5651 / FAX 973.777.4597

Sister Mary Ellen Coombe, NDS
[The Archdiocese of Chicago]
The Pastoral Center
P.O. Box 1979
Chicago, IL 60690

Sister Maryanne Guertin, SSJ
[The Diocese of Norwich]
Bishop Flanagan Ministry Center
1595 Norwich-New London Tpke.
Uncasville, CT 06383

The Reverend Msgr. Dennis Mikulanis
[The Diocese of San Diego]
Saint Charles Rectory
990 Saturn Blvd.
San Diego, CA 92154

The Reverend Joseph Wallace
[The Diocese of Camden]
Saint Mary Rectory
2001 Springdale Road
Cherry Hill, NJ 08003

Local

Within the history of the renewed relationship between Judaism and the Church, efforts to provide specific direction for the universal and national churches to implement the spirit and letter of *Nostra Aetate* (through subsequent documentation) have often been assisted by the local churches. To prepare these universal or national helps, the Vatican's Commission for Religious Relations with the Jews, along with the USCC's BCEIA, have often relied upon the experiences of dialogue, common study and joint social action in many of the local churches in the country and throughout the world during the decades since the Council.

As the "Guidelines and Suggestions" document aptly states (in its Conclusion), as it entrusts the future of these endeavors back to these same local churches: "... the bishops will know what best to do on the pastoral level,...." Two examples (within the United States) of this kind of far-reaching response on a local level, to the direction and vision offered, can be found in the Archdiocese of Chicago and in the Diocese of Rochester.

The influence of Chicago's *Institute for Catholic-Jewish Education* has reached far beyond the borders of the Archdiocese. By making available the manifold resources of the *Institute*, other local churches are assisted and encouraged toward the fostering and advancement of the dialogue. An illustration of this promotion can be found in the collection of internet *web* sites which identify readily accessible sources of information for those involved in the dialogue, on various levels of experience or expertise. A copy of this resource appears as a part of the resource addenda to this section.

Another example of this type of response by a local church may be observed in what has been entitled: "The Rochester Agreement." This local document, the fruit of almost two years of specific dialogue by members of a task force comprised of representatives of the Jewish and Catholic communities of the Rochester NY area, was signed on 8 May 1996. The signatories of the document were leaders of the Roman Catholic Diocese of Rochester, the Rochester Board of Rabbis and the Jewish Community Federation of Rochester.

The signing of "The Fundamental Agreement" by the Vatican and the State of Israel on 30 December 1993, leading to full diplomatic relations between the two States, was reported to be the impetus for the beginning of the directed dialogue effort by the Rochester task force in June 1994.

The text, with commentary and sidebar of insightful background information, can be found in *Origins* 26:1 (23 May 1996) 8-9. A copy of this resource also appears as a part of the resource addenda to this section.

Resource Addenda (I):

The [Chicago] Institute for Catholic-Jewish Education

BASIC INFORMATION ABOUT JUDAISM

- JUDAISM 101 - great site for a beginner. This is an online encyclopedia of Judaism, covering Jewish beliefs, people, places, things, language, scripture, holidays, practices and customs. Basic general information about Judaism written from a traditional perspective in plain English. Good links to other sites with basic information. www.jewfaq.org

MORE ADVANCED

- for Jewish Studies, the Columbia University site will get you started. www.columbia.edu/cu/lweb/indiv/mideast/cuvlj/
- for Jewish-Christian relations, the site of the International Council of Christians and Jews will give you articles, reports, conferences, church documents, etc. www.jcrelations.net/index.htm

JEWISH INTERNET GUIDES (for those with more time and some knowledge)

- Maven - the “all you ever need to know about Judaism” site. Maven can link you to over 1500 Jewish/Israel sites. www.maven.co.il
- the Mining Company - also has good links for holidays, Judaism and Israel. www.judaism.about.com/religion/judaism/mbody.htm

JEWISH ORGANIZATIONS

- The American Jewish Committee - good for discussion of issues in Jewish life, international affairs and intergroup relations. www.ajc.org
- The Anti-Defamation League - good site for information on combating hate and antisemitism. www.adl.org
- Spertus Institute for Jewish Studies - local institution with museum and library. Information on programs and exhibits. www.spertus.edu

ISRAEL

- Current events, news, living, travel, history in Jerusalem and Israel. www.virtualjerusalem.com

HOLOCAUST

- The United States Holocaust Memorial Museum - great place to start, good info, good links. www.ushmm.org

Resource Addenda (II):

The Rochester Agreement

“All your works shall praise you, O Eternal One, and all your faithful ones shall bless you” (Ps. 145:10).

The Rochester Board of Rabbis, the Jewish Community Federation of Rochester and the Roman Catholic Diocese of Rochester,

Aware of our dependence on and responsibility to the one God in whose image we are all created, and whose work of justice and peace has been entrusted to us,

Conscious of the unique nature of the relationship between the Catholic Church and the Jewish people, and of the historic process of reconciliation and growth in mutual understanding and friendship between Catholics and Jews since the Second Vatican Council,

Mindful of the long-standing spirit of friendship and cooperation which has marked relations between the Jewish and Roman Catholic communities of the Rochester area, and of the signing on Dec. 30, 1993/16 Tevet 5754, of the Vatican-Israel Fundamental Agreement, and,

Realizing that such an agreement will provide a sound and lasting basis for the continuing development of our present and future relations and for the furtherance of the many tasks which we face in common,

Agree upon the following articles:

Article 1. The Rochester Board of Rabbis, the Jewish Community Federation of Rochester and the Roman Catholic Diocese of Rochester, in the spirit of their respective religious traditions, the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, the Declaration of Independence of the state of Israel, the declarations on Religious Freedom and on the Relation of the Church to Non-Christian Religions of the Second Vatican Council (*Dignitatis Humanae and Nostra Aetate*), and the recent Fundamental Agreement between the Holy See and the state of Israel, affirm the continuing commitment of their two communities to uphold and observe the right of every human being to freedom of religion and conscience.

Article 2. The Rochester Board of Rabbis, the Jewish Community Federation of Rochester and the Roman Catholic Diocese of Rochester commit themselves to appropriate cooperation in combating all forms of anti-Semitism, racism, anti-Catholicism and religious intolerance, and in promoting mutual understanding, and respect for human life and dignity.

Article 3. The Rochester Board of Rabbis, the Jewish Community Federation of Rochester and the Roman Catholic Diocese of Rochester commit themselves to foster the maturing relationship of mutual respect and cooperation between our two communities by promoting a deeper knowledge of and respect for each other’s history, traditions and sensitivities.

To this end, the two communities are encouraged to find ways to promote:

- a. Richer and more frequent communication that will serve to instruct, enlighten and heal.
- b. Efforts to ensure appropriate and accurate curriculum when teaching about each other’s religious traditions. Such efforts might be enhanced by consultations between clergy, educators and interested laity. Joint learning experiences might also be sought.

- c. Efforts to transmit moral and ethical values from the past to the present and future, as exemplified in “A Lesson of Value: A Joint Statement on Moral Education in the Public Schools,” issued in 1990 by the Synagogue Council of America and the National Council of Catholic Bishops.
- d. Efforts to deepen awareness and sensitivity to issues of particular contemporary concern to each community. In the Jewish community, for example, these include such areas as the vital link between the state of Israel and the Jewish people, the continued presence of anti-Semitism and the deep concern over interfaith marriages. In the Catholic community, these include increasing anti-Catholic sentiment and deep concern over issues concerning the sacredness of life.

Article 4. The Rochester Board of Rabbis, the Jewish Community Federation of Rochester and the Roman Catholic Diocese of Rochester, recognizing a common interest in working together to create a society free from violence and prejudice, agree to:

- a. Respond publicly to acts of religious, racial, ethnic or any other kind of intolerance by publicly denouncing such acts.
- b. Work to educate and sensitize our own communities to the evil of such intolerance.
- c. Educate and inform each other on matters of public concern, and,
- d. Support whenever possible efforts in our communities and in the community at large to provide for the basic needs of all citizens.

Article 5. Where there are parallel services in our two communities, individuals associated with the Roman Catholic Diocese of Rochester and the Jewish Community of Rochester are encouraged to discuss specific ways in which such ongoing contact might be beneficial to both communities.

Examples of such groups which might meet are:

- a. The Rochester Board of Rabbis and the Priests’ Council.
- b. Jewish Family Services and Catholic Family Services.
- c. The Department of Jewish Education of the Jewish Community Federation of Rochester, the Educators’ Council of the Jewish Community and the Faith Development Ministry of the Catholic Diocese of Rochester.
- d. The Department of Community Relations of the Jewish Community Federation and the Department of Ecumenical and Interreligious Affairs of the Catholic Diocese of Rochester.
- e. Local synagogues and parishes and other grass-roots organizations, and
- f. Jewish and Catholic chaplains at area hospitals and institutions of higher learning.

Article 6. The director of ecumenical and interreligious affairs of the Roman Catholic diocese and the director of community relations of the Jewish Community Federation will be responsible for forming and chairing a committee for the ongoing implementation of this agreement.

*Signed in Rochester, N.Y., this eighth day of May, in the year 1996,
which corresponds to the nineteenth day of Iyar, in the year 5756.*