



Joint Reflections on the Declaration “Between Jerusalem and Rome”

| 30.11.2017

Bilateral Commission Meeting of the Delegations of the Chief Rabbinate of Israel and the Holy See’s Commission for Religious Relations with the Jews. Jerusalem, November 12-14, 2017; MarCheshvan, 23-25, 5778.

- 1.** The 15th meeting of the Bilateral Commission opened with a welcome dinner hosted by the Konrad Adenauer Foundation which continued its generous facilitation of the meetings in Jerusalem. The following morning, members of the respective delegations were treated to a guided tour of the recent archeological excavations at the City of David, of profound significance to both faith traditions. Later in the day, after a welcome by Rabbi Rasson Arussi, Chairman of the Chief Rabbinate’s delegation, briefings on the current situation of Christians in the Middle East were provided by representatives of the Israeli Ministries of Foreign Affairs and Interior.
- 2.** Cardinal Peter Turkson, Chairman of the Catholic delegation, opened the formal deliberations of the bilateral commission which focused on the Orthodox Jewish document presented on 31st August 2017 to Pope Francis in the Vatican, entitled “Between Jerusalem and Rome”.
- 3.** The Catholic analysis of the unique significance of the document opened with a reiteration of its statement that “Despite irreconcilable theological differences, we Jews view Catholics as our partners, close allies, friends and brothers in our mutual quest for a better world blessed with peace, social justice and security”; and accordingly the Catholic side affirmed that “The patrimony of faith, shared by Catholics and Jews is well capable of sustaining common commitment to the service of all humanity”.
- 4.** The Catholic reflection also highlighted “...that the bond that the Church recognizes with Israel on the basis of divine election is unique, and so strong that the document of the Commission for Religious Relations with the Jews, ‘The Gifts and the Calling of God are Irrevocable’, published on the occasion of the fiftieth anniversary of the Declaration Nostra Aetate (10th December 2015), does not hesitate to affirm: ‘The dialogue with Judaism occupies a unique position for Christians; Christianity is by its roots connected with Judaism as with no other religion.’”
- 5.** The Jewish presentation provided an historical, cultural and theological overview of the various reactions to Nostra Aetate (Number 4), acknowledging that even prior to 1965, “many Jewish leaders were skeptical of the sincerity of the Church’s overtures to the Jewish community, due to the long history of Christian anti-Judaism.” However “over time, it has become clear that the transformation in the Church’s attitudes and teaching are not only sincere but also increasingly profound, and we are entering an era of growing tolerance, mutual respect, and solidarity between members of our respective faiths.” Pope Saint John Paul II’s contribution to this process, building on the pioneering role of Pope Saint John XXIII, was emphasized, as impacting profoundly on the Jewish world in general and in Israel in particular. The establishment of bilateral relations between the Holy See and the State of Israel following the signing of the Fundamental Agreement in December 1993, served to substantiate the transformation.
- 6.** While previous Jewish statements had acknowledged this new reality, “Between Jerusalem and Rome” is the first ever official statement from the leadership organizations of Jewish Orthodoxy worldwide, to express appreciation for this transformation and to affirm the partnership between the

Catholic Church and the Jewish People in combating the violent scourges that afflict our world today, and in working together for a better world for all humanity.

7. With this increasing appreciation within the Jewish world of “the strategic importance of the relationship with the Catholic Church, and even of the theological as well as moral imperatives for deepening this mutual relationship, the opportunity to work together for the establishment of the Kingdom of Heaven on earth” becomes our common imperative.

8. The bilateral commission reiterated its repudiation of the instrumentalization of religion for violent ends, and reaffirmed the obligation that our religions demand to preserve the sanctity and dignity of human life. In this regard, religion must not be part of the problem but must be part of the solution.

9. The need to make the achievements in the field of Catholic-Jewish relations and the work of the Bilateral Commission more widely known was stressed. Accordingly various proposals were put forward to this end, in particular the collaboration with institutions of higher education and the mass media.

10. In giving thanks to Our Father in Heaven for the gift of our friendship experienced within the Bilateral Commission, the prayer was expressed that such fraternity will extend throughout our world and He will instill His full Blessing of Peace within us, making us instruments of His Peace for all.

Jerusalem

November 14, 2017 - MarCheshvan 25, 5778

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Peter Cardinal Turkson
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