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The 50th Anniversary of *Nostra Aetate*:
The Past, Present and Future of the Christian-Jewish Relationship

50° anniversario della Dichiarazione conciliare *Nostra Aetate*:
passato, presente e futuro delle relazioni ebraico-cristiane

Opening Session

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The Journey We Have Shared, from Nostra Aetate to Today, and Onward Toward the Future

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(Archbishop of Florence)

(Translation by Murray Watson; September 2015)

The framework within which this talk is situated is the words of Pope Francis, in the programmatic document of his pontificate—clear words and not confusing, but also words full of welcome and hope, commitment and responsibility: “Dialogue and friendship with the children of Israel are part of the life of Jesus’ disciples. The friendship which has grown between us makes us bitterly and sincerely regret the terrible persecutions which they have endured, and continue to endure, especially those that have involved Christians. God continues to work among the people of the Old Covenant and to bring forth treasures of wisdom which flow from their encounter with his word. For this reason, the Church also is enriched when she receives the values of Judaism. While it is true that certain Christian beliefs are unacceptable to Judaism, and that the Church cannot refrain from proclaiming Jesus as Lord and Messiah, there exists as well a rich complementarity which allows us to read the texts of the Hebrew Scriptures together and to help one another to mine the riches of God’s word. We can also share many ethical convictions and a common concern for justice and the development of peoples” (*Evangelii gaudium*, 248-49). In addition to his words, however, it is his personal experience that orients us—an experience of brotherly dialogue with Rav Abraham Skorka, the Rector of the Latin American Rabbinical Seminary in Buenos Aires, whom we are fortunate to have here among us, and who is participating with me in this introductory session for the ICCJ’s international conference, a pairing that both honours me and makes me nervous.

The theme that has been chosen for this gathering is a document of the Second Vatican Council: the declaration *Nostra Aetate* (NA) which is, for the Catholic Church, the founding principle of the Jewish-Christian dialogue. It is well known that the origin of this document was the Council Fathers’ desire to re-examine the Church’s approach to Judaism, in the light of the tragedy of the *Shoah*, in order to understand how centuries of anti-Judaism had influenced anti-Semitism, which was at the source of the attempt to exterminate the Jewish people. This linkage, between historical conditions and the need to revise theological frameworks, has been part of the entire journey, from NA right up to our own time.

We must also acknowledge how challenging it has been—and still is today—to broaden that sensitivity within the Christian communities since, on the eve of the Second Vatican Council, it was still only just beginning, and was the preserve of a limited group of élites.

In that process of maturing, a decisive role was taken by individuals whose human and cultural experiences had brought them into contact with Judaism—most notably St. John XXIII and Cardinal Augustin Bea. That intertwining of personal biography with theological and religious issues has continued right up to our own

time, as we see in the importance Pope Francis has attributed in that domain to the dialogue he had as archbishop of Buenos Aires with Rav Abraham Skorka.

Far from confusing our approach, this intertwining of personal biographies, historical events and theological issues actually enriches it with human and cultural depth.

We all know the difficulties Cardinal Bea had, in getting a text on the relationship between Christians and Jews onto the Council's agenda, because of fears about the imagined repercussions that such a gesture could have in the Muslim world. But we are also aware that the very fact of not abandoning the idea, but instead transforming it into a declaration that broadens its scope to the relationship between Christianity and other religions—far from diminishing the impact of that action in the Jewish world, even further highlighted the specificity of Judaism with regard to other religions. If, in *NA*, the Church is questioning itself about how to act toward religions in general (with specific references to the different religious traditions), then what emerges with greater clarity is how utterly unique is the relationship with Judaism, inasmuch as the Church recognizes in Judaism its own roots and, therefore, an essential component of its own self-understanding.

In order to achieve this, it was necessary to remove, both from Christian consciences and from Christian preaching, the accusation of deicide which had been made to fall upon the Jewish people—on the Jews of Jesus' time and, even more so, on those of subsequent centuries, as Cardinal Bea took pains to show to the Council Fathers in the congregation of November 19, 1963 (now in the framework of a declaration that would speak jointly of Jews and non-Christians in general). It would mean abandoning all expressions of hatred and contempt toward Jews and, instead, underscoring in catechesis and preaching the need to increase mutual esteem and knowledge between Christians and Jews. We also know how that position was strongly opposed in the Council's more reactionary quarters, and how this had an influence on the text that Cardinal Bea presented in the congregation of September 25, 1964, when he actually urged the re-introduction of the issue of deicide, which had been removed. What is very significant is Cardinal Bea's insistence on the motivation for the Church's review of its attitude toward the Jewish people: faithfulness to the loving attitude that Christ and the apostles had toward their own people.

Faced with a substantial endorsement of the position sketched out by Cardinal Bea, we know very well the efforts that were made in the following weeks of debate in the assembly, to play down the significance of the Council's stance—to the point of proposing that it be reduced to just one paragraph (or a little more) in the document on the Church. But we also know that those efforts failed. The vast majority, who welcomed the text that was submitted to the assembly between November 18 and 20, 1964 (a text which had inserted a discussion of the relations between the Church and the Jewish people, now within a text devoted to the relations between Christianity and all other religions) marked a point of no return, even if it did not succeed in overcoming all opposition, which resulted in the softening of some phrases. In particular, the term "deicide" disappeared, and "condemning" (with regard to anti-Semitism) was transformed into "deploring". The substance of the document remained, however, and received the approval of more than 1700 Fathers out of those who cast ballots (there were 243 votes opposed), a consensus that grew to more than 2200 out of 2300 in the vote for promulgation on October 28, 1965 (when there were still 88 opposed).

I thought it might be opportune to quickly recall the journey of the conciliar text, whose fiftieth anniversary we are celebrating this year. This is not only because that anniversary is the theme of this gathering, but also because that declaration still represents the basic point of reference for contemporary Catholicism's approach to its encounter and dialogue with the Jewish world. The historical reasons that made Vatican II's action necessary, the personalities who painstakingly constructed it, the 'massaging' it had to undergo, and its final outcome—which made it an irrevocable part of the Catholic Church's heritage—provide the background for the journey we have undertaken over these fifty years. A journey that, from the perspective of the Catholic Church, I would like to address from several different angles, noting various types of words and actions that converge, but all of which would have been unthinkable and impossible without the conciliar text.

First of all, I would like to begin with something that touches on the very heart of the experience of Christian faith: the liturgy—an essential place in which to come together again, but not without its difficulties. Already back in 1962, St. John XXIII had removed the adjective "perfidious" and the noun "perfidy" from the invocation

for the Jews in the General Intercessions of Good Friday¹—two terms which, beyond a merely philological interpretation as meaning “unbelievers” and “unbelief,” had, in fact, taken on a hostile and hateful meaning, and which became the symbolic expression of the theology of contempt which lasted up until Vatican II. It would take the liturgical reform sought by Blessed Paul VI to definitively overcome that approach, eliminating even the image of darkness². We cannot here pass over in silence the painful events connected with Benedict XVI’s *motu proprio* “*Summorum Pontificum*” (2007), with its extension of the possibility of celebrating according to the Extraordinary Form of the Roman Rite, which is to say, with the Tridentine missal, in the form it had taken on with the last modifications introduced by St. John XXIII —with the return, therefore, of the phrases about blindness and darkness, from which the Jews were meant to be snatched away. The Pope subsequently intervened to remove those expressions, although the prayer remained that [the Jews] would acknowledge Jesus’ messianic and salvific role. Unquestionably, it represented a blow on the path of dialogue, but it should be understood as an intervention of limited scope which, in fact, only concerned marginal segments of Catholicism—an intervention whose intention was to curb schismatic tendencies, rather than to take backward steps in the relationship with Judaism. It was, therefore, an intervention which, by keeping intact the teaching of *NA*, does not contradict the larger framework of freedom of conscience and religion, but limits itself to expressing a wish for sharing in what all Christians consider to be something of value to them. This particular incident, however, shows how delicate is the path of dialogue that Vatican II opened up, which is being carried forward with conviction.

Since we have already noted the centrality of the liturgy, we can continue further along those lines with a few reflections on prayer. We can see a richness of prospects in the initiatives that are increasingly frequent (at least in many European cities) of shared prayer between Christians and Jews, especially when they share the common heritage of “prayer” which is provided by the text of the First Testament, and particularly by the book of Psalms. The exemplary quality of shared prayer—an expression of Abrahamic brotherhood—means that it is spreading more and more widely, even building upon initiatives for peace, such as the one Pope Francis undertook on June 8, 2014 in the gardens near St. Peter’s Basilica in the Vatican, when he provided time for Jewish and Christian prayers to be shared, along with those of representatives of Islam. These gatherings—to use the Pontiff’s expression—are “a great sign of brotherhood, undertaken as children of Abraham, and are a concrete expression of trust in God, who is the Lord of history, and who today looks upon us as each other’s brothers, and seeks to lead us in His ways” (Speech of the Holy Father Francis at the Invocation for Peace in the Vatican Gardens, June 8, 2014). It is, therefore, beginning with the liturgy itself that the Council marks out a path, because it is only by rooting oneself in prayer—and including more and more people in that prayer—that the brotherhood between Jews and Christians grows more intense, deeper and stronger, always directing our gaze upward.

Turning from the topic of prayer to that of the Catholic liturgy, it is important to note how the Roman Rite’s ordinary prayer-formula expresses a theological awareness which became increasingly clear after the Second Vatican Council, and which we could sum up in the phrase, derived from St. Paul, of “the covenant never revoked”. We can find an exemplary treatment of it in the short 1989 study of Norbert Lohfink, the title of which is, appropriately, *The Covenant Never Revoked: Biblical Reflections on Christian-Jewish Dialogue*³. In it, he warns us against an overly cavalier use of the concept of “the new covenant,” an expression that is, nevertheless, already present in the prophetic texts (Jer 31). However, it must be situated in the framework of the oneness of the divine covenant, which Christians see as fulfilled in Jesus—but which is not, for that reason,

¹ “Oremus et pro *perfidis* Judaeis ut Deus et Dominus noster auferat velamen de cordibus eorum; ut et ipsi agnoscant Jesum Christum, Dominum nostrum. - Omnipotens sempiternus Deus, qui etiam judaicam *perfidiam* a tua misericordia non repellis: exaudi preces nostras, quas pro illius populi obcaecatione deferimus; ut, agnita veritatis tuae luce, quae Christus est, a suis tenebris eruantur.”

² “Let us pray for the Jewish people, the first to hear the word of God, that they may continue to grow in the love of his name and in faithfulness to his covenant – Almighty and eternal God, long ago you gave your promise to Abraham and his posterity. Listen to your Church as we pray that the people you first made your own may arrive at the fullness of redemption.”

³ [Ed.: The English translation of this work was published by Paulist Press in 1991.]

revoked as regards the Jewish people (Rom 9-11). Here is what Lohfink says toward the conclusion of his study: “We should not speak of two ‘covenants,’ much less of more ‘covenants,’ but only of the unique ‘covenant’. On the contrary: speaking of a ‘twofold way of salvation’ is defensible only insofar as it is meant in a ‘dramatic’ way. Christians are on a journey no less than Jews are; God is with both of them, and both of them are in ‘the covenant’; there is only one covenant, and it is one and the same. However, they find themselves in the covenant in different ways ... The twofold nature of this path carries within itself such a weight of sorrow, of guilt and misery; on account of this, the praise of God within His creatures has been degraded to a level so low that the drama must play itself out: this [drama] must take place apart from this state of neediness. Christians must arouse the jealousy of Jews, and Jews must arouse the jealousy of Christians.” This seems to me to be an extremely responsible theological position, and it could be considered broadly in keeping with the best of contemporary Catholic theology.

In the introduction to his study, Lohfink recalls that the expression “the covenant never revoked” is found in the speech that John Paul II gave during his meeting with representatives of the Jewish community in Mainz in 1980. This is how that holy Pontiff expressed himself: “The first dimension of this dialogue — that is, the meeting between the people of God of the ancient but never-revoked covenant (cf. Rom 11:29) and the people of the new covenant which is, at the same time, a dialogue within our Church — almost, one could say, a dialogue between the first and second parts of its Bible” (November 17, 1980). The use the Pontiff makes of the image of the covenant is not yet what Lohfink is proposing, but it marks an interesting step forward in reflection by the Church’s Magisterium regarding the point where the text of Rom 11:29 refers to the ancient covenant (“God’s gifts and calling are irrevocable!”), and it does so with reference to the people of Israel today, “today’s people of the covenant made with Moses,” as he says immediately afterward in the same speech. To my way of seeing things, John Paul II’s text is particularly interesting for two reasons: first of all, for the reason Lohfink emphasizes — the connection made between the irrevocability of God’s promise and the very expression “the ancient covenant,” which can thus no longer be described as “surpassed” (a description which has often gone hand-in-hand with it in Christian thought). But it also highlights the importance for Christians of the link between the First and the New Testament in our very understanding of the Word of God.

This is an important feature in the development of the dialogue between Christianity and Judaism during these decades. The Catholic Church and its faithful have returned to drawing upon the First Testament as the necessary source of nourishment for one’s faith, which had not been taking place since the first centuries of the Church’s history. It is not coincidental that this relationship to the Hebrew Scriptures represented one of the first points of conflict between Christian orthodoxy and heresy, which tended to remove those Scriptures from the normative texts of the faith. A broader return to Old Testament sources constitutes one of the most meaningful areas of richness in the post-conciliar period, whether in the field of liturgy, or in the spiritual life. The 1993 document of the Pontifical Biblical Commission, *The Interpretation of the Bible in the Church*, attests to this, by dedicating several pages to this topic. Most of all, there is that authoritative Commission’s 2001 document, *The Jewish People and Their Sacred Scriptures in the Christian Bible*, whose first chapter is notably entitled, “The Sacred Scriptures of the Jewish people: A fundamental part of the Christian Bible”. Today, the Scriptures are the most promising meeting-place for the development of the dialogue between Christians and Jews—and “Scripture” means not merely the material text of the biblical books themselves, but also the interpretive heritage that the two religious traditions have accumulated over the centuries, which today has become a spiritual inheritance that each group offers as a gift to the other.

Simply as an example of what horizons may be opening up to our gaze is the great importance that this deepening of our common heritage can have in facing the great challenges which are arising in broad sections of our modern world—for example, the fundamental challenge of acknowledging the male-female duality of creatures, and the related responsibility of human procreation. This field of reflection, which draws upon the common heritage of Genesis, can strengthen the bonds of dialogue between Jews and Christians, in order to affirm the absolute dignity of human life, of our reproductive potential, and of the richness of sexual duality on the anthropological level. The challenges that are arising today from genetic manipulation can be addressed with greater intensity and can generate a wealth of subject matter, when Abraham’s children together reflect upon, meditate upon and proclaim what the message of Genesis has to say to humanity today, with a courage

reinforced by these shared roots. Jewish-Christian dialogue, therefore, has mutual responsibilities for the development of a deepened reflection on human dignity, and on the imperative of responsibility for generations to come.

The reference to St. John Paul II's speech in Mainz reminds us of another area in the development of Jewish-Christian dialogue after the Second Vatican Council: what took place on account of the Bishop of Rome's visits to synagogues around the world. The blessing that St. John XXIII conferred on the Jews who were leaving the synagogue in Rome on March 17, 1962 can be considered a foretaste of this. But what was historic was John Paul II's act of crossing the threshold of the synagogue in Rome on April 13, 1986, where he was welcomed by Rabbi Elio Toaff. We remember the Pope's well-known expression: "You are our beloved brothers and, in a certain way, it could be said that you are our elder brothers," a suggestive expression, even if it is not without ambivalence in terms of its biblical underpinnings. But its cultural and emotional impact are beyond question. What seems even more significant is the expression that preceded that one: "The Jewish religion is not 'extrinsic' to us but, in a certain way, it is 'intrinsic' to our religion. We have, therefore, with the Jewish religion relations that we do not have with any other religion" — which the Pope rightly presents as the central content of *NA*.

In that speech in the Roman synagogue, John Paul II reminded Catholics "of the fact that the tools to apply the Council in this specific field are already available to everyone, in the two documents published in 1974 and 1985 respectively, by the Holy See's Commission for Religious Relations with Judaism. One need only study them attentively to identify these [tools] in their teachings and put them into practice". This reminder is relevant, in that it shows that the conciliar declaration did not have a purely declaratory intention, but sought to open up a specific path made up of new ways of thinking, new words and actions, and it showed how that path might be supported by the Church's precise directives in the two texts mentioned above: "Guidelines and Suggestions for Implementing the Conciliar Declaration *Nostra Aetate*" (December 1, 1974) and "Notes on the Correct Way to Present the Jews and Judaism in Preaching and Catechesis in the Roman Catholic Church" (June 24, 1985). These are tools which remain current, and are still worthwhile today.

The pontificate of John Paul II laid broad, solid footings for the bridge between the Jewish world and the Catholic Church; in a certain way, those footings were rooted in the personal spiritual experience that Karol Wojtyła lived during the *Shoah*, with the loss of so many of his Jewish friends in his own village, a drama that, to a certain degree, exemplified what took place on Polish and European soil. John Paul II's existential lived experience has now become a source of spiritual fruitfulness for the entire Catholic Church ... a stimulus for theological reflection ... an example for local Christian communities of how it might be put into practice, enlightening almost radiantly a more intense common future of sharing between Jews and Christians.

Returning to the visits to synagogues by the Popes, we cannot forget that Benedict XVI, in his first apostolic journey outside Italy, for the World Youth Day in Cologne, visited that city's synagogue on August 19, 2005. It was a gesture he chose to repeat in New York, on April 18, 2008, and especially when he, too, returned to the Rome synagogue on January 17, 2010.

Particularly relevant in this context, it seems to me, are the words with which he connected the drama of the *Shoah* to the roots of the denial of the faith: "The singular and deeply disturbing drama of the *Shoah* represents, as it were, the most extreme point on the path of hatred that begins when man forgets his Creator and places himself at the centre of the universe. As I noted during my visit of May 28, 2006 to the Auschwitz concentration camp, which is still profoundly impressed upon my memory, 'the rulers of the Third Reich wanted to crush the entire Jewish people,' and, essentially, 'by wiping out this people, they intended to kill the God who called Abraham, who spoke on Sinai and laid down principles to serve as a guide for mankind, principles that remain eternally valid'. [This is] a fundamental reflection, in order not to separate the issue of dialogue between Christianity and Judaism from the broader issue of the Christian faith's dialogue with human history. As Jews and Christians, together we are responsible for offering meaning and direction for the path which all of humanity is walking.

Furthermore, there are reflections which cannot sidestep the responsibility of Christians in the persecutions against Jews which were denounced, courageously and clearly, in the "Day of Pardon" on March 12, 2000,

during the Great Jubilee of the [third] millennium, when Christians were invited to pray “that, in recalling the sufferings endured by the people of Israel throughout history, Christians will acknowledge the sins committed by not a few of their number against the people of the Covenant and the blessings, and in this way will purify their hearts,” followed by an invocation spoken by the Pope: “God of our fathers, you chose Abraham and his descendants to bring your Name to the Nations: 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 commit ourselves to genuine brotherhood with the people of the Covenant”. These are words which distill down the process of reflection undertaken by the Holy See’s Commission for Religious Relations with Judaism, which led to the March 16, 1998 document “We Remember: A Reflection on the *Shoah*,” approved by John Paul II in an introductory letter of March 12 of the same year, in which he expresses his hope that the truth “will truly help to heal the wounds of the misunderstandings and injustices of the past”.

A task that still remains unfinished is that of re-reading and organizing the texts that John Paul II left concerning Jewish-Christian brotherhood⁴. This could be one of the undertakings which would promote dialogue, by sketching out his “theology of Judaism,” and which could be very helpful, in terms of pastoral decisions, cultural initiatives, and testimonials—even personal ones—of faithfulness to the God of Abraham as lived out through the Christian vocation. John Paul II put a final stamp on this, with his explicit reference in his last will and testament to his friend, Rabbi Elio Toaff—for the first time in the history of Christianity!

We can also get a glimpse of the tasks that still lie ahead of us in the research and personal experience of Cardinal Carlo Maria Martini, the archbishop of Milan, who marked out innovative steps in terms of the experience of the Ambrosian-rite Church, which in so many ways radiated outward into Jewish-Christian dialogue in other Italian and European contexts, especially through a shared valuing of the Word.

This path, articulated in this way and filled with meaningful pronouncements and gestures, resonates in a particular way in the city of Florence, whose shepherd I am. It was in Florence, actually, that the first (and for a long time, the only) “Jewish-Christian Friendship Association” was born in the wake of the Second World War. Its statutes, which date back to 1950, define it as “freely welcoming people of a religious spirit (in whatever way they express that sentiment), who desire love and cooperation among Christians and Jews, and all people, with the goal of creating a truly human way of living together, from which every type of misunderstanding and hatred is banished forever”. By no coincidence, it is the fruit of an intense network of brotherhood, born out of the work of defending Jews who were persecuted by the Nazis, working in close collaboration with Rabbi Nathan Cassuto and Cardinal-Archbishop Elia Dalla Costa, who saved hundreds of Jews from certain death. Those saved did not, however, include the rabbi himself who, having been captured at the headquarters of Florence’s Catholic Action group (where he, together with members of the clergy of the archdiocese, was organizing ways to save Jews) was deported to Auschwitz, and who ended his earthly existence in February 1945 in the Gross Rosen concentration camp. On the basis of these connections, on account of having taken responsibility for the fate of the Jewish people (which, in remembrance of Cardinal Dalla Costa, earned Yad Vashem’s recognition of “Righteous Among the Nations”), dialogue between Jews and Christians developed, energetically supported by the saintly mayor of Florence, Giorgio La Pira. It is an experience which still lives on today, and which justifies my presence here among you, for which I would like to thank the International Council of Christians and Jews.

It is, therefore, to that great cardinal—my predecessor—and to that great mayor of Florence, that I wish to turn now, to conclude my presentation.

Although they were spoken in a purely religious context, the words of the former are a clear condemnation of racist theories that were clearly targeting the Jewish people, and therefore his words provided the theological basis for future action in saving Jews: “The theories of those who substitute race, the state or any other political ideology in place of God, claiming that the individual—and even the Church—ought to serve those they purport to be gods, are contrary to the doctrine of the Church,” he said (1938). “God does not look to see

⁴ [Ed.: In English, this task has been undertaken by Dr. Eugene Fisher and the late Rabbi Léon Klenicki, and published as *The Saint for Shalom: How John Paul II Transformed Catholic-Jewish Relations*. Crossroad Publishing, 2011].

if a person belongs to this people or that, whether he comes from this nation or that, from this race or that. He is a human being, and that is enough for him to be given a seat at the table of [God's] children" (1942); "Even if people of another nationality, of another race or of another faith were involved, in terms of the law of respect and charity that we owe to every person, no one can show them less of those" (1943).

For La Pira, his attentiveness to the Jewish people was governed by his search for peace among peoples. For the mayor of Florence, the meeting-place is the encounter among the three religions who acknowledge Abraham as their ancestor: "This is the Lord's will: that the peoples and nations of the Mediterranean — Christians, Muslims, and Jews—should together kindle the divine lamp, and together lift it up, so that it might give light and bring consolation, brotherhood, peace and beauty, over all the face of the earth" (1958).

Giorgio La Pira was the founder of the Jewish-Christian Friendship Association of Florence. Among other things, while he was in the Palazzo Vecchio⁵, he sought to remind Florence of the great figure of Jules Isaac, who initiated the post-war path of dialogue. Among the values (not only religious but also civil) that he sought to inculcate was the overcoming of every kind of racial discrimination, which he had also suggested for a draft of the Constitution of the Italian Republic. For La Pira, in fact, the encouragement of Jewish-Christian dialogue also played a role in building up a more humane city, in terms of welcoming others and seeking new sources of inspiration for living together in harmony. It is profiles like this that ought to be better known, through the civil, cultural and social responses that the brotherly dialogue between Jews and Christians can sketch out for "living together in harmony" and "feeling at home" in these new situations of migration, such as those which today are changing entire continents and turning them upside down. In this, lay Christians, together with their Jewish brothers and sisters, have a specific task to fulfill on behalf of our common home, so that it might have (as an ancient Jewish tradition says Job's home had) a door on each of its four sides, so that any pilgrim reaching it, from whichever of the cardinal directions they came, would always find an open door to greet them.

As I come to the end, I would like, however, to return to the witness of Pope Francis, and to the words he spoke during his visit to Jerusalem, and to the Chief Rabbis of Israel. May they summarize well the direction of our journey on the path *NA* opened up for us: "We need to do more than simply establish reciprocal and respectful relations on a human level: we are also called, as Christians and Jews, to reflect deeply on the spiritual significance of the bond existing between us. It is a bond whose origins are from on high, one which transcends our own plans and projects, and one which remains intact despite all the difficulties which, sadly, have marked our relationship in the past ... Mutual understanding of our spiritual heritage, appreciation for what we have in common and respect in matters on which we disagree: all these can help to guide us to a closer relationship, an intention which we put in God's hands. Together, we can make a great contribution to the cause of peace; together, we can bear witness, in this rapidly changing world, to the perennial importance of the divine plan of creation; together, we can firmly oppose every form of anti-Semitism and all other forms of discrimination. May the Lord help us to walk with confidence and strength in his ways. *Shalom!*" (Speech at the *Heichal Shlomo* Centre, at the Great Synagogue of Jerusalem, May 26, 2014)

⁵ [Ed.: Florence's City Hall]