



# Sion News

## CELEBRATING 50 YEARS OF NOSTRA AETATE

The main aim of this issue of "Sion News" is to celebrate the 50th anniversary of the Declaration "Nostra Aetate". The importance of addressing this topic does not lie in saying new things but in keeping alive, in the younger generations, the memory of what the document signified at the time it was promulgated during Vatican II, all the advances in Christian-Jewish relations since then, and, above all, what it still means for the Church in its openness to dialogue with modernity.

You will notice that many of the articles are familiar to many of you. Part of our goal is to provide new generations of sisters, associates, friends and collaborators with deeper knowledge in order to help them internalize it, put it into practice and share this treasure.

We will learn about what each region is doing to celebrate, transmit and disseminate this Declaration as much as possible, drawing out its implications for the Congregation, the Church in its relationship with the Jewish people and for the world.

We will see just how significant the participation of Sisters of Sion and the Sion family has been in this event and learn about the people who were important in writing the documents. We will look especially at people who continued to be involved, promoting dialogue between Jews and Christians, taking new steps in the process of building bridges and forging respectful and fraternal relationships in the search for justice and peace.

You will also read about concrete actions taken in the communities where the Sisters of Sion are inserted in the local Church and at international level.

*Ivete Holthmam*

## NOSTRA AETATE



1965 - 2015

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- Celebrating Nostra Aetate in the Congregation
- NDS leading role in preparing Nostra Aetate
- NDS during and after Nostra Aetate
- Nostra Aetate behind the scenes characters

CELEBRATING 50 YEARS OF NOSTRA AETATE



## **TO CELEBRATE FIFTY YEARS OF THE DECLARATION NOSTRA AETATE, AMÉRICA CENTRAL REGION**

### **GENERAL OBJECTIVE:**

At the end of this exercise, the participants will have succeeded in recalling or recognizing the basic aspects of the history and approbation of the Declaration *Nostra Aetate* and will have acquired some tools or means to communicate it to others.

**ACTIVITIES** Read the whole Council Document, taking note of questions and comments and wait (month of July). Read the attached document taken from Internet and which we are giving to you, Wikipedia, in the same way.

**Publish a triptych** with the text of *Nostra Aetate* and the 10 points of Selisberg, to distribute it free of charge to priests, religious, friends.

### **Reflect and speak about these things in community... LAITY AND SISTERS**

Get to know the following, who they were and what they did: Cardinal Bea, Jules Isaacs, John XXIII, Sisters of Sion in Paris, Sr. Yolán in Costa Rica, (research, make notes...)

Who was Hitler and what did he do? (research and make notes...)

Have a clear knowledge and be able to share on:

Christian Anti-Judaism, Anti-Semitism, Nazi rationalism;

Palestine, Synagogue, Semite, Sanhedrin, Messiah;

Deicide, Torah, Pesach, Purim, Talmud,

Pointed hat, yellow patch, midrash, pigs, blood libel,

Slander, perfidy, wandering Jew, expulsion from Spain.

Was there or is there Anti-Semitism in Costa Rica, Nicaragua, El Salvador?

Have the Episcopal Conferences spoken about this?

Is it worthwhile to speak about these things in the Region and be concerned about doing something?

With whom should we speak? What should we do, publish, demonstrate?

### **To a large Public**

Organize a conference on N.A. in which a Bishop, a theologian, a Biblicist, a Jew and a non-Catholic lay person would participate (October)

Organize a conference on “The Jewish Sacred Scriptures in the Christian Writings” in September with one or two Biblicists

Take advantage of the occasion of the Month of the Bible Episcopal Commission of Bible and Catechesis (September) to invite the groups so that they will know the proper methodology which will have the “episcopal seal” (Speak with those in charge if necessary). Promote this in the Schools in Managua and Coronado. Create an audiovisual message, on the theme, as a memorial and that it can be distributed.

### **SUMMARIZING:**

The months of July and August would be a time of preparation and reading the documents

September dedicated to the Bible: dedication of the heart...

During September, would be the study of the Hebrew Sacred Scriptures”... but with help, not the book alone because it has parts that are quite difficult.

During October everything related to N.A.

On **October 28th** creative celebration of everything that has been discovered.

*Maria Luisa Castillo*

## CELEBRATING NOSTRA AETATE IN MELBOURNE, AUSTRALIA



**Pope John XXIII at the opening  
of the II Vatican Council**



**Pope John XXIII gives start  
to the II Vatican Council**



**Pope John XXIII with Msgr  
John M. Oesterreicher**

**The** Region of Australia has arranged a Public Lecture to mark this auspicious occasion. The speaker, well known to the Sisters in Europe, is Dr Didier Pollyfeyt from Leuven, Belgium. His topic: “Fiftieth anniversary of Nostra Aetate: The impact of Catholic Jewish relations on Catholic identity and the challenges for the future.” This suits our situation where Didier is working with the Catholic education Office to enhance Catholic Identity. It brings together his love for Jewish Catholic Relations and his work in Catholic Education. We hope this will further stimulate knowledge of the importance of the Church’s relationship with Judaism. In the same week we will invite a few friends to a meal with Didier to look at questions concerning the next steps in J/C relations.

In May the Sisters in the Philippines will come to Melbourne for a combined Assembly. During this time we will share the fruits of Nostra Aetate as experienced in the Philippines and as experienced in Australia.

Our Lady of Sion College in Box Hill has chosen for its theme for the year “Growing through Dialogue”. This theme was chosen because of two anniversaries this year: Nostra Aetate and 125 years since the first Sisters of Our Lady of Sion came to Australia.

Nostra Aetate will also be incorporated into the topics for the Leadership Teams of

the three Heritage Colleges in Australia (Sale, Warragul and Box Hill). We meet with these dedicated educators three times a year for formation in the Charism.

I think it is true to say that this anniversary is an essential part of all our major happenings for 2015.

In the Archdiocese of Melbourne there will be four meals to mark the 50th anniversary of Nostra Aetate. The first a Maryam meal with the Turkish Muslim community will look at the texts on Mary in the Quran and in Luke’s Gospel, it fittingly takes place on March 25. Our annual Jewish – Catholic dinner will also celebrate Nostra Aetate. Later in the year we will have a meal with the Hindu and Buddhist communities. All of these meals will have an element of celebrating the cultural contributions of each community.

I think it is true to say that Nostra Aetate offers us a feast.

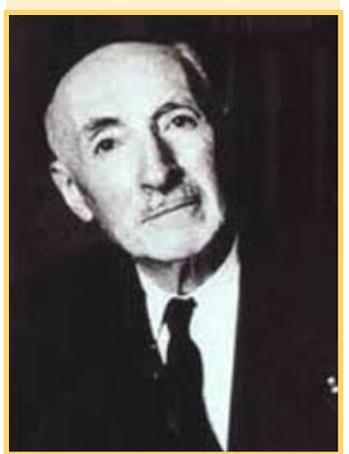
*Mary Reaburn*

**CELEBRATING 50 YEARS OF NOSTRA AETATE**



## BEHIND THE SCENES OF NOSTRA AETATE 1

**Jules Isaac** dedicated a large part of his efforts to research into the causes of antisemitism. He published *Jésus et Israël*, edited during the war, then inspired by the Charte de Seelisberg. Cofounder, with Edmond Fleg among others, and active member of "Amitiés judéo-chrétiennes" in 1947, he was particularly engaged in fighting anti-Semitism's Christian origins, which he saw as decisive. His essential idea was to make Early Christianity's Jewish origins better valued. In 1949, he advised Pope Pius XII to revise the Good Friday prayer, which previously contained offensive references to the Jews, to wit, the words "perfidious Jews." He also noted that Catholics did not kneel when they prayed for the Jews on Good Friday, though they knelt for all the other petitions. Pope Pius modified the language (although only later did Pope John XXIII excise the negative language about the Jews altogether) and implemented a kneeling posture as Isaac had suggested. He thus helped start the road that led to Vatican II's declaration *Nostra aetate* (1965), whose paragraph #4 represents a monumental shift in perspective towards the Jews in Roman Catholic thought.



**The Seelisberg Conference (International Conference of Christians and Jews)** was an international conference that took place in the small town of Seelisberg in Switzerland from 30 July to 5 August 1947 in order to study the causes of Christian anti-Semitism.

Among the 70 participants from 17 countries were: 28 Jews, including Jules Isaac, Jacob Kaplan, acting chief rabbi of France, Alexandre Safran, chief rabbi of Romania, the writer Josué Jéhouda, of Geneva; Professor Selig Brodetsky, president of the Representative Council of the Jews of England.

23 Protestants,

9 Catholics, including Père Marie-Benoît, Father Calliste Lopinot, Abbot Charles Journet, Father Jean de Menasce, Father Paul Démann.

At the time of this conference, the Christians undertook a re-examination of Christian teaching with regards to the Jews and Judaism. They measured the extent of Christian responsibility in the Nazi genocide and understood that Christian teaching had to be urgently corrected. They prepared ten points, largely inspired by the eighteen proposals of the historian.



**Rabbi Abraham Joshua Heschel's**

involvement in discussions with Vatican II is little-known. Heschel drafted the third official memorandum that the American Jewish Committee (AJC) submitted to the Vatican on the relationship between Christianity and the Jews. Titled "On Improving Catholic-Jewish Relations," this paper, instead of dwelling on the past, presented the basis for a way forward. As the work of Vatican II wore on, Rabbi Heschel and AJC remained deeply involved in the development of the groundbreaking statement *Nostra Aetate*, which changed deeply the relationship between the Church and the Jews. Even as this relationship continues to evolve and the understanding of the meaning of *Nostra Aetate* continues to unfold, the distinct



Rabbi A. Heschel (on the right) at the Selma March with dr. Martin Luther King

imprint of Rabbi Heschel can still be felt.

*"Who does not love, does not know God" (from 1 John 4:8)*

## INVITATION TO CELEBRATING NOSTRA AETATE IN EUROPE REGION, MILAN

CINQUANT'ANNI  
DALLA DICHIARAZIONE CONCILIARE  
NOSTRA AETATE 4

**DOMENICA  
22 MARZO 2015**  
ORE 17.00

IL DIALOGO EBRAICO-CRISTIANO  
A 50 ANNI DAL CONCILIO  
VATICANO II (NAE4)

**RAV LARAS E  
CARD. FRANCESCO  
COCCOPALMERIO**



CON LA PARTECIPAZIONE DEL  
CORO EBRAICO COL HAKOLOL  
E DEL  
CORO DELLA COMUNITÀ PASTORALE  
GIOVANNI PAOLO II

**SALONE POLIFUNZIONALE  
PARROCCHIA S. MARIA GORETTI**  
VIA MELCHIORRE GIOIA, 193 MILANO

Per disabili e anziani ricordiamo che si può accedere al  
Salone anche con l'ascensore entrando dal cancello della  
segreteria parrocchiale



Rabbi Abraham Joshua Heschel meeting with Cardinal Bea,  
part of the process leading to the drafting of Nostra Aetate (1965)  
*L'incontro del rabbino Abraham Joshua Heschel con il cardinale Bea,  
parte del processo che porta alla redazione della Nostra Aetate (1965)*

US Holocaust Memorial Museum,  
courtesy of the American Jewish Committee Archives, New York.

COMUNITÀ  
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[www.comunitapastoralegorettigreco.it](http://www.comunitapastoralegorettigreco.it)

COMUNITÀ  
PASTORALE  
GIOVANNI PAOLO II

**ECUMENISMO  
VISSUTO IN COMUNITÀ PASTORALE**



**IL DIALOGO EBRAICO-CRISTIANO  
UN DIALOGO TRA FRATELLI**

CINQUANT'ANNI DALLA DICHIARAZIONE  
CONCILIARE NOSTRA AETATE 4

• **DOMENICA 22 MARZO 2015 ORE 17:00**  
**IL DIALOGO EBRAICO-CRISTIANO  
A 50 ANNI DAL CONCILIO VATICANO II**  
RAV LARAS E CARD. FRANCESCO  
COCCOPALMERIO

**QUARESIMA ECUMENICA:  
UN DIALOGO TRA FRATELLI**  
VESPERI MUSICALI CON SERMONE + INNO  
(CORALE E ASSEMBLEA)

VENERDÌ 27 FEBBRAIO 2015 ORE 18:30  
VENERDÌ 6 MARZO 2015 ORE 18:30  
VENERDÌ 13 MARZO 2015 ORE 18:30  
VENERDÌ 20 MARZO 2015 ORE 18:30 + 21:00  
VENERDÌ 27 MARZO 2015 ORE 18:30

## CELEBRATION OF NOSTRA AETATE IN BAYONNE

On March 1, 2015, our bishop named Mr. Jean KALMAN for relations with the Jews in our diocese. We met him at an interfaith celebration on Thursday, March 5.

In agreement with the bishop, he has already organized two important times for this anniversary. In December, Father Patrick DESBOIS' assistant will bring together all the members of the Council of Christians and Jews in Bayonne to talk about "Nostra Aetate", and on the other hand, he will organize a whole day of formation to "dialog" in the hopes that young people will participate. We are thus giving up the idea of a round table discussion. Our community is too fragile to carry it out, even if Sr. Ionel is pushing this idea with great energy. We shall approach parishes with a leaflet inviting them to unite with this anniversary by means of a prayer that our community will write and give them.

In community, we work every Monday on Pope Francis' encyclical letter on consecrated life; when we have finished this study, we will look at the fundamental texts "on Jewish-Christian dialog" that the Council of Christians and Jews in France published in 1999.

We are hoping that we will receive information on this anniversary from the other regions in the congregation, and we are praying with you to curb a little more the anti-Semitism that is now on the increase.

**CELEBRATING 50 YEARS OF NOSTRA AETATE**

*Communauté de Bayonne*



## BEHIND THE SCENES OF NOSTRA AETATE 2



**Mrs. Judith Banki** authored *The Image of the Jews in Catholic Teaching*, a memorandum which helped pave the way for the historic declaration, *Nostra Aetate*, adopted at the Second Vatican Council. In 2009, the Council of Centers of Jewish-Christian Relations awarded her its Shevet Achim Award, given for outstanding contributions to Jewish-Christian relations.



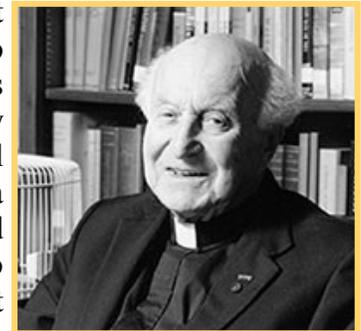
**Fr. Thomas F. Stransky**, rector emeritus of Tantur Ecumenical Institute for Theological Studies, was one of the original staff members of the Secretariat for the Promotion of Christian Unity. He began his service in 1960 soon after the Secretariat was formed as one of the preparatory commission for the Second Vatican Council. He served with Cardinals Augustin Bea and Johannes Willebrands, the first two Secretariat Presidents. In October 1960, they handed him the file on a proposal for the Council to address the Church's relationship with the Jewish people. He staffed that proposal as it developed through the Council to become the Declaration on the Relation of the Church to Non-Christian Religions (*Nostra Aetate*), promulgated on October 28, 1965.



**Gregory Baum**. During the church council Vatican II he was a peritus, or theological advisor, at the Ecumenical Secretariat, the commission responsible for three conciliar documents, *On Religious Liberty*, *On Ecumenism*, and *On the Church's Relation to Non-Christian Religions*.

### **Mons. Oesterreicher John**

In 1964, Oesterreicher personally crafted that part of *Nostra Aetate* according to which the church no longer speaks of mission to the Jews, but looks forward to the day when all "peoples will address the Lord in a single voice and 'serve him shoulder to shoulder.'" (The last phrase is taken from



Zephaniah 3:9.) In the 1960s, Oesterreicher was in a group of 15 priests who petitioned the Vatican to take up the issue of antisemitism. Oesterreicher is probably best known for his involvement in drafting *Nostra aetate*. The statement rejected antisemitism and repudiated the notion that Jews were responsible for the persecution and death of Jesus Christ. It stated that even though some Jewish authorities and those who followed them called for Jesus' death, the blame for this cannot be laid at the door of all those Jews present at that time, nor can the Jews in our time be held as guilty. The statement thus repudiated the historic charge of deicide, which is a basis of antisemitism. It stated that "the Jews should not be presented as rejected or accursed by God."



From the left: Prof. Gregory Baum, Prof Judith Banki and Rev. Thomas Stransky—2013

***"The problem to be faced is: how to combine loyalty to one's own tradition with reverence for different traditions." Abraham Joshua Heschel***

## SION, PHILIPPINES' REGION, CELEBRATES

### 50 YEARS OF NOSTRA AETATE

#### *Learning from the richness of Jewish developments and biblical scholarship*

*April 27th – May 9th*



**Rabbi Fred Morgan**

**I**t is with great joy that we heard of Rabbi Fred Morgan's interest in coming to the Philippines and so planning commenced from his request. After sessions with the Australian region at the last joint assembly in Melbourne, he expressed this desire, which is now becoming a reality. As can be seen from his background, Rabbi Fred has a particular expertise in World Religions, which gives him a capacity to enter into dialogue with Asian culture; the size and location of the Jewish community here means that, while the chances of meeting a rabbi are very slight, the interest level is likely to be high.

For several years Rabbi Morgan was a lecturer in Religious Studies at the University of Bristol in the U.K., specialising in the religions of India, before entering Leo Baeck College in London to study for the rabbinate. Ordained as rabbi in 1984, he served North West Surrey Synagogue in England for 13 years before taking up the position as Senior Rabbi of Temple Beth Israel in Melbourne. After 16 years as Senior Rabbi, Rabbi Morgan took up the position as Emeritus Rabbi in August 2013. He is currently co-ordinating an innovative project on grass-roots dialogue for the Council of Christians and Jews. He was recently made a Member of the Order of Australia for his work in inter-faith relations.

He will be staying in the Manila Sion community and speaking in several institutes on 3 different topics: namely (1) 'Whither Jewish-Christian Dialogue?'— A Jewish perspective on 50 years of Nostra Aetate—(2) General Themes in Judaism—(3) 'Elijah's Mantle: The Spiritual Legacy of Elijah and Elisha in the Bible and beyond'. The locations where Rabbi Fred will talk in Manila are: Institute of Formation and Religious Studies, Institute of Asian Spirituality (O'Carm), University of San Tomas (Dominican Pontifical University), Ecumenical group in Baguio City. We will have the pleasure of sharing Friday evening parashah and meal together with some friends as well as having opportunities for informal discussion over the days he will be with us. We will also join the Jewish community for their Shabbat morning worship. The image is a painting by Michael O'Neill McGrath, OSFS. Titled "In Our Time", it was commissioned by the Center for Christian-Jewish Learning and the Archdiocese of Boston in 2005 in commemoration of the 40th Anniversary of Nostra Aetate.



*Anne Brittain*



### **BEHIND THE SCENES OF NOSTRA AETATE 3**

**Rabbi Marc H. Tanenbaum** (1925–1992) was a human rights and social justice activist who was known for building bridges with other faith communities to advance mutual understanding and cooperation and to eliminate entrenched stereotypes, particularly those rooted in religious teachings. He was an advocate during the Second Vatican Council (1962–1965) on behalf of what eventually emerged as *Nostra aetate*, Known as "the father of modern Christian-Jewish dialogue," Rabbi Tanenbaum devoted his life and talents to easing tensions between the two groups, arranging dialogues between such organizations as the National Council of Churches and the Synagogue Council. The only rabbi to attend, he helped to draft the landmark document, *Nostra Aetate*, in which the Catholic Church formally disclaimed anti-Semitism and attempted to heal discord centuries old. Tanenbaum was determined to eradicate the negativity and misunderstandings that

**CELEBRATING 50 YEARS OF NOSTRA AETATE**



## “SO DIFFERENT! SO SIMILAR!”

### “The Surprise of an Encounter” Testimony of a dialog between the students of a Jewish school and Isabelle, nds

Since March 2014, there have been four broadcasts presenting this testimony in Jewish radio stations and one broadcast in a Catholic radio station (in Toulouse) with Sister Isabelle, nds and Zeev Seror who teaches Judaism at the Genenou School. An experience of encounters in which loyalty has been built up since 1985 ... already thirty years! Last January 20, in a short celebration in the chapel of the Sion school in Strasbourg, the students from three classes at the end of the primary cycle (CM2) each received a copy of the testimony I gave of my vocation as a Sister of Sion who had entered the novitiate in the summer of 1966. Other projects are being developed for next September-November in Strasbourg. In the context of the projects for celebrating the 50th anniversary of *Nostra Aetate*, some suggestions from the directors of the *Alliance Israélite universelle* (AIU) [Universal Jewish Alliance] (seat in Paris), who had received this testimony, are going to be implemented: *“Bringing inter-faith dialog to the level of the children is a beautiful initiative... presenting this book should be done in close collaboration with the schools of the AIU.”* “It would be interesting to think about presenting this project to the Médiathèque Alliance Baron Ed. de Rothschild ... at the beginning of the next school year, together with all who developed it.” “I would be very happy to organize a workshop or any other form of exchange around this beautiful brochure.” “These exchanges between the CM1-CM2 at Genenou and Sister Isabelle Denis with the motto of 'encountering the other' produced some beautiful drawings (*editor's note: including the relationship with Muslims, for peace*), as well as reflections full of hope.” “Especially after all the tragic events since January!” (Team of directors and educational department). On the Catholic side, the response from the diocesan catechetical service in Paris for 2015: “We really must do something. And already give it to and study it with the catechetical service, which is responsible for everything having to do with 'supports' to help catechists and pastoral animators.” And the response from Msgr. Ornellas, the referent bishop for pastoral ministry in the Church of France: “I am passing on this testimony to the diocesan catechetical service of Rennes. I would also like the site of the *Service National de la Catéchèse et du Catéchuménat* [National Service for Catechesis and the Catechumenate] to pick it up and to speak of its significance and present-day relevance in the life of the Church, particularly with the 50th anniversary of *Nostra Aetate* drawing near.”

**Is it a dream to imagine future formation sessions for Jewish and Christian teachers together ...?**

*Isabelle Denis*

### CONCERNING NOSTRA AETATE IN POLAND

On March 6, 2015, in the context of the anniversary year of *Nostra Aetate*, the Council of Christians and Jews in Poland awarded its annual diploma to "persons of reconciliation" to Sister Mary O'Sullivan, an Irish woman of the Congregation of the Sisters of Mercy. This diploma honors a non-Polish personality who is involved in activity for the relationship between Jews and Christians. Sister Mary has been working for five years at the Center of Dialog and Prayer in Auschwitz. The ceremony took place in the large synagogue of Warsaw, a prestigious place. In the course of the evening, the archbishop, Henryk Muszynski, a builder of dialog with the Jews in Poland and elsewhere, was celebrated. He was the first president of the Polish episcopal committee for relations with Judaism. Many memories of the beginnings of those relations were recalled in a very cordial atmosphere. Various university courses and international and national symposia have been organized in the country's Catholic universities and in dioceses. At Sandomierz (southern Poland) an international scholarly symposium took place on *Nostra Aetate*: history, presence and perspectives of Jewish-Christian dialog. Among the participants were: Msgr. Mieczysław Cisko, the president of the bishops committee for dialog with Judaism, Prof. Magda Teter of the Wesleyan University (USA), Prof. John Connelly of the University of California in Berkeley. For the inauguration of the catechetical year 2014/2015 in the diocese of Bielsko-Żywiecki, Bishop Grzegorz Ryś gave an introductory talk on the Jewish-Christian relationship.

(If you want to listen [http://diecezja.bielsko.pl/wiadomosci/5482\\_bp\\_ry\\_o\\_dialogu\\_z\\_judaizmemks](http://diecezja.bielsko.pl/wiadomosci/5482_bp_ry_o_dialogu_z_judaizmemks).)

The bishops wrote a letter in which they ask all the priests to take initiatives in order to safeguard the memory of the Jewish people in Poland, including the memory by means of material things. They also ask all the Christians and the secular authorities to help them in this work. (If you wish to read it: <http://sion.pl/category/dialog/>)

Articles on *Nostra Aetate*: <http://www.miesiecznik.znak.com.pl/15993/calosc/otwarcie-nowej-ery>

*Anne Denise Rinckwald*

## KANSAS CITY “SIGNS OF THE TIMES!”



An Invitation from the sisters and associates of Our Lady of Sion to celebrate Nostra Aetate at an afternoon event hosted at Avila University Thursday, April 9 1:00 – 4:00 p.m. “*Understanding the past: discerning the future*”.



In keeping with our Sion charism which calls us to “*appreciate the values and significance of cultures and religions different from our own*” (Const. 16), we invite representatives from Avila University, St. Thomas More Parish, and Notre Dame de Sion School. It is our hope that our time together will help foster in our Kansas City neighborhood a deeper understanding and appreciation of the growth in the Jewish-Christian and interfaith relationship since Vatican Council II. In keeping with the observation by Pope Francis that “it is important to know and understand what brought us to who and where we are,” the afternoon will begin with a brief overview of developments and challenges since 1965. In small groups and in plenary sessions, we will then discern together: What “signs of the times” does the vision of Nostra Aetate call us to be attentive to today? Given these “signs of the times,” how — in our school, in our parish, at our university — can we help carry the spirit and vision of Nostra Aetate into the future? Are there possibilities for us doing some of this in partnership with each other?

*Through different forms of education, we endeavor to transmit the biblical perspective of human life which we ourselves are continually trying to appropriate: namely, the dignity of the human person, the love that God has for each person in his/her uniqueness and for each people in its distinctiveness.*

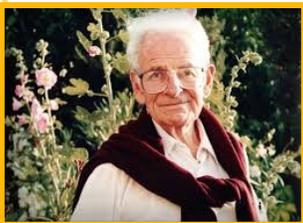
(# 15.4 Constitution, Congregation of Our Lady of Sion, 1984)

**Audrey Doetzel**

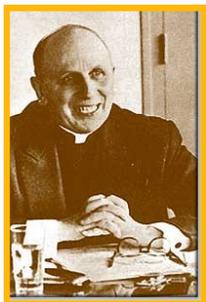
### BEHIND THE SCENES OF NOSTRA AETATE 4



**Johannes Gerardus Maria Willebrands** (1909-2006) was one of the most important Roman Catholic promoters of ecumenism of the 20th century, having a decisive influence on the course of the Second Vatican Council (1962-1965) in this regard. In 1960, Pope John XXIII appointed him the first Secretary of the newly created Secretariat (later Council) for Christian Unity. During the work of the Second Vatican Council, he prepared the documents relating to scripture and tradition, ecumenism, religious freedom, and relations with non-Christian religions.



**Bruno Hussar** was the founder of *Neve Shalom / Wahat al-Salam*, which means “Oasis of Peace,” an Arab/Jewish village dedicated to coexistence. Father Bruno derived the name from the book of Isaiah (32:18) “*My people shall dwell in an Oasis of Peace*”. Bruno was invited by Cardinal Augustin Bea as an expert to participate in the third séance dedicated to discussing the text that would become Nostra Aetate. He was one of the participants in the session when the SIDIC was founded in 1965.



**Yves Congar** was specifically appointed by Pope John XXIII to the theological commission that was to prepare texts for the bishops to consider during the Second Vatican Council. While doing this he sent in sixteen pages of suggested changes to the agenda to make it more focused on the real world. These suggestions went largely unheard until Pope John presented the bishops with a very different idea than everyone expected and the council took a very unexpected but positive turn. The original idea that the only ecumenism needed would be that everyone would return to the church was thrown out the window and it became one of the top goals for Vatican II. During the council Congar kept the council-journal which covers the summer 1960 through December 8, 1965. The journal contains his actions throughout the entire council, things that were true, things that were rumored to have been true. At his request it was not published until the year two thousand because of his very truthful demeanor. It is in this journal that we read about his true happiness in being with the observers of Vatican II who were of different faiths. He expresses this by saying “it will take generations to nurture the seeds of understanding miraculously sown. Ecumenical dialogue is at its beginning.” It was during the second session that they discussed the schema on ecumenism and he wrote that it was a “historic day” and “a moment of growth.” When the council adjourned Congar had in reality made a huge contribution to the Church, but all he had to say for it was “*Servi inutiles sumus. We are useless servants.*”

## CANADA/SASKATOON – WHERE ARE WE GOING?

**March 1, 2015**  
Holy Family Cathedral—Bishop Legatt Hall  
Saskatoon, SK  
W:EN: 7:30 PM  
COST: Free

Keynote Speaker  
  
Sr. Eileen Schuller

Featured Panelists  
  
Rabbi Claudia Jodorkovsky  
  
Sr. Lucy Thorson, NDS  
  
Rev. Scott Pittendrigh

Roman Catholic Diocesan Interfaith Commission

**WHERE  
are we  
GOING?**

50 Years of  
Jewish-Christian  
Conversations  
Celebrating "Nostra Aetate"

Photo: Owen (Owen) Hall

### AN INVITATION TO LOUVAIN

**In** the context of the 50 years since the declaration of Nostra Aetate by the Second Vatican Council, I recommend the invitation to the international colloquium that has been organized jointly by the theology faculty of the Catholic University of Louvain-la-Neuve, the Institute of Religions, Cultures, and Spiritualities, and the National Catholic Commission for Relations with the Jewish World (CNCJ).

#### THE ANTI-JUDAISM OF THE FATHERS OF THE CHURCH: MYTH AND/OR REALITY?

May 20 – 22, 2015

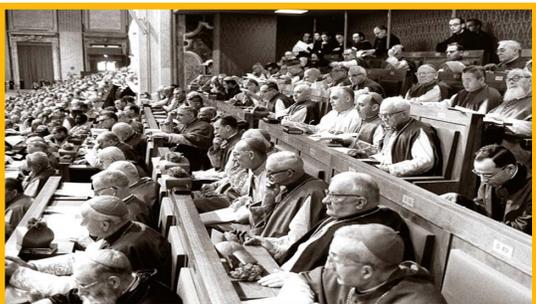
at Louvain-la-Neuve, Auditorium Montesquieu 10

and to the public Lecture:

#### “POLEMICS AND CONTROVERSIES: WHEN JEWS AND CHRISTIANS WORKED OUT THEIR IDENTITY”

Wednesday, May 20, 2015 at 7:30 p.m.

**Michèle Debrouwer**



Nostra Aetate passed by a vote of 2,221 to



Nostra Aetate was proclaimed by Pope Paul VI on  
October 28th 1965

**CELEBRATING 50 YEARS OF NOSTRA AETATE**



## CELEBRATING FIFTY YEARS OF NOSTRA AETATE IN SYDNEY

**The** Sydney Archdiocese will be involved in promoting celebrations for the fiftieth anniversary of Nostra Aetate. As yet, details have not been announced, but preparatory meetings have been held between Catholic and Jewish leaders and joint ventures are being planned with the Sydney Archdiocese, the Council of Christians and Jews, the New South Wales Jewish Board of Deputies and the Sydney Jewish Museum. Suitable speakers are being sought. Another event is envisaged with other Christian communities being involved as well, and non-Christian religions. Sr Giovanni Farquer, the Executive Director of the Archdiocese of Sydney's Ecumenical and Interfaith Commission, has urged Catholics to take another look at the Nostra Aetate document from Vatican II and "its ground-breaking potential for generating peace, justice and unity amongst the whole human family, a family united in origin, life's pilgrimage and final destiny."

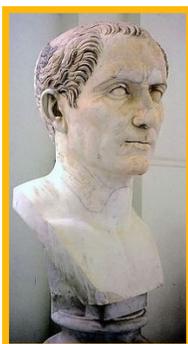
Half a century after the Second Vatican Council handed down the Declaration on the Relationship of the Church to non-Christian Religions, Nostra Aetate has astounding relevance to present times, Sister Giovanni Farquer previously told scholarship recipients, academics, council members and fellows, scholarship donors and students at St John's College. "It is not confrontation that offers hope to resolve problems but rather the ability to meet and dialogue."

Another initiative is also taking place that is being promoted by the Australian Council of Christians and Jews. Teresa Pirola, from the Broken Bay Diocese is working with other members of the Council of Christians and Jews, Jenny Van Proctor (Jewish and current CCJ President) and a Catholic journalist Kate Mannix in producing a leaflet, which is entitled:

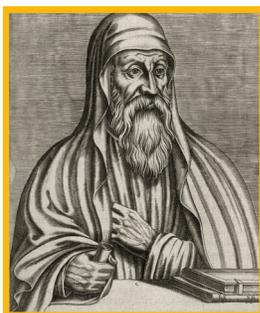
"Preaching without unintended prejudice. Lenten notes for homilists, teachers and catechists." It is partially based on the document produced in earlier years by the Victorian Council of Christians and Jews: "Rightly Explaining the Word of Truth." and includes the phrase: Vatican II: Nostra Aetate, 4". Sounding the depths of the mystery which is the church, this sacred council remembers the spiritual ties." The group plans to produce three or four documents designed to awaken awareness in theological colleges to be distributed throughout Australia and New Zealand. The prototype has been sent to the International Council of Christians and Jews, who have expressed great interest and are encouraging the implementation of this project. The leaflets are originally an initiative funded by the Broken Bay Catholic Diocese.

*Marianne Dacy*

## FEW HISTORICAL TIPS ON INTERFAITH DIALOGUE



Julius Ceasar , the Roman statesman, as high priest of the College of Pontiffs in ancient Rome opened to Jews



The early Christian theologian, Origen of Alexandria was the first to openly appreciate Jewish culture



Francis of Assisi may have initiated the first ever Christian-Muslim dialogue when he met with Sultan Malik-al-kalim of Egypt during the fifth Christian crusade

## MAIN LINES OF THE COUNCIL DECLARATION NOSTRA AETATE, GÉMENOS

**In our time:** growing relations between peoples.

**The Church's task:** to promote unity and charity among persons and among peoples.

**Among the religions:** Responses to the enigmas of the human condition.

Traditional religions.

Religions linked to the progress of culture.

Hinduism, Buddhism.

"The Catholic Church rejects nothing that is true and holy in these religions."

Within the vast world of the religions:

"The Church regards with esteem also the Muslims" (Islam).

"As (the Council) searches into the mystery of the Church it remembers the bond that spiritually ties the people of the New Covenant to Abraham's stock." (Judaism)

A double consequence: human fraternity is founded on the paternity of God.

**Commitment:** against every discrimination based on race, color, class, religion.

**Witness:** "To conduct oneself honorably among the nations" (1 Peter 2:12).

That is the mission of those who believe in Christ.

### *Community of Gémenos*



Pope John Paul II and Rabbi Elio Toaff on the first-ever papal visit to a synagogue in 1986



## Ahead of our times....

*The Council's Declaration on "The Church's Attitude towards non-Christian Religions" is a program for the future, a program for everyone, but especially for you, Sisters of Our Lady of Sion. Until now, your task was based above all on your Constitution and your Rules; now that same task is given to you by the Church herself (Cardinal Bea to the Sisters of Our Lady of Sion).*

**Understanding** the charism of the Congregation of Our Lady of Sion and the congregation's participation in Nostra Aetate is a journey into the history of two thousand years, a route that goes back in time through historical events, difficulties, and finally a change of mentality that was difficult to accept, battles of which Western society would never have imagined that they were fought by people who were women and even less, by sisters.

The contribution of the Sisters of Sion after the Second Vatican Council is well known, but what about before the Council? From its beginnings, the congregation was involved in the education of young Christian, Jewish and Muslim girls, respecting their beliefs and traditions. The mission was clear for the congregation's founder Theodore Ratisbonne, who insisted on the need for reconciliation and on the salvation of the Jewish people. The sisters shared Fr. Theodore's vision and at the same time prayed for the conversion of the Jews (a common tendency of the Church at that time), but they did not proselytize. The congregation belonged to the Archconfraternity of Prayer for Israel (API), which encouraged prayer for the conversion of Israel.



Sr M. Felix

Then came the war, the Shoah, the sisters' commitment in saving Jewish children, the Finaly Affair, the Seelisberg Conference, the collaboration and correspondence between the Father of Sion P. Demann and Jules Isaac. All these events did not leave the congregation untouched.

During the 1950s, the superior general, Sr. M. Felix, established a process for reevaluating Sion's identity, which encountered many obstacles and much reticence...! In 1955, she organized an international conference for delegates from all the provinces with the title, "Information Session on various Aspects of the Mystery of Israel", following which "the deepening of the Mystery and the problems of Israel must become everyone's work" ... Still in 1955, the "Center for Study and Information on Israel" (the future SIDIC) was set up. The sisters began to learn Hebrew, Judaism, they went to study in Jerusalem... The general chapter of 1957 came, from which the congregation emerged with a renewed Constitution: in it, the emphasis on the "conversion of Israel" was weakened and the desire to seek the best way to become friends with the Jewish

people was affirmed.

Since 1937, the Ancelles had been a third branch of the congregation; they were already involved in concrete contacts with Jews through various kinds of social work or professional activities, and their life was a call to the other sisters, "giving them a more concrete awareness of their mission".



Sr Laura Maria



Sr Edward



Sr Laurice



Sr Dominique Gros



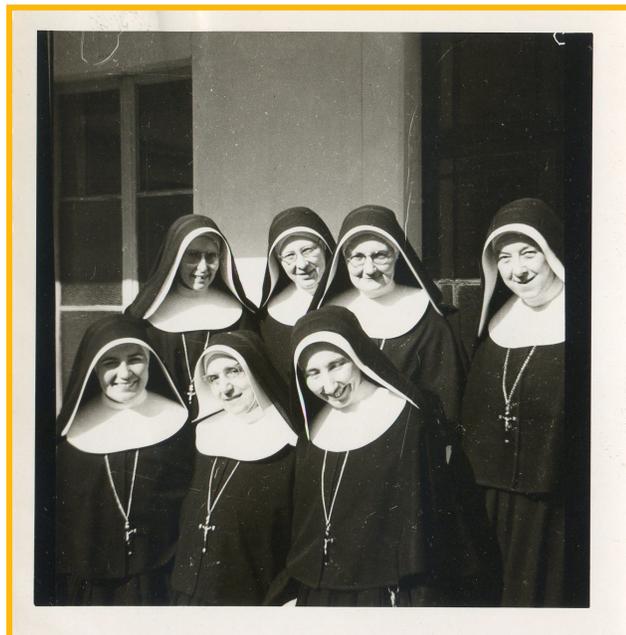
Sr Magda Manipoud

**In** 1961, Sr. M. Felix received the visit of the secretary of the Sacred Congregation for Religious, Fr. Paul Philippe, who asked her to direct a larger number of sisters towards the work of encounter with Israel. This had consequences within Sion (schools had to be closed because of the limited number of sisters, and this gave rise to a certain discontent). But in the meantime, the dream had been replaced by a sense of mission.

This journey of a new Sion towards the future was confirmed by the general chapter of 1964. The new congregational leadership team was now made up of Sr. Laurice, the superior general, Sr. Edward, Sr. Magda, Sr. Marie Dominique Gros, and Sr. Laura-Maria. Sion separated from the API. A little after the chapter, Cardinal Bea met the sisters in Rome and affirmed that Sion's special vocation is more urgent than ever.

**1965: Nostra Aetate** – the descending route was transformed into a path that from then on was more clear, more rapid; the congregation was ready to develop a new history, which not only goes with the Church, but with the whole of society..., the first steps of which date from well before Nostra Aetate.

*Nicky*



Upper row , from left: Benedetta, Dominique,  
Laurice, Edward

Lower row, from left: Laura Maria, Salva, Magda

## CELEBRATING IN BRASIL REGION!



**On** May 11th in the Ministry Ecumenism and Interreligious Dialogue will offer in The Sion School.

Issue: *A Jewish reflection about the 50th Anniversary of Nostra Aetate: past actions, commitments and forwards.*

Lecture: Rabbi Ruben Sternschein

we intend to have about 300 people.

On 25th of August the Archdiocese of São Paulo and the Nacional Commission will do a great celebration of the 50th Aniversary of Nostra Aetate. In that occasion the Cardinal Koch will be present and the jewish-christian communities and civil and interreligious authorities.



we intend to have about 400 people.

On 25th October will have a big Celebration with all sisters of Sion, Associates, Educators and friends. The Bishop, the Interreligious leaders, the Director of the Reconciliation House and both rabbis from Israelite Congregation of São Paulo has confirmed they presences. Will have a cultural moment, a prayer and a buffet.

we intend to have about 300 people.

Associates:

Northeast - the Associates are studying the Nostra Aetate document in the community in Santo Amaro/SE and also with the youth in the countryside.

Curitiba: it involves school, university and associates. Formatives meetings about the historical context that did emerge the Vatican Council II. Studies of Documents of Vatican II. Different views will be done trough studies with priests about Nostra Aetate. Participation of the Celebration in São Paulo in oct 25th - Sion SP.

***Giselda Rollemberg da Fonseca***



**Throughout** the academic year, St. Theodore School of Our Lady of Sion is organising reflection and discussion sessions for the teaching staff on the Declaration Nostra Aetate, exploring what it signifies for Sion and for the world. This is an ongoing formation opportunity. We hope that the reflection on Nostra Aetate will guide the faculty in their approach and their teaching, helping to raise awareness among our students (during classes, times of prayer and celebration) regarding the need to respect religious diversity, the practice of inter-religious dialogue and the actual relationship between Christianity and Judaism.

Among various activities we would like to highlight:

A meeting held with teachers during Planning Week at the beginning of the year to present the Declaration Nostra Aetate and also the Lenten Campaign (planned in the context of the 50th anniversary of the Second Vatican Council and the Declaration Nostra Aetate and having as theme Fraternity and the Church with the motto "I have come to serve")

Participation of the team in formation meetings (happening throughout the year).

Reflection and discussion with the students about the Declaration and what it signifies for the Sion community, for the religions concerned, and for humanity.

***Maria Cristiane dos Santos***

**CELEBRATING 50 YEARS OF NOSTRA AETATE**



## The Nuns who opened the Doors for Europe's Jews....

[...] **From** the beginning, the Sisters of Sion were a part of this effort. In his first speech to the Congregation in January of 1964, Cardinal Bea spoke of Sion's particular vocation, which gave the Sisters a "special right" to speak of the Church's spiritual relationship with the Jews. He encouraged the Sisters to increase their work with the Jews as a way to "make up for the ingratitude, unkindness, and injustice of Christians to these people -- faults which the Church has committed throughout the ages."

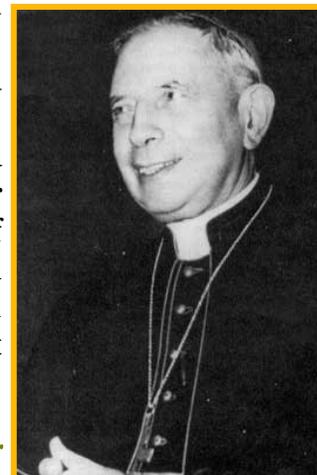
The Sisters, corresponding with influential Church leaders, pushed for a more radical rethinking of the attitude towards Judaism. Sisters Magda Manipoud and Dominique Gros in Paris were in contact with leading French Council bishops, including the Archbishops of Lyon, Rouen, Paris, Lille, Reims, Cambrai and Toulouse. While the Sisters' input was sometimes received less than enthusiastically by these Council Fathers, the Sisters remained in contact with them throughout the second, third, and fourth sessions of the Council.

In the later years of the Council Sister Magda met with Cardinal Giacomo Lercaro, a leading member of the Secretariat for Promoting Christian Unity who made a significant "intervention" in the Council on behalf of *Nostra Aetate* in 1964, after his team of theologians asked the Sisters to prepare a dossier of information on Catholic-Jewish relations. In April of 1965, Sister Magda was chosen to accompany two other women, Sister Dominique Gros and the Superior General of the Congregation, Sister Marie Laurice, on a visit to Bologna to meet with Cardinal Lercaro and his team of theologians to discuss possible liturgical reforms which would encourage a more meaningful and just Christian attitude toward the Jews.

The Sisters also hosted Council Fathers in their communities to discuss their work and reflect upon the events of the Council. Father Gregory Baum, a theological expert at the Council, regularly stayed at the Sisters' house in London on his way to and from Rome, providing the Sisters with first-hand information about the difficulties of getting *Nostra Aetate* passed. In exchange, the Sisters passed feedback from local Jewish communities to the Council Fathers working on drafts of *Nostra Aetate* in Rome. After a weak version of a draft of *Nostra Aetate* was leaked to the public in 1964, the Provincial leadership of the Sisters in London wrote a letter to Archbishop Heenan, a representative at Vatican II. Their letter told of strong "reactions aroused in Jewish circles" in the London community, including disappointment about language in the draft that could be interpreted as a call to conversion. They also pointed to the failure to include language eliminating blame for "deicide," writing that this was "taken to imply that Jews at the time of Christ were collectively responsible" for the death of Christ. Archbishop Heenan responded, declaring his intention to act on the Sisters' concerns about proselytism. The new draft of *Nostra Aetate* -- already in progress at the time of the leak -- added an explicit rejection of accusations of Jewish responsibility for deicide was added back into the draft of *Nostra Aetate*.

After the Council, the Sisters' work on interreligious dialogue blossomed through the creation of centers for research and dialogue in Rome and Paris. Sion's first members in the mid-nineteenth century, women educators with a special interest in fostering Christian-Jewish friendship, were ahead of their time in the love and respect they afforded all of their students, regardless of their faith. One hundred years later, a dedicated handful of young women helped to shape the Church's first declaration of goodwill toward the Jewish people. Whatever the other debates over Church reform, this was a significant symbolic step in a two-thousand-year history of violence and disagreement

*(From Emma Green's article 'Sisters of Sion: The Nuns Who Opened Their Doors for Europe's Jews')*



Card. Giacomo Lercaro

**Sent from Generalate:**

**News from Rome 12/03/2015**

**Reminder for Roots of Sion Pilgrimage 20/03/2015**

**Letter Re: Associates Meeting in 2015 – 20/03/2015**

**Easter Reflection 30/03/2015**

**Message from CLT to all the congregation, associates and friends  
re 2015 Congregational assembly 7 /04/2015**

**Letter from Assembly 5/5/2015**

**Status changes n. 1 - 8/05/2015**

**Death notices**

**Sr Isabel Cristina Sales de Souza 30/03/2015**

**Sr Yolanda Andrade Mendes 17/04/2014**

**Sr Hercilia Dias Lages 23/04/2015**

**Sr Jacqueline Marie Mercier des Rochettes 28/04/2015**

**CELEBRATING 50 YEARS OF NOSTRA AETATE**

