



**International Jewish Committee for Interreligious Consultations (IJCIC) Message to Kurt Cardinal Koch and the Holy See's Commission for Religious Relations with the Jews on the occasion of the 55<sup>th</sup> anniversary of "Nostra aetate" (no.4)**

28 October 2020

The International Jewish Committee for Interreligious Consultations (IJCIC) joins Kurt Cardinal Koch and the Holy See's Commission for Religious Relations with the Jews in joyous commemoration of the 55<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the promulgation of the Second Vatican Council's "Nostra aetate" (no. 4), the October 28, 1965 transformative declaration on the Catholic Church's relationship with the Jewish people.

IJCIC is proud of its 50 years as the official partner of the Catholic Church, representing world Jewry in its vibrant dialogue with the Vatican. The eleven constituent organizations of IJCIC – American Jewish Committee, Anti-Defamation League, B'nai B'rith International, Central Conference of American Rabbis, Israeli Jewish Council for Interreligious Relations, Rabbinical Assembly, Rabbinical Council of America, Union for Reform Judaism, Union of Orthodox Congregations of America, United Synagogue of Conservative Judaism, World Jewish Congress – join together in their ideological and international diversity to advance Catholic-Jewish relations.

"Nostra aetate" (no. 4) is a milestone document articulating the promise of a new and better era in Christian-Jewish relations. It states, "Since the spiritual patrimony common to Christians and Jews is thus so great, this sacred synod wants to foster and recommend that mutual understanding and respect which is the fruit, above all, of biblical and theological studies as well as of fraternal dialogues." That aspiration has been realized by the Church's teachings and initiatives since 1965 that expanded upon "Nostra aetate" (no. 4). It has been dramatically amplified by papal visits to synagogues, to the horrific yet sacred sites of the crimes of the Holocaust, and to the State of Israel following the establishment of Vatican-Israel diplomatic relations in 1993.

Equally important, Jews have welcomed the Church's outstretched hand and created the religious, communal, and academic structures and responses necessary to partner with Catholics in an era that transformed two millennia of enmity into a blessing of amity. For half a century, Jewish communities across the globe have reached out to Catholics in friendship. IJCIC has been the leader in partnering with the Church, especially through five decades of biennial gatherings of the "International Catholic-Jewish Liaison Committee" (ILC), when Catholic and Jewish leaders gather in dialogue and address emerging issues.

As important as these formal structures have been, the progress in Catholic-Jewish relations has been elevated by the depth of relationships between Catholic and Jewish leaders and those mirrored by their constituents. Our friendships have assured open and candid communication that are essential in addressing challenging issues. We have experienced and affirmed in our encounter a shared belief that human beings are created in the Divine image (Genesis 1:27) and our destinies are inextricably linked. As we battle a pandemic that does not distinguish between its victims, these values draw us closer as guideposts for our religious lives.

At a time when anti-Semitism is on the rise and the physical threat to Jewish communities and individuals is very real, we are grateful for the steadfastness of Pope Francis, who has forcefully and repeatedly spoken out against this scourge. Early in his pontificate, when Pope Francis met with IJCIC, he reminded the world of "Nostra aetate" (no. 4)'s firm condemnation of "hatred, persecution and all forms of anti-Semitism." He added, "Due to our common roots, a Christian cannot be anti-Semitic!"

Likewise, we stand in solidarity with our Christian brothers and sisters as they face serious religious freedom infringements, discrimination and persecution in a number of non-democratic countries across the globe.

On this 55<sup>th</sup> anniversary we pray for the sustainment and expansion of the reconciliation manifest by "Nostra aetate" (no. 4) and the subsequent decades of Catholic-Jewish partnership. May God bless our endeavors. May our example be a beacon of light to all of humanity.

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