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NOTE

A JOURNEY OF HOPE

**Sixty Years of Interreligious Dialogue and Fraternity
in the Light of the Conciliar Declaration [Nostra Aetate](#)**

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I. Introduction

1. On 28 October 1965, the [Second Vatican Council](#)'s Declaration [Nostra Aetate](#) “on the relation of the Church with non-Christian religions” opened a new chapter in the history of relations among Catholics, Jews, and believers of other faiths and spiritual traditions. Far more than a mere text, it marked a profound change in the Church’s understanding and expression of her relationship with followers of other religions. In that [Declaration](#), the Church explicitly affirmed that she “rejects nothing of what is true and holy in these religions,” inviting the faithful to regard

with esteem and respect “the manner of life and conduct, the precepts and doctrines.”^[1] Written amid the creative and fraternal vitality of the Council, it remains highly relevant in a world marked, on the one hand, by widespread attitudes of closed-mindedness and, on the other, by a search for a peaceful coexistence within a universal citizenship founded on fraternity and mutual recognition.

2. Seen in this light, [Nostra Aetate](#) aligns with the other conciliar Declaration, [Dignitatis Humanae](#), which focuses on the right to religious freedom. No respectful relationship with other religions can be sincere or feasible without a corresponding respect for the religious freedom of others: “This demand for freedom in human society chiefly regards the quest for the values proper to the human spirit. It regards, in the first place, the free exercise of religion in society.”^[2] This conviction leads us to call for the same freedom for Christians living in countries where they are a minority.^[3]

3. Sixty years after its promulgation, [Nostra Aetate](#) continues to inspire the Church’s pastoral and theological orientations and to nourish the dialogue that is the very form in which human life unfolds, and which has become all the more indispensable in the societies of our time. Such dialogue, however, also constitutes an abiding challenge: How can fidelity to Christian identity be reconciled with a sincere openness to otherness? How can the call to universal fraternity be lived concretely in societies marked by increasing cultural and religious diversity, by war and violence, and by a growing trend toward secularization? This commemorative document seeks to retrace the essential stages of interreligious dialogue since [Nostra Aetate](#), to assess its achievements and challenges, and to outline some perspectives for the future.

The Origin and Scope of Nostra Aetate: a Response to the Shoah

4. The Declaration [Nostra Aetate](#) emerged in the aftermath of the Second World War. Initially, it was not conceived as a document about dialogue with other religions, but rather as a response to the tragic consequences of antisemitism, which culminated in the Shoah. Already deeply sensitive to this issue, [Pope Saint John XXIII](#) met with the Jewish scholar Jules Isaac through the mediation of Maria Vingiani, founder of the Secretariat for Ecumenical Activities. Following this encounter, he entrusted Cardinal Augustin Bea with drafting a conciliar text aimed at healing and renewing the relationship between the Church and the Jewish people. This project was further developed during the sessions of the [Second Vatican Council](#) and ultimately took concrete form in a document that, like the mustard seed in the Gospel (cf. *Mk* 4:31-32), grew beyond all expectations, becoming a great tree that embraced not only relations with Judaism but also dialogue with the various religions. In it, one can discern an ever more universal openness, which the Church wishes to offer to her brothers and sisters of other religious traditions in a spirit of respect and a shared pursuit of truth.

5. Official and institutional Catholic-Jewish dialogue finds its foundation in paragraph 4 of the Declaration. This is the first magisterial statement that clearly recognizes the Jewish roots of Christianity. It cites Romans 9:4-5, which affirms that the patriarchs belong to the People of Israel and that Christ, according to the flesh, descended from them. The Declaration also states that “the Apostles, the Church’s mainstay and pillars, as well as most of the early disciples who proclaimed Christ’s Gospel to the world, sprang from the Jewish people.”^[4] In this regard, speaking of the person of Jesus, a [document of the Commission for Religious Relations with the Jews](#) of the Secretariat for Promoting Christian Unity (today the Dicastery for Promoting Christian Unity) explains: “Jesus was and always remained a Jew [...]. Jesus is fully a man of his time and of his environment: the Jewish Palestinian one of the first century, the anxieties and hopes of which he shared. This cannot but underline both the reality of the Incarnation and the very meaning of the history of salvation, as it has been revealed in the Bible (cf. *Rom* 1:3-4; *Gal* 4:4-5).”^[5] To put it in the words of the Evangelist John (cf. *Jn* 1:14), as reinterpreted by the Protestant theologian K. Barth, the Word became “Jewish flesh”^[6] and dwelt among us. Jesus’ dwelling place was the Judaism of his time, the original soil from which the *Ecclesia ex circumcisione*, and later the *Ecclesia ex gentibus*, developed (as illustrated, for example, by the mosaic in the Basilica of Santa Sabina in Rome).

Dialogue with Non-Christian Religions

6. From the opening of the [Second Vatican Council](#) in 1962, [Pope Saint John XXIII](#), regarded as the “precursor of dialogue,” ^[7] explicitly called for the promotion not only of Christian unity but also of a broader fraternity with believers of other religions, founded on mutual “esteem and respect.”^[8] This authentically human and profoundly evangelical vision gradually took shape with increasing theological and pastoral clarity: respectful encounter with the other is an indispensable condition for living the Gospel fully. A few months later, in the Encyclical [Pacem in Terris](#), the Pontiff called upon everyone to respect the dignity of every person.^[9]

7. [Pope Saint Paul VI](#) confirmed this direction in the Encyclical [Ecclesiam Suam](#), inviting the Church to “enter into dialogue with the world in which it lives.”^[10] According to this Encyclical, the Church is called to engage with renewed fervor in a “dialogue conducted with all people of good will both inside and outside the Church,”^[11] excluding no one and respecting the particular characteristics and dynamics proper to the various contexts of the dialogue. The vision of a dialogue structured methodologically in different circles—the dialogue for peace, dialogue with believers in God, and dialogue with the separated Christian brothers and sisters^[12]—has served as a kind of blueprint for the development of ecumenical, interreligious, and intercultural dialogue in the postconciliar period. Grounded in doctrinal clarity, sincere listening, and profound respect for those with whom Christians engage in dialogue, this approach is regarded as an essential component of the Church’s mission.^[13] Thus, the Church affirms clearly that *the way of dialogue is neither an expedient strategy nor a renunciation of one’s own identity, but an authentically evangelical path.*

8. [Pope Saint Paul VI](#) highlighted the distinctive contribution of [Nostra Aetate](#) at the conclusion of the [Second Vatican Council](#): “May our dear Christian brothers and sisters who are still separated from full communion with the Catholic Church look upon this manifestation of the Church’s face, made even more beautiful. And may the followers of other religions—especially the Jews, with whom the kinship of Abraham unites us—likewise look upon [this document] not as an object of reproach or suspicion, but of respect, love, and hope. For the Church advances in the firmness of truth and faith, and in the spread of justice and charity. Thus does the Church live.”^[14]

9. [Nostra Aetate](#) brings a fundamental principle to light. Respect and esteem are the indispensable foundations for interreligious dialogue and for relations with Judaism, making it possible to overcome attitudes of exclusion, contempt, or indifference that had long prevailed: “We cannot call upon God as the Father of all if we refuse to behave in a fraternal manner toward certain people who have been created in the image of God. [...] The Church reproves, as foreign to the mind of Christ, any discrimination against men or harassment of them because of their race, color, condition of life, or religion.”^[15] In this sense, the Declaration is situated within the relational anthropology of [Gaudium et Spes](#), in which the other is not perceived as a threat but recognized as an interlocutor with whom to build, in a spirit of reciprocity, a more just and fraternal society.

The Distinctive Character of Dialogue with the Jewish People

10. Both modern Judaism and contemporary Christianity are based on the Word revealed in the Old Testament and trace their roots to the Judaism of Jesus’ time. Following the destruction of the Temple in Jerusalem in 70 A.D., Judaism gradually evolved primarily into Rabbinic Judaism, while early Christianity developed from the movement initiated by Jesus and his disciples, distinguishing itself from the various forms of Judaism over time. With Jesus, who was himself a Jew, the first Christians effectively adopted the principles of Judaism as they existed at the time and adapted them to the new post-Paschal situation. Accordingly, [Nostra Aetate](#) 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.”^[16] This rich shared heritage is a solid foundation and a true treasure for Jewish-Christian dialogue.

11. Yet what Jesus brought into Christianity, as a Jewish inheritance, forms part of the theological structure of Christianity itself. In the section entitled “[Fundamental Themes in the Scriptures of the Jewish People and Their Reception in Faith in Christ](#)” (pars. 19–65), the document of the [Pontifical Biblical Commission](#), [The Jewish People and Their Sacred Scriptures in the Christian Bible](#) (24 May 2001), refers to the principal scriptural aspects and to their interpretation. It is a document of great value.

12. Indeed, both Jews and Christians share the conviction that the God of Israel revealed himself in his Word, thereby addressing human beings. Likewise common to Judaism and Christianity are the beliefs that God, as Creator of heaven and earth, created the living space in which people dwell, and that he surrounds and preserves it; that the human person, as the “image of God” (cf. *Gen* 1:26–27), has been entrusted with its stewardship and must therefore assume proper responsibility toward creation; and that each person is responsible for the well-being of his or her brothers and sisters, especially the poor.^[17] Every ethical teaching regarding the proper relationship of the human person with God, with the surrounding world, and with one’s neighbor has its origin in God and in the dignity of every person derived from being created in the “image of God.” Like Rabbinic Judaism, Christianity has also embraced the Ten Commandments; they have likewise become a moral patrimony recognized by many people. Jesus’ twofold commandment of love—namely, to love God with all one’s heart, with all one’s soul, with all one’s mind, and with all one’s strength, and to love one’s neighbor as oneself (cf. *Mk* 12:30–31; *Mt* 22:37–39; *Lk* 10:27)—is drawn from the Old Testament (cf. *Deut* 6:5 and *Lev* 19:18), even though the two commandments are not explicitly

linked there. For this reason, [Pope Benedict XVI](#) regarded the Jewish people as our “fathers in faith,”^[18] and emphasized that dialogue between the two faiths must begin with the gratitude of Christians toward the Jewish people, because, despite the difficulties they have endured, they have preserved faith in the one God. Accordingly, the then-Cardinal Ratzinger could affirm that “such a dialogue, to be fruitful, must begin with a prayer to our God that he may above all grant to us Christians greater esteem and love for this people, the people of Israel.”^[19]

13. Bearing in mind this rich spiritual heritage shared by Jews and Christians, it is easy to understand that Jewish-Christian dialogue cannot be regarded as a secondary activity for Christians, aimed only at gaining a better understanding of Judaism, fostering diplomatic relations, or even simply cultivating friendship with the Jewish people. Rather, it is a matter of becoming fully aware of one’s own original identity. God’s covenant with the Jewish people is irrevocable^[20], and this continually challenges the Church. This does not mean, for Christians, that there are two paths to salvation^[21] or that the covenant with the Jewish people runs parallel to the Christian way of salvation: the Church teaches that Christ is the one and only Redeemer.^[22] Nevertheless, this irrevocable covenant has theological significance. The more Christians come to know and love the Jewish roots of their own tradition, the better they understand themselves in the practice of faith, and the stronger their religious identity becomes—even though, for this to happen, Christians must know their own faith tradition well and be firmly rooted in it. When, with reference to Judaism, we affirm that we cannot do without one another, this also implies that the religious life of contemporary Jews, and not only that linked to the Old Testament, is relevant to Christians. [Pope Francis](#) affirmed this as follows: “God continues to work among the people of the Old Covenant.”^[23] Indeed, Jewish religious life can be regarded as *an effect of the revealed Word*, always living and effective, which they have received; for this reason, it has a present and dynamic value that can always enrich us (cf. *Rom* 11:29). It is, therefore, of fundamental importance to deepen the biblical, exegetical, liturgical, and theological understanding of the relationship with Judaism, in accordance with the principles outlined in the conciliar Constitutions [Dei Verbum](#) and [Lumen Gentium](#).

14. This solidarity with the Jewish people also includes the shared struggle against antisemitism. [Nostra Aetate](#) already states unequivocally that the Church “decries hatred, persecutions, displays of anti-Semitism, directed against Jews at any time and by anyone,”^[24] thereby reaffirming—and at the same time advancing beyond—what had already been declared by the Supreme Sacred Congregation of the Holy Office on 25 March 1928.^[25] Antisemitism has manifested itself in cruel ways throughout history, even in our own time, but its darkest moment was undoubtedly the Shoah. In this regard, the words of [Pope Benedict XVI](#) during the [General Audience of 28 January 2009](#)—which occurred the day after the annual Holocaust Remembrance Day—remain very precise and powerful: “In these days when we remember the Shoah, images come to mind from my repeated visits to Auschwitz, one of the concentration camps in which the heinous slaughter of millions of Jews occurred, innocent victims of a blind racial and religious hatred. As I affectionately renew the expression of my full and unquestionable solidarity with our fellow receivers of the First Covenant, I hope that the memory of the Shoah will lead humanity to reflect upon the unfathomable power of evil when it conquers the heart of man. May the Shoah be a warning for all against forgetfulness, denial, or reductionism, because violence committed against one single human being is violence against all. No man is an island, as a famous poet wrote. May the Shoah teach both old and new generations that only the arduous path of listening and dialogue, of love and forgiveness, leads peoples, cultures and religions of the world to the desired goal of fraternity and peace in truth. May violence no longer degrade the dignity of man!”^[26]

15. The conflicts that have erupted in the Middle East in recent years have also left their mark on Jewish-Christian dialogue. Many channels of communication have been strained and continue to be tested by differing interpretations of the events that have unfolded, interpretations that are often not unanimous even within the respective religious communities. Nevertheless, the pillars of dialogue among believers, built over sixty years of common effort, have remained firm. Upon these foundations, it is both possible and necessary to continue building, once again drawing inspiration from the Council Fathers’ recommendations to grow in mutual knowledge and esteem “above all through biblical and theological studies and through fraternal dialogue.”^[27]

II. Post-Conciliar Developments: a Continuity enriched by successive Popes

Pope Saint Paul VI

16. [Pope Saint Paul VI](#) situated the Church’s new attitude toward other faiths and religious traditions—which emerged from the [Second Vatican Council](#)—within the framework of the “dialogue with the world” outlined in his Encyclical [Ecclesiam Suam](#) (1964). *This framework was further developed in subsequent magisterial teaching.* As the same Pontiff recalls in his Encyclical [Populorum Progressio](#) (1967), “development cannot be restricted to economic growth alone. To be authentic, development must be integral: that is, it must promote the development of every person and of the whole person.”^[28] This gives rise to a strong call for fraternity, supported by constant

dialogue with cultures, religions, and consciences, with a view to a solidarity-based development that is open to transcendence and directed toward universal fraternity.[29] With this vision, [Pope Saint Paul VI](#) gave a decisive impetus to interreligious dialogue, embedding it into the very structures of the Roman Curia.

17. Accordingly, as early as 1964, the Pope established the Secretariat for Non-Christians, today known as the [Dicastery for Interreligious Dialogue](#).^[30] Founded during the Council itself, even before the promulgation of [Nostra Aetate](#) and the Encyclical [Ecclesiam Suam](#), this body was entrusted with guiding, supporting, and coordinating the Church's relations with followers of other religions. To this day, it remains committed to promoting "a true search for God among all people."^[31]

18. [Pope Saint Paul VI](#) strongly emphasized that non-Christian religions should no longer be seen as adversaries but as companions on the journey, united "in a friendship already begun and yet to be fully realized."^[32] In the same spirit, a decade later two specific commissions were established: one for religious relations with Judaism and the other for religious relations with Islam.^[33] These commissions were established to deepen the encounter with Jews and Muslims and to strengthen cooperation, including with other Christian Churches and ecclesial communities.^[34] At the wish of [Pope Saint Paul VI](#), dialogue became firmly rooted not only in the institutions of the Church, but also in her missionary heart. It has become a significant component of Christian life: an authentic style of evangelical witness, in harmony with a world increasingly marked by a plurality of beliefs and cultures.

Pope Saint John Paul II

19. [Pope Saint John Paul II](#) brought the Council's vision of interreligious dialogue to the forefront. His efforts to put the principles of [Nostra Aetate](#) into practice were decisive, particularly through the organization of the [historic meeting in Assisi on 27 October 1986](#). For the first time, religious leaders from around the world gathered, each expressing their own faith, to pray for peace. This deeply symbolic moment served as a clear and powerful call to view religions no longer as sources of division, but as essential agents of lasting peace, based on mutual esteem and fraternal cooperation.^[35] At the conclusion of that World Day of Prayer, before representatives of various religions, the Pope declared: "More perhaps than ever before in history, the intrinsic link between an authentic religious attitude and the great good of peace has become evident to all [...] Humanity has entered an era of increased solidarity and hunger for social justice."^[36]

20. Regarding dialogue with the Jewish people, when [Pope Saint John Paul II](#) visited the synagogue in Rome on 13 April 1986, he was able to affirm before his Jewish interlocutors that "the Jewish religion is not 'extrinsic' to us, but in a certain way is 'intrinsic' to our own religion. With Judaism, therefore, we have a relationship which we do not have with any other religion. You are our dearly beloved brothers, and in a certain way, it could be said that you are our elder brothers."^[37] Since Jesus was Jewish, the Church and Judaism share a unique relationship—one that does not exist with any other religion.

21. Furthermore, by promoting what later became known as "the spirit of Assisi,"^[38] [Pope Saint John Paul II](#) shared with [Pope Saint Paul VI](#) an awareness of the need to clarify certain aspects of the relationship between dialogue and evangelization. His pontificate was marked by the publication of several foundational documents, such as [Dialogue and Mission](#) (1984) by the Secretariat for Non-Christians,^[39] and the Encyclical [Redemptoris Missio](#) (1990), which reaffirmed the enduring value of the Church's missionary mandate. This was followed by [Dialogue and Proclamation](#) (1991), drafted jointly by the Pontifical Council for Interreligious Dialogue and the Congregation for the Evangelization of Peoples.^[40]

22. In continuity with the [Second Vatican Council](#), these texts articulate two inseparable requirements whose relevance remains undiminished. To those who might be tempted to insist exclusively on the obligation to proclaim Christ, they recall that [Nostra Aetate](#) also affirms the necessity of dialogue with other religious traditions, since such dialogue is now "a part of the Church's evangelizing mission."^[41] Conversely, to those who tend to relativize their own religious identity, the same Declaration recalls the need for fidelity to Jesus Christ, "the Way, the Truth, and the Life" (*Jn* 14:6).^[42] Dialogue, therefore, presupposes a clear awareness of one's own religious and cultural identity, together with a genuine openness to otherness, which is an indispensable condition for coexistence within pluralistic societies. It must be free of ambiguity, avoiding relativism and syncretism, with the fullest possible affirmation of identity and the fullest possible commitment to dialogue.

23. One of the principal concerns of [Pope Saint John Paul II](#)'s pontificate was undoubtedly the promotion of a genuine "dialogue between cultures"^[43] in the service of world peace, especially in the face of the growing number of acts of violence committed in the name of God. At the dawn of the new millennium, the Holy Father strongly

reaffirmed that it is the responsibility of believers to demonstrate that religions are not an obstacle to peace but rather one of its essential elements. Any exploitation of religion for violent ends is a grave distortion of its true nature. Religion must never serve as a pretext for conflict: “*Religion and peace go together*: to wage war in the name of religion is a blatant contradiction.”[44] Hence [Pope Saint John Paul II](#)’s clear appeal to religious leaders: it is their responsibility to bear witness, through their actions and commitment, that their very faith impels them to work for peace.

Pope Benedict XVI

24. Likewise in the spirit of [Nostra Aetate](#), [Pope Benedict XVI](#) reaffirmed in 2006, on the twentieth anniversary of the Assisi event, that “we cannot truly call on God, the Father of all, if we refuse to treat in a brotherly way any man, created as he is in the image of God,”[45] because faith in God can only encourage relationships of universal fraternity among all human beings.[46] Perseverance in interreligious dialogue is meant to demonstrate that fundamentalism is a distortion of religions, one that runs counter to their deepest calling. In a well-known speech, citing the words of a Byzantine emperor, he affirmed that “spreading the faith through violence is something unreasonable. Violence is incompatible with the nature of God and the nature of the soul.”[47]

25. Closely linking the pursuit of peace to the demands of reason and truth, [Pope Benedict XVI](#) consistently affirmed that no religion or culture can legitimately justify fanaticism or recourse to violence. For this reason, believers must continue to meet one another and share a duty to serve the truth and, therefore, humanity. In particular, “interreligious and intercultural dialogue between Christians and Muslims cannot be reduced to an optional extra. It is, in fact, a vital necessity, on which in large measure our future depends.”[48]

26. Moreover, dialogue must be carried out with cultures, the sciences, and political institutions, with a view to achieving a deeper understanding of the human person in all his or her complexity. This “broadened” dialogue aims at the integral development of the person and the harmony of society. For, in reality, the true danger lies not so much in a clash between religious blocs as in a clash between cultures incapable of understanding one another and of engaging in dialogue.

Pope Francis

27. [Pope Francis](#) continued to implement [Nostra Aetate](#) by following the teachings of his predecessors, affirming that “three basic areas, if properly linked to one another, can assist in this dialogue: the duty to respect one’s own identity and that of others, the courage to accept differences, and sincerity of intentions.”[49] Dialogue with other religious traditions must be characterized by an attitude of openness in truth and charity[50], “in spite of various obstacles and difficulties.” He also reaffirmed that such dialogue is “a necessary condition for peace in the world, and so it is a duty for Christians as well as other religious communities.”[51]

28. With regard to the specific characteristics of dialogue with the Jewish people, [Pope Francis](#), from the very beginning of his pontificate, referred to the theological foundation of Jewish-Christian dialogue when, on the basis of [Nostra Aetate](#), he stated: “This foundation is theological, and not simply an expression of our desire for reciprocal respect and esteem. Therefore, it is important that our dialogue be always profoundly marked by the awareness of our relationship with God.”[52]

29. Of great importance are the three paragraphs dedicated to the relationship with Judaism in the Apostolic Exhortation [Evangelii Gaudium](#)[53], the foundational document for interpreting his pontificate. Among the themes that the Holy Father sought to articulate in defining the Church’s understanding of the relationship between the Catholic Church and Judaism are: welcoming the revealed Word together with the Jewish people, to “help each other to mine the riches of God’s word”[54]; dialogue and friendship as a part of the life of Jesus’ disciples; sorrow over the terrible persecutions suffered by the Jewish people, especially those in which Christians were involved; and the sharing of many ethical convictions together with a common concern for justice and the development of peoples.

30. Under [Pope Francis](#), interreligious dialogue entered a new phase, deeply imbued with the vision of “human fraternity,”[55] understood in the sense of the fraternity found in Saint Francis of Assisi. As the Holy Father stated in his Encyclical [Fratelli Tutti](#), “faith has untold power to inspire and sustain our respect for others, for believers come to know that God loves every man and woman with infinite love.”[56] In continuity with the principle that “unity prevails over conflict,”[57] the Holy Father affirmed: “a culture of dialogue as the path; mutual cooperation as the code of conduct; reciprocal understanding as the method and standard.”[58] Faced with the temptation to fragment the world into closed cultural and religious universes, [Pope Francis](#) urged people to tear down the “walls of

separation”[59] and to make the resolute choice for encounter: “Isolation, no; closeness, yes. Culture clash, no; culture of encounter, yes.”[60]

31. Individuals and peoples can truly bear good fruit only if they are willing to open themselves to others with creativity and generosity. From this perspective, [Pope Francis](#) also recalled that it is impossible to understand oneself fully, or to grasp the reality of one’s own country, Church, or community deeply, without a respectful engagement with those who are different. Otherness thus becomes a source of mutual enrichment, provided that other faiths, spiritual traditions, and cultures are not perceived as threats.

32. Nevertheless, it is important to remember that “‘dialogue’ is not a magic formula.”[61] It does not happen on its own, and those who engage in it must be neither naïve nor blindly idealistic: they are called to be the “heroes of the future.”[62] Rejecting both withdrawal into identity and the logic of aggression, they undertake a middle path, which is demanding yet fruitful: the path of patiently building human fraternity.[63] A fundamental principle must always guide their actions: the awareness that believing in God and worshiping him does not necessarily guarantee a life in accordance with his will.[64] Hence arises the importance of a universal criterion of discernment that can be found in the sacred texts of the various religions: namely, *whether one welcomes or rejects the wounded person lying by the roadside*. Concrete concern for the most vulnerable is the essential measure by which the integrity of every project—whether political, economic, social, academic, religious, or cultural—must be judged. The poor, in all the forms their vulnerability may take, are the compass that allows us to know whether we are moving in the right direction.[65]

Pope Leo XIV

33. In his [first address to the Diplomatic Corps accredited to the Holy See in 2025](#), [Pope Leo XIV](#) recalled the three key words that must accompany every form of dialogue: peace, justice, and truth.[66] Then, later that same year, following in the footsteps of his predecessors, the Holy Father commemorated the sixtieth anniversary of [Nostra Aetate](#), affirming that, through this conciliar document, “a seed of hope for interreligious dialogue was planted.”[67] The Pontiff also recalled that there have been martyrs of dialogue who gave their lives in opposing violence and hatred.[68] Furthermore, he emphasized that “we can lead our people to become prophets of our time — voices that denounce violence and injustice, heal division, and proclaim peace for all our brothers and sisters.”[69] At the [General Audience of 29 October 2025](#), dedicated to [Nostra Aetate](#), the Holy Father reaffirmed: “This luminous Document teaches us to meet the followers of other religions not as outsiders, but as travelling companions on the path of truth; to honor differences, affirming our common humanity; and to discern, in every sincere religious search, a reflection of the one divine Mystery that embraces all creation.”[70]

34. [In his first address to representatives of other Churches and ecclesial communities and of other religions, on 19 May 2025](#), [Pope Leo XIV](#) summarized the core of Jewish-Christian dialogue and also underscored the importance of theological dialogue: “Because of the Jewish roots of Christianity, all Christians have a special relationship with Judaism. The conciliar Declaration [Nostra Aetate](#) (par. 4) emphasizes the greatness of the spiritual heritage shared by Christians and Jews, encouraging mutual knowledge and esteem. The theological dialogue between Christians and Jews remains ever important and close to my heart. Even in these difficult times, marked by conflicts and misunderstandings, it is necessary to continue the momentum of this precious dialogue of ours.”[71] Christians and Jews, unable to do without one another, should continue to walk this path together until the end of time on earth. Together, they should await that day “known to God alone, on which all peoples will address the Lord in a single voice and ‘serve him shoulder to shoulder’ (*Zeph 3:9*).”[72]

35. The theme of dialogue with the various religions, to be promoted and cultivated, is also clearly reaffirmed [in the Joint Declaration](#) with Ecumenical Patriarch Bartholomew I of 29 November 2025: “We reject any use of religion and the name of God to justify violence. We believe that authentic interreligious dialogue, far from being a cause of syncretism and confusion, is essential for the coexistence of peoples of different traditions and cultures. Mindful of the 60th anniversary of the Declaration [Nostra Aetate](#), we exhort all men and women of good will to work together to build a more just and supportive world, and to care for creation, which is entrusted to us by God. Only in this way can the human family overcome indifference, desire for domination, greed for profit, and xenophobia.”[73] Seen in this light, the dialogue that unfolds in the wake of [Nostra Aetate](#) is not merely a theoretical exercise but a shared ethical and spiritual commitment, directed toward peace, justice, and the care of our common home.

36. Especially in the current international context, scarred by so many wars that cause numerous deaths and situations of immense and unjust suffering each day, [Pope Leo XIV](#) has sought to reaffirm the decisive role of interreligious dialogue in rejecting the logic of violence: “Those who use the name of God to legitimize terrorism, violence or war betray his true nature, for to fight in the name of religion means attacking religion itself. The ‘spirit

of Assisi,’ evoked by Saint John Paul II and carried forward by [Pope Francis](#)—for example, through his dialogue with the Grand Imam of Al-Azhar—shows that believers can draw upon the most authentic sources of their particular spiritual traditions, where there is no room for ‘sanctified hatred.’”[74]

III. The Fruits and Challenges of the Declaration *Nostra Aetate* today

Visible and Silent Fruits

37. Sixty years after its promulgation, the fruits that [Nostra Aetate](#) has borne for relations with Judaism and for dialogue with Islam and other religions are evident. With regard to the latter, to provide a few examples, during this period the Catholic Church has engaged in dialogue and collaboration—in various fields and at different levels—with followers of Hinduism, Buddhism, Jainism, Sikhism, Shintoism, Taoism, Confucianism, and Zoroastrianism, as well as with traditional religions, particularly those of Africa.

38. One of the most significant effects of [Nostra Aetate](#) has undoubtedly been a shift in perspective that has had important consequences. Enduring friendships have been forged among religious leaders; joint educational and social projects have been launched; and joint statements have been issued in response to humanitarian tragedies, wars, or environmental crises.[75] Where rejection, mistrust, or ignorance once prevailed, these concrete gestures have helped build a culture of dialogue and a “culture of encounter.”[76] The journal *Pro Dialogo*, published by the Dicastery for Interreligious Dialogue, regularly highlights these numerous initiatives, gathering and disseminating the many fruits of such encounters around the world. Likewise, the Dicastery for Interreligious Dialogue sends messages of goodwill to friends from other religious traditions on the occasion of their major festivals, to reinvigorate and strengthen bonds of mutual esteem and cooperation. The Commission for Religious Relations with Judaism likewise does the same.

39. As a result of theological reflection and the pastoral development of interreligious dialogue, in keeping with the original vision of [Pope Saint Paul VI](#), dialogue[77] is now carried out in various spheres, as outlined in [Dialogue and Proclamation](#) (1991): the dialogue of life, which encompasses the daily realities of multireligious living, whether in villages or in cities, large and small; the dialogue of action, expressed in common initiatives that followers of different religions can undertake together; theological dialogue, conducted by experts and consisting of an exchange of religious knowledge on a primarily doctrinal level; and finally, the dialogue of religious experience, pursued primarily by monks and nuns involved in Monastic Interreligious Dialogue.[78]

40. Among the fruits of the dialogue initiated by [Nostra Aetate](#) are the Women’s Network for Interreligious Dialogue, promoted by the Dicastery for Interreligious Dialogue to broaden women’s participation, and the decades-long collaboration between the Dicastery and the Commission on Interreligious Dialogue of the World Council of Churches, which has led to important documents such as [Christian Witness in a Multireligious World: Recommendations for Conduct](#) (2011).

41. These fruits are often lived out quietly and discreetly, rooted in everyday life. Priests, religious, and the lay faithful today live in multireligious neighborhoods where the simple fact of living in peace and being present for one another, as neighbors, is already a form of witness. Interreligious couples, youth groups, and local communities are continually finding new ways of living together. All these results, sometimes still embryonic, invisible yet fruitful, embody the intuition of [Nostra Aetate](#): to live in the world as witnesses to the love of God, in dialogue with all.

42. In line with the intuition of [Nostra Aetate](#) and the teachings of the recent Magisterium, it is hoped that, with renewed discernment, conversations and forms of cooperation will also be promoted with members of “new religious movements” and representatives of new religious experiences. Such fraternal encounters—which cannot be understood as ecumenical dialogue or as interreligious dialogue, properly speaking—can offer concrete opportunities to work together to promote shared values and pursue the common good when grounded in clarity about one’s own identity and in mutual respect. They can also contribute to a more attentive understanding of contemporary spiritual aspirations, expanding the opportunities for witness, mutual understanding, and cooperation in the service of human dignity, social peace, and the care of creation.

43. Finally, it is worth noting the growing critical awareness of manifestations of Islamophobia, which fail to distinguish adequately between, on the one hand, cases of fundamentalism and violence and, on the other hand, the peaceful lives of other Muslim believers who integrate into and contribute to the countries that welcome them. We should thank the Christian communities that have grown in a spirit of welcome, as well as in greater knowledge and esteem for Muslim believers who, as [Nostra Aetate](#) reminds us, “adore the one God, living and subsisting in himself;

merciful and all-powerful, the Creator of heaven and earth, who has spoken to men; they take pains to submit wholeheartedly to even His inscrutable decrees, just as Abraham, with whom the faith of Islam takes pleasure in linking itself, submitted to God. [...] Finally, they value the moral life and worship God especially through prayer, almsgiving, and fasting.”[79]

Persistent Resistance and Misunderstandings

44. Despite this progress, the difficulties surrounding dialogue remain. Some circles continue to question its appropriateness, fearing doctrinal relativism or a dilution of religious identity. Even after [Dialogue and Proclamation](#) (1991), misunderstandings persist regarding the very nature of dialogue. Some still ask whether it is a pastoral issue, an act of charity, a theological exchange, or a need for political commitment to the common good.

45. Outside the boundaries of the Church, misunderstandings are no less significant. In some regions, relations between believers of different religions have historically been marked by conflict, and the memory of past wounds makes mutual trust difficult, despite the exhortation of the Declaration [Nostra Aetate](#) “to forget the past and to work sincerely for mutual understanding,”[80] particularly between Christians and Muslims. In this regard, one may recall the words of [Pope Francis](#): “In order to sustain dialogue with Islam, suitable training is essential for all involved, not only so that they can be solidly and joyfully grounded in their own identity, but so that they can also acknowledge the values of others, appreciate the concerns underlying their demands and shed light on shared beliefs. We Christians should embrace with affection and respect Muslim immigrants to our countries in the same way that we hope and ask to be received and respected in countries of Islamic tradition. I ask, and I humbly entreat those countries to grant Christians freedom to worship and to practice their faith, in light of the freedom which followers of Islam enjoy in Western countries!”[81] Elsewhere, the increase of fundamentalism, the persistence of prejudice, the political manipulation of religious affiliations, and violence committed in the name of God undermine the very foundations of dialogue. In secularized societies, religious discourse is sometimes marginalized or exploited, reduced to folklore or subjective opinion, or obscured entirely.

46. The journey remains demanding; it requires humility, courage, and discernment. For Christians, this requirement comes as no surprise because the true believer is not driven by arrogance, but rather, “truth leads to humility, since believers know that, rather than ourselves possessing truth, it is truth that embraces and possesses us. Far from making us inflexible, the security of faith sets us on a journey; it enables witness and dialogue with all.”[82] This dialogue often requires “inexhaustible patience”[83] and cannot be reduced to a simple generic consensus. Rooted in the Church’s evangelizing mission—of which it is an essential dimension—it presupposes a sincere commitment, a deep understanding of the other, and recognition of the freedom of conscience as the foundation of every authentic relationship.[84] It is not, therefore, a matter of renouncing the truth but of proclaiming it in a manner befitting the Gospel: with esteem, listening, and charity. It is a genuine sharing of what dwells in one’s heart: “To be able to speak of Christ, by witness or by word, in such a way that others seek to love him, is the greatest desire of every missionary of souls. This dynamism of love has nothing to do with proselytism; the words of a lover do not disturb others, they do not make demands or oblige, they only lead others to marvel at such love. With immense respect for their freedom and dignity, the lover simply waits for them to inquire about the love that has filled his or her life.”[85]

47. Last but not least, it is necessary to highlight the persecution suffered by Christians in various parts of the world at the hands of extremist religious groups. Every persecution on religious grounds is always a violation of human dignity, and there is an urgent need to find a common response which, in the spirit of [Nostra Aetate](#), promotes respect, dialogue, and peaceful coexistence among all and toward all.

A Pedagogy of Dialogue to be developed further

48. Faced with contemporary challenges, the Church is called to renew and deepen its pedagogy of dialogue. This presupposes, first of all, thorough formation in seminaries, theological institutes, and pastoral programs. It is no longer sufficient to proclaim the importance of dialogue; it must now be lived, providing the faithful with the tools to participate in it in an informed, critical, and serene manner. Knowledge of religions, the history of interreligious relations, the development of guidelines for dialogue, and the promotion of religious literacy are all factors that foster and sustain interreligious encounter and dialogue. Likewise, it is necessary to integrate an understanding of contemporary cultural and geopolitical issues into Christian formation.

49. At the same time, greater appreciation must be given to the concrete initiatives undertaken by the local Churches, which are on the front lines. It is they who, at the local level, develop the most creative and courageous forms of

encounter: dialogue commissions, joint projects, educational or humanitarian initiatives, and shared celebrations. By gathering, sharing, and networking these experiences, the universal Church can enrich her life while also identifying and guiding new pastoral paths.

50. Particular attention should also be given to the spiritual dimension of dialogue. The goal is not simply an intellectual exercise but an authentic encounter—an encounter with a believing other, in a spirit of peace, friendship, and a shared search for truth and goodness.^[86] Sincere dialogue excludes every form of exploitation. Its aim is mutual understanding and the discovery of what is right and authentic for all. To engage in dialogue in the spirit of *Nostra Aetate*, therefore, presupposes a contemplative gaze directed toward the “other who is different.” “Approaching, speaking, listening, looking at, coming to know and understand one another, and to find common ground: all these things are summed up in the one word ‘dialogue.’”^[87]

51. In this sense, interreligious dialogue can become an opportunity for greater fidelity to the universal love of God, manifested in Jesus Christ. It transforms individuals, communities, and at times even ecclesial structures. Far from being a marginal issue, it is a theological locus where the Holy Spirit wishes to be heard through the encounter with the other.^[88]

IV. Perspectives and Directions for the Future of Interreligious Dialogue

52. The future of interreligious dialogue calls for a renewed reflection and particularly clear commitments. While the decades following the *Second Vatican Council* made it possible to establish more peaceful relations among the various religious traditions, the geopolitical, cultural, and ecological changes of recent years pose unprecedented challenges. Tensions over identity, the closing off of communities, fundamentalist ideologies, conflicts with a religious dimension, the political manipulation of religion, and the growing indifference in many countries toward all forms of spirituality compel us to renew the ways in which dialogue is pursued in a rapidly changing world.

53. It is not a matter of founding one great world religion in which all beliefs are flattened. Such a possibility must be excluded out of respect for oneself and for others. Rather, it is a matter of building a fraternal society capable of accepting differences. This intention remains at the heart of interreligious dialogue, just as it was in the Declaration *Nostra Aetate* and in the efforts that have characterized the decades following its promulgation. Dialogue does not consist merely in presenting one’s own doctrines or comparing worldviews. Today, in the face of those who foment divisions and stir up conflicts, believers of different traditions—and above all their leaders—while remaining aware of their irreducible differences, are called to seek, with clarity and hope, the conditions necessary for peaceful coexistence.

54. To achieve this goal, a genuine shift in mindset is necessary: abandoning the logic of defensiveness, hostility, or conquest in order to adopt an attitude that is open, benevolent, and courageous. Monolithic and isolated models, which encourage a closed view of reality, are proving increasingly inadequate and, ultimately, become sources of violence and suffering for the most vulnerable. The defensive entrenchment in one’s own position and the view that proselytism is the only way to engage with the other no longer make sense in a world that increasingly resembles an interconnected and constantly evolving global village. *Pope Francis* recalled this *in 2019 at Chulalongkorn University in Bangkok*, before Buddhist, Muslim, Hindu, Sikh, and Christian religious leaders: “Long gone are the days when an insular mode of thought could determine an approach to time and space and appear to offer a valid way of resolving conflicts. Now is the time to be bold and envision the logic of encounter and mutual dialogue as the path, common cooperation as the code of conduct, and reciprocal knowledge as a method and standard. In this way, we can provide a new paradigm for resolving conflicts and help foster greater understanding and the protection of creation. In this regard, religions, like universities, have much to offer, without having to renounce their specific character and special gifts. Everything we do in this regard will be a significant step towards guaranteeing younger generations their right to the future, while serving the cause of justice and peace.”^[89]

55. In stark contrast to those rigid attitudes that seek to resolve conflicts by force, it is time to promote a new ethic of dialogue: a culture of complexity, flexibility, and friendship. It is no longer a matter of fearing or keeping one’s distance from the ‘other believer’—another civilization, another way of thinking—but of daring the encounter. The one who was once perceived as a threat, an enemy to be feared, respected only from a distance, or even destroyed, can become a dialogue partner, an ally, a friend, even a “pilgrim of truth”^[90] with whom one shares a part of the journey. Civilizations and religions can certainly come into tension, but they can also resonate with one another in a creative dynamic, knowing how to transform diversity into solidarity. Otherness should no longer be experienced as an obstacle, but as a challenge to be embraced. In a world confined within the suffocating limits of immanence, believers belonging to different religions do not wish to give up presenting to the world the truth of transcendence

and God’s love for all people. This is especially important at a time when occasionally “contempt is shown for writings which reflect religious convictions, overlooking the fact that religious classics can prove meaningful in every age; they have an enduring power to open new horizons, to stimulate thought, to expand the mind and the heart.”^[91]

56. A richer and more nuanced model of dialogue is therefore not only desirable for the future, but is already beginning to take shape in the Church and in its relations with other religious traditions. This model, with its many facets, could be compared to a polyhedron: it requires engaging with multiple dimensions simultaneously, showing patience and clarity, as well as imagination and creativity.^[92] It is through this interaction that a shared future is built—one in which peace and friendship are no longer utopian ideals but the mature fruits of the encounter.

V. Conclusion

57. Sixty years after the Declaration *Nostra Aetate*, the Catholic Church looks back upon the journey she has undertaken with deep gratitude. Over the course of six decades, this brief yet bold text has radically transformed the face of interreligious relations. The Church has moved from an attitude that was often reserved or distant to a courageous path of sincere dialogue, respectful encounter, and fraternal cooperation. This legacy has now become a living and indispensable heritage that continues to challenge today’s believers and commits them to continuing this human and spiritual adventure, so vital for our time.

58. In a world that is both profoundly interconnected and also deeply fragmented, the message of *Nostra Aetate* remains highly relevant. Fraternity among believers of different religious traditions is not merely an ideal, but a moral, spiritual, and social imperative. Faced with contemporary challenges—religious extremism, global migration, secularization, and ecological and social crises—religions are called to transform the world and society so that they may become fraternal expressions of God’s will. This commitment necessarily involves a renewed education in dialogue, especially among younger generations, to overcome fears and prejudices and to foster a genuine culture of encounter.

59. As the Church celebrates the sixtieth anniversary of the Declaration *Nostra Aetate*, she reaffirms with conviction her determination to continue on this demanding path, listening to the Holy Spirit, who is always at work in human history and within the diverse cultures and religions of peoples. There, in ways known only to him, the Spirit kindles the flame of wisdom and bestows his manifold gifts. The Church invites everyone to become “builders of bridges, not walls,”^[93] artisans of peace and fraternity, capable of welcoming others in their diversity, recognizing their spiritual riches, and collaborating in building a more just and humane society. As *Pope Leo XIV* expressed: “The witness of our fraternity, which I hope we will be able to show with effective gestures, will certainly contribute to building a more peaceful world, something that all men and women of good will desire in their hearts.”^[94]

60. Today more than ever, it is necessary to move forward resolutely in this direction, sustained by God’s grace and the spiritual treasure of religious traditions. “Sixty years ago, *Nostra Aetate* brought hope to the world after the Second World War. Today we are called upon to rekindle that hope in our world, devastated by war and our degraded natural environment.”^[95] This journey of hope remains open, and all of us are invited to walk it together with courage.

The Supreme Pontiff, Leo XIV, at the Audience granted on 22 June 2026 to the undersigned Prefects and Secretaries of the Dicastery for the Doctrine of the Faith, the Dicastery for Promoting Christian Unity, and the Dicastery for Interreligious Dialogue, approved this Note and ordered its publication.

Given in Rome, at the offices of the Dicastery for the Doctrine of the Faith, the Dicastery for Promoting Christian Unity, and the Dicastery for Interreligious Dialogue, on 16 September 2026, the Liturgical Memorial of Saints Cornelius, Pope, and Cyprian, Bishop, Martyrs.

Víctor Manuel Cardinal Fernández
Prefect

Kurt Cardinal Koch
Prefect

George Jacob Cardinal Koovakad
Prefect

Msgr. Armando Matteo
Secretary

Archbishop Flavio Pace
Secretary

Msgr. Indunil Janakaratne Kodithuwakku Kankanamalage
Secretary

Ex audientia die 22 Iunii 2026
Leo PP. XIV

- [1] Second Vatican Ecumenical Council, Declaration [*Nostra Aetate*](#) (28 October 1965), par. 2: *AAS* 58 (1966), 741.
- [2] Second Vatican Ecumenical Council, Declaration [*Dignitatis Humanae*](#) (7 December 1965), par. 1: *AAS* 58 (1966), 929-930.
- [3] Cf. Francis, Apostolic Exhortation [*Evangelii Gaudium*](#) (24 November 2013), par. 253: *AAS* 105 (2013), 1121.
- [4] Second Vatican Ecumenical Council, Declaration [*Nostra Aetate*](#) (28 October 1965), par. 4: *AAS* 58 (1966), 742.
- [5] Secretariat for Promoting Christian Unity – Commission for Religious Relations with the Jews, [*Notes on the Correct Way to Present Jews and Judaism in Preaching and Catechesis in the Roman Catholic Church*](#) (24 June 1985), III, 1: *EV* 9, 1639.
- [6] K. Barth, *Church Dogmatics, IV/1: The Doctrine of Reconciliation*, ed. G.W. Bromiley and T.F. Torrance, trans. G.W. Bromiley, T&T Clark, Edinburgh 1956, 166.
- [7] J.-L. Tauran, “Cinquant’anni di dialogo interreligioso”: *Pro Dialogo* 151-52 (2016), 71.
- [8] John XXIII, *Address for the Solemn Opening of the Second Vatican Ecumenical Council* (11 October 1962), par. 8.2: *AAS* 54 (1962), 794.
- [9] Cf. John XXIII, Encyclical Letter [*Pacem in Terris*](#) (11 April 1963), par. 83: *AAS* 55 (1963), 299.
- [10] Paul VI, Encyclical Letter [*Ecclesiam Suam*](#) (6 August 1964), par. 65: *AAS* 56 (1964), 639.
- [11] Paul VI, Encyclical Letter [*Ecclesiam Suam*](#) (6 August 1964), par. 93: *AAS* 56 (1964), 649.
- [12] Cf. Paul VI, Encyclical Letter [*Ecclesiam Suam*](#) (6 August 1964), pars. 109-112: *AAS* 56 (1964), 654-657.
- [13] Cf. Paul VI, Encyclical Letter [*Ecclesiam Suam*](#) (6 August 1964), par. 81: *AAS* 56 (1964), 644-45. Thus, the Holy Father affirms, “dialogue is to be regarded as, so to speak, a particular manner of carrying out the apostolic mission, and as, as it were, an instrument for bringing minds together.” The Pontiff also defines the characteristics of dialogue: first clarity, then gentleness. He also states that dialogue should be “not proud, not stinging, not offensive. What gives it its authority is the fact that it affirms the truth [...]. It is peaceful, has no use for extreme methods, is patient under contradiction and inclines towards generosity.” Then there is trust; and finally, pedagogical prudence to take into account the listener’s psychological and moral conditions.
- [14] Paul VI, *Homily on the Occasion of the Promulgation of Five Conciliar Documents of Vatican II* (28 October 1965): *AAS* 57 (1965), 903.
- [15] Second Vatican Ecumenical Council, Declaration [*Nostra Aetate*](#) (28 October 1965), par. 5: *AAS* 58 (1966), 743-744.
- [16] Second Vatican Ecumenical Council, Declaration [*Nostra Aetate*](#) (28 October 1965), par. 4: *AAS* 58 (1966), 743.

- [17] Cf. N. Hofmann, “Nella ‘Giornata dell’ebraismo’: Tradizioni, valori e impegni comuni”: *L’Osservatore Romano*, 17 January 2023, 5.
- [18] Benedict XVI, [*Address to the Members of the Delegation of the “Conference of Presidents of Major American Jewish Organizations”*](#) (12 February 2009): *Insegnamenti*, V/1 (2009), 235. Cf. Id., *Light of the World: The Pope, the Church, and the Signs of the Times; A Conversation with Peter Seewald*, tr. M.J. Miller – A.J. Walker, San Francisco 2010, 123.
- [19] J. Ratzinger, “L’eredità d’Abramo: dono di Natale”: *L’Osservatore Romano*, 29 December 2000, 1.
- [20] Cf. *Catechism of the Catholic Church*, par. 121.
- [21] Cf. Secretariat for Christian Unity, *Jews and Judaism in the Catholic Church* (24 June 1985), I, 7: *EV* 9, 1623.
- [22] Cf. Pontifical Council for Promoting Christian Unity, [*“‘The Gifts and the Calling of God Are Irrevocable’ \(Rom. 11:29\): A Reflection on Theological Questions Pertaining to Catholic-Jewish Relations on the Occasion of the 50th Anniversary of ‘Nostra aetate’ \(no. 4\)”*](#) (10 December 2015), par. 35: *EV* 31, 2055. See also Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith, Declaration *Dominus Iesus* (6 August 2000): *AAS* 92 (2000) 742-765.
- [23] Francis, Apostolic Exhortation [*Evangelii Gaudium*](#) (24 November 2013), par. 249: *AAS* 105 (2013), 1120.
- [24] Second Vatican Ecumenical Council, Declaration [*Nostra Aetate*](#) (28 October 1965), par. 4: *AAS* 58 (1966), 743.
- [25] Cf. Supreme Sacred Congregation of the Holy Office, Decree (25 March 1928), *AAS* 20 (1928), 103-104.
- [26] Benedict XVI, [*General Audience*](#) (28 January 2009): *Insegnamenti*, V/1 (2009), 157.
- [27] Second Vatican Ecumenical Council, Declaration [*Nostra Aetate*](#) (28 October 1965), par. 4: *AAS* 58 (1966), 743.
- [28] Paul VI, Encyclical Letter [*Populorum Progressio*](#) (26 March 1967), par. 14: *AAS* 59 (1967), 264.
- [29] Cf. Paul VI, Encyclical Letter [*Populorum Progressio*](#) (26 March 1967), par. 42: *AAS* 59 (1967), 278.
- [30] The Secretariat for Non-Christians was established by [*Pope Saint Paul VI*](#) on 19 May 1964, through the Apostolic Letter issued “*Motu proprio*” *Progremente Concilio* (cf. *AAS* 56 [1964], 560), with the aim of paying attention “to those who are deprived of the Christian religion, and to whom the Lord’s words seem to refer: ‘And I have other sheep, which are not of this fold: these also I must lead’ (*Jn* 10:16)” (*ibid.*). Its creation was made necessary “in these times when many relationships are developing among people of every race, language and religion” (*ibid.*). In 1988, the Secretariat took the name Pontifical Council for Interreligious Dialogue (cf. John Paul II, Apostolic Constitution [*Pastor Bonus*](#) [28 June 1988], arts. 159-162: *AAS* 80 [1988], 902) and, subsequently, in 2022, the Dicastery for Interreligious Dialogue (cf. Francis, Apostolic Constitution [*Praedicate Evangelium*](#) [19 March 2022], arts. 147-152: *AAS* 114 [2022], 426-427).
- [31] Francis, Apostolic Constitution [*Praedicate Evangelium*](#) (19 March 2022), art. 149 §1: *AAS* 114 (2022), 426.
- [32] Paul VI, *Opening Address at the Third General Assembly of the Synod of Bishops* (27 September 1974): *AAS* 66 (1974), 561.
- [33] The Commission for Religious Relations with the Jews and the Commission for Religious Relations with Muslims were established on the same day, 22 October 1974.
- [34] Cf. P. Rossano, “Le cheminement du dialogue interreligieux de *Nostra Aetate* à nos jours”: *Pro Dialogo* 74 (1991), 131-142; S. Schmidt, “Cardinal Bea and Interreligious Dialogue”: *Pro Dialogo* 74 (1991), 143-149.
- [35] Cf. John Paul II, *General Audience* (22 October 1986), par. 5: *Insegnamenti*, IX/2 (1986), 1147: “After having often been a cause of division, [the religions of the world] would all now like to play a decisive role in building world peace.”

[36] John Paul II, [*Address to Representatives of Christian Churches and Ecclesial Communities and of the World's Religions Gathered in Assisi*](#) (27 October 1986), pars. 6, 8: *Insegnamenti*, IX/2 (1986), 1268, 1269.

[37] John Paul II, *Address to the Jewish Community of Rome* (13 April 1986), par. 4: *Insegnamenti*, IX/1 (1986), 1027.

[38] John Paul II, [*Message for the 21st World Day of Peace*](#) (1 January 1988), par. 4: *AAS* 80 (1988), 284-285.

[39] The document *Dialogue and Mission* is an essential reference for understanding the Church's vision of interreligious dialogue. It affirms that dialogue is an integral dimension of the Church's evangelizing mission, while making clear that it does not replace the explicit proclamation of Christ, but rather accompanies and enriches it. The document distinguishes four complementary forms of dialogue (cf. *ibid.*, par. 42): the *dialogue of life*, consisting in respectful and fraternal coexistence among believers of different religions; the *dialogue of action*, based on concrete collaboration in the service of justice and peace; the *dialogue of theological exchange*, which fosters intellectual and doctrinal exchange among scholars and religious leaders; and finally, the *dialogue of religious experience*, grounded in an authentic encounter among religious traditions with regard to prayer and contemplation. By clarifying these levels, the text thus lays the groundwork for a concrete and diversified commitment by the Church within pluralistic societies.

[40] The document [*Dialogue and Proclamation*](#) further develops the reflection on the relationship between interreligious dialogue and the explicit proclamation of the Gospel. While clearly reaffirming that the proclamation of Christ remains at the heart of the Christian mission, it emphasizes that interreligious dialogue is not only compatible with that proclamation but also constitutes an essential and complementary dimension of it. Dialogue is presented as an authentic spiritual journey and as a privileged means by which Christians bear witness to their faith through respect for and sincere listening to others. The document insists that dialogue and proclamation are never in opposition; rather, they are two complementary ways of carrying out the Church's one mission, rooted in the love of God and in a profound recognition of the dignity and freedom of every person.

[41] John Paul II, Encyclical Letter [*Redemptoris Missio*](#) (7 December 1990), par. 55: *AAS* 83 (1991), 302.

[42] Cf. Second Vatican Ecumenical Council, Declaration [*Nostra Aetate*](#) (28 October 1965), par. 2: *AAS* 58 (1966), 741.

[43] John Paul II, [*Message for the 34th World Day of Peace*](#) (1 January 2001): *AAS* 93 (2001), 234-247.

[44] John Paul II, [*Address to the Religious Representatives at the Conclusion of the Interreligious Assembly*](#) (28 October 1999), par. 3: *Insegnamenti*, XXII/2 (1999), 653. Emphasis in the original.

[45] Second Vatican Ecumenical Council, Declaration [*Nostra Aetate*](#) (28 October 1965), par. 5: *AAS* 58 (1966), 743.

[46] Benedict XVI, [*Letter to Bishop Domenico Sorrentino on the Occasion of the 20th Anniversary of the Interreligious Meeting of Prayer for Peace*](#) (2 September 2006): *AAS* 98 (2006), 750.

[47] Benedict XVI, [*Address on the Occasion of the Meeting with Representatives of Science*](#) (12 September 2006): *Insegnamenti*, II/2 (2006), 259.

[48] Benedict XVI, [*Address to Representatives of Certain Muslim Communities*](#) (20 August 2005): *Insegnamenti*, I (2005), 448. Cf. Id., [*Address to Ambassadors of Muslim-Majority Countries Accredited to the Holy See and to Some Representatives of Muslim Communities in Italy*](#) (25 September 2006): *AAS* 98 (2006), 705.

[49] Francis, [*Address to Participants in the International Peace Conference*](#) (28 April 2017): *AAS* 109 (2017), 495.

[50] Cf. Pontifical Council for Interreligious Dialogue, [*Dialogue in Truth and Charity: Pastoral Guidelines for Interreligious Dialogue*](#) (19 May 2014): *EV* 30, 843-928.

[51] Francis, Apostolic Exhortation [*Evangelii Gaudium*](#) (24 November 2013), par. 250: *AAS* 105 (2013), 1120.

- [52] Francis, [*Address to Members of the American Jewish Committee*](#) (13 February 2014): *Insegnamenti*, II/1 (2014), 166.
- [53] Cf. Francis, Apostolic Exhortation [*Evangelii Gaudium*](#) (24 November 2013), par. 247-249: *AAS* 105 (2013), 1119-1120.
- [54] Francis, Apostolic Exhortation [*Evangelii Gaudium*](#) (24 November 2013), par. 249: *AAS* 105 (2013), 1120.
- [55] Cf. [*Document on Human Fraternity for World Peace and Living Together: Signed by Pope Francis and Ahmad Al-Tayyeb*](#) (4 February 2019): *AAS* 111 (2019), 349-356.
- [56] Francis, Encyclical Letter [*Fratelli Tutti*](#) (3 October 2020), par. 85: *AAS* 112 (2020), 998.
- [57] Francis, Encyclical Letter [*Lumen Fidei*](#) (29 June 2013), par. 55: *AAS* 105 (2013), 592. Cf. Id., Apostolic Exhortation [*Evangelii Gaudium*](#) (24 November 2013), pars. 226-230: *AAS* 105 (2013), 1112-1113.
- [58] Francis, Encyclical Letter [*Fratelli Tutti*](#) (3 October 2020), par. 285: *AAS* 112 (2020), 1073, which cites the [*Document Signed by Pope Francis and Ahmad Al-Tayyeb on Human Fraternity for World Peace and Living Together in Harmony*](#) (4 February 2019): *AAS* 111 (2019), 350.
- [59] Francis, [*Address on the Occasion of the Conference "Theology After Veritatis Gaudium in the Context of the Mediterranean"*](#) (21 June 2019): *AAS* 111 (2019), 1098.
- [60] Francis, Encyclical Letter [*Fratelli Tutti*](#) (3 October 2020), par. 30: *AAS* 112 (2020), 980.
- [61] Francis, [*Address on the Occasion of the Conference "Theology After Veritatis Gaudium in the Context of the Mediterranean"*](#) (21 June 2019): *AAS* 111 (2019), 1101.
- [62] Francis, Encyclical Letter [*Fratelli Tutti*](#) (3 October 2020), par. 202: *AAS* 112 (2020), 1041.
- [63] Cf. Francis, Encyclical Letter [*Fratelli Tutti*](#) (3 October 2020), par. 199: *AAS* 112 (2020), 1040.
- [64] Cf. Francis, Encyclical Letter [*Fratelli Tutti*](#) (3 October 2020), par. 74: *AAS* 112 (2020), 995.
- [65] Cf. Francis, Encyclical Letter [*Fratelli Tutti*](#) (3 October 2020), par. 69: *AAS* 112 (2020), 993.
- [66] Cf. Leo XIV, [*Address to the Diplomatic Corps Accredited to the Holy See*](#) (16 May 2025): *L'Osservatore Romano*, 16 May 2025, 1-3.
- [67] Leo XIV, [*Address Celebrating the 60th Anniversary of Nostra Aetate: "Walking Together in Hope"*](#) (28 October 2025): *L'Osservatore Romano*, 29 October 2025, 4.
- [68] Cf. Leo XIV, [*Address Celebrating the 60th Anniversary of Nostra Aetate: "Walking Together in Hope"*](#) (28 October 2025): *L'Osservatore Romano*, 29 October 2025, 4-5.
- [69] Leo XIV, [*Address Celebrating the 60th Anniversary of Nostra Aetate: "Walking Together in Hope"*](#) (28 October 2025): *L'Osservatore Romano*, 29 October 2025, 5.
- [70] Leo XIV, [*General Audience*](#) (29 October 2025): *L'Osservatore Romano*, 29 October 2025, 2.
- [71] Leo XIV, [*Address to Representatives of Other Churches and Ecclesial Communities and of Other Religions*](#) (19 May 2025): *L'Osservatore Romano*, 19 May 2025, 6.
- [72] Second Vatican Ecumenical Council, Declaration [*Nostra Aetate*](#) (28 October 1965), par. 4: *AAS* 58 (1966), 743.
- [73] [*The Joint Declaration Signed by Pope Leo XIV and the Ecumenical Patriarch*](#) (Istanbul, 29 November 2025): *L'Osservatore Romano*, 29 November 2025, 3.

[74] Leo XIV, Encyclical Letter [*Magnifica Humanitas*](#) (15 May 2026), par. 223, which cites Francis, [*Appeal for Peace at Assisi for the World Day of Prayer for Peace, “Thirst for Peace: Faiths and Cultures in Dialogue”*](#) (20 September 2016): *AAS* 108 (2016), 1124.

[75] Cf. [*Document Signed by Pope Francis and Ahmad Al-Tayyeb on Human Fraternity for World Peace and Shared Coexistence*](#) (Abu Dhabi, 4 February 2019); [*Final Declaration of the Seventh Congress of Leaders of World and Traditional Religions*](#) (Nur-Sultan, 15 September 2022); [*Joint Declaration of Istiqlal signed by Pope Francis and Grand Imam Nasaruddin Umar*](#) (Jakarta, 5 September 2024). All these texts bear witness to the ongoing commitment to mutual understanding, concrete collaboration, and peaceful coexistence among people of different religious traditions.

[76] Francis, [*Address at the Closing Session of the “Rencontres Méditerranéennes”*](#) (23 September 2023): *AAS* 115 (2023), 1146.

[77] In the context of religious pluralism, dialogue means “‘all positive and constructive interreligious relations with individuals and communities of other faiths which are directed at mutual understanding and enrichment,’ in obedience to truth and respect for freedom. It includes both witness and the exploration of respective religious convictions” (Pontifical Council for Interreligious Dialogue - Congregation for the Evangelization of Peoples, Instruction [*Dialogue and Proclamation*](#) [19 May 1991], par. 9: *AAS* 84 [1992], 417-418; which cites the Secretary for Non-Christians, “The Attitude of the Church Towards the Followers of Other Religions: Reflections and Orientations on Dialogue and Mission,” *Bulletin of the Secretariat for Non-Christians* 56 [1984/2], par. 13).

[78] Cf. Pontifical Council for Interreligious Dialogue - Congregation for the Evangelization of Peoples, [*Instruction Dialogue and Proclamation*](#) (19 May 1991), par. 42: *AAS* 84 (1992), 428.

[79] Second Vatican Ecumenical Council, Declaration [*Nostra Aetate*](#) (28 October 1965), par. 3: *AAS* 58 (1966), 741.

[80] Second Vatican Ecumenical Council, Declaration [*Nostra Aetate*](#) (28 October 1965), par. 3: *AAS* 58 (1966), 742.

[81] Francis, Apostolic Exhortation [*Evangelii Gaudium*](#) (24 November 2013), par. 253: *AAS* 105 (2013), 1121.

[82] Francis, Encyclical Letter [*Lumen Fidei*](#) (29 June 2013), par. 34: *AAS* 105 (2013), 577.

[83] G.C. Anawati, O.P., “Excursus on Islam,” tr. S. Young – E. Young, in H. Vorgrimler, ed., *Commentary on the Documents of Vatican II*, vol. III, New York – London 1969, 154.

[84] Cf. Pontifical Council for Interreligious Dialogue – Congregation for the Evangelization of Peoples, [*Instruction Dialogue and Proclamation*](#) (19 May 1991), par. 77: *AAS* 84 (1992), 441-442.

[85] Francis, Encyclical Letter [*Dilexit Nos*](#) (24 October 2024), par. 210: *AAS* 116 (2024), 1435-1436.

[86] Cf. Francis, Encyclical Letter [*Fratelli Tutti*](#) (3 October 2020), par. 271: *AAS* 112 (2020), 1066.

[87] Francis, Encyclical Letter [*Fratelli Tutti*](#) (3 October 2020), par. 198: *AAS* 112 (2020), 1039.

[88] Cf. Pontifical Council for Interreligious Dialogue – Congregation for the Evangelization of Peoples, [*Instruction Dialogue and Proclamation*](#) (19 May 1991), par. 38: *AAS* 84 (1992), 427.

[89] Francis, [*Address at the Meeting with the Leaders of the Christian Denominations and Other Religions at Chulalongkorn University*](#) (22 November 2019): *AAS* 111 (2019), 1957.

[90] Cf. Benedict XVI, [*Address at the Day of Reflection, Dialogue, and Prayer for Peace and Justice in the World: “Pilgrims of Truth, Pilgrims of Peace”*](#) (27 October 2011): *Insegnamenti*, VII/2 (2011), 514.

[91] Francis, Apostolic Exhortation [*Evangelii Gaudium*](#) (24 November 2013), par. 256: *AAS* 105 (2013), 1123.

[92] Cf. Francis, Apostolic Exhortation [*Evangelii Gaudium*](#) (24 November 2013), par. 236: *AAS* 105 (2013), 1115.

[93] Francis, [*Message Urbi et Orbi*](#) (21 April 2019): *AAS* 111 (2019), 731.

[94] Leo XIV, [*Address to Representatives of Other Churches and Ecclesial Communities and of Other Religions*](#) (19 May 2025): *L'Osservatore Romano*, 19 May 2025, 6.

[95] Leo XIV, [*General Audience*](#) (29 October 2025): *L'Osservatore Romano*, 29 October 2025, 3.
