

POPE WANTS AN EXCHANGE OF IDEAS

ROME (WNS) -- Christians and Jews must continue to exchange ideas "in depth and on the basis of their own identities." This message was conveyed by Pope John Paul II in an address to 40 Church and laymen from 15 countries, including Israel, who participated in the three and a half day meeting designed to advance the ongoing Christian-Jewish dialogue and assess the progress made since it was initiated at the Second Ecumenical Council in 1965. The convocation was held at the Vatican.

The Pope's remarks affirmed the abandonment of any and all attempts to convert the Jews the Church's "special relationship" with Jews exempts them from being subjected to the Gospel commandment to "evangelize" the world, the Pontiff noted. While this is firmly based on declarations made in the past, from the "Nostra Aetate" (In Our Time) promulgated at Vatican II to the "Catholic Guidelines" in 1978, this convocation marked the first time the Pope personally addressed the delicate issue at an international gathering. He spoke not only to Roman Catholics but to representatives of the Orthodox churches, the Anglican Communion, the World Lutheran Federation and the World Council of Churches who attended the meeting.

For three days, the delegates discussed such subjects as "how the Bible helps us to understand contemporary and ancient Judaism," the inalienable ties in Judaism between the land of Israel and the Jewish people, the problems posed by theological differences, and the image of Jews in Judaism in Catholic and other

Christian teaching. In particular, one study group was headed by Rev. Marcel Dubois, a French Dominican priest who is chairman of the philosophy department at the Hebrew University in Jerusalem and long-time Resident of the St. Isaiah House of the Dominican Order there. Dubois, who has taken Israeli citizenship, observed that a theological dialogue between Catholics and Jews can be furthered only if three points are accepted.

One is that both faiths must, according to their respective religious views, "disagree" on Jesus. The agreement to disagree or the mutual acceptance of the other's difference in this respect, is essential to dialogue, he said. The second principle is that "both Christians and

Jews must accept the Jewishness of Jesus"; and the third is that since Jews and Christians are the only two religions to have this enormous conflict as a basic aspect of their respective beliefs, "the idea of Jesus unites

us at the moment it divides us." Meanwhile, the Pope's address, delivered in a tone of great warmth, highlighted "the ties between the Church and the Jewish people...based on the design of the God of the

alliance." He emphasized that mutual esteem and mutual maintenance of the separate identities of Judaism and Christianity were essential aspects of the Divine Mystery. The Pope also referred to the "terrible per-

secutions" inflicted on Jews by Christians in different periods of history which have "finally opened our eyes and transformed our hearts."

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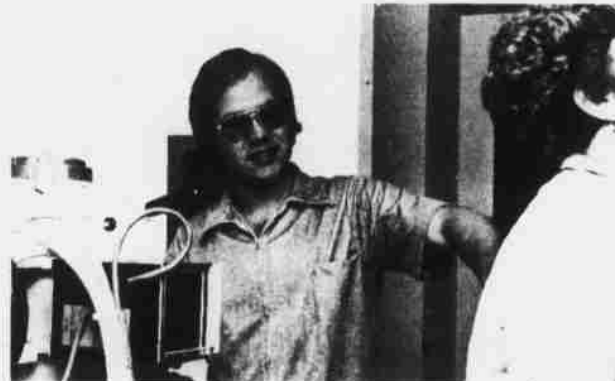


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