

# 'Sign of Great Hope'

## Positive steps in Jewish-Catholic relations

By LAWRENCE H. SCHIFFMAN

The year 2015 came to a close with three important steps in Jewish-Christian relations, two relating specifically to the Jewish people and the Catholic

### ANALYSIS

Church. Historically, it has been the Catholic Church that has led the way in the post-Holocaust period in seeking to eradicate anti-Semitism and to make amends for 2,000 years of religious persecution that the Jews suffered at the hands of Catholics and other Christians. Their efforts in this direction have been both sincere and unremitting so that today relations between the Jewish people and the Vatican are both friendly and regular.

Three major forms of official relationship characterize Jewish Vatican friendship:

Soon after the Second Vatican Council issued the statement entitled "Nostra Aetate" ("In Our Time") in 1965, calling for a reconciliation with the Jewish people, the Jewish community formed a consortium called IJCIC (the International Jewish Committee for Interreligious Consultations) that, among other things, maintains a regular dialogue and ongoing relationship with the Vatican. (I have the privilege of being a past chair of the IJCIC and representing the Orthodox Union).

Later, when the Vatican entered into diplomatic relations with the State of Israel in 1993, Israel posted an ambassador to the Holy See who is charged with overseeing political relations between Israel and the Vatican. Finally, the Chief Rabbinate of Israel maintains its own ongoing dialogue with the Vatican. In practice, these three groups work closely together in order to carry virtually the same message on important issues. Further, numerous Jewish groups also visit the Vatican or work locally with Catholic leaders so that there is constant interchange of views and ideas.

IJCIC, in keeping with its international standing and its consortial relationship to the main American

and international Jewish organizations, does not sponsor many activities in the U.S. and generally seems to be under the radar of the American press. However, with its desire to properly celebrate the 50th anniversary of the Nostra Aetate declaration and to make clear the inestimable contribution that this declaration made to Jewish-Catholic relations and the fight against anti-Semitism, it sponsored an event on Dec. 15 together with the Permanent Observer Mission of the Holy See to the UN, held at UN headquarters. The point of this event was not only to commemorate the accomplishments of this statement and the changed relationship of Catholics and Jews, but to make clear to all that this accomplishment should set an example for the successful improvement of relations between groups after long periods of strife. Further, the organizers wanted very much to make the point that in the world in which we now live, religious communities are obligated to serve as centers for cooperation and friendship and not as sources of evil and destruction.

The program was an amazing success. An audience of hundreds heard from a series of speakers who went way beyond heralding the successes of the past. The program was introduced by Archbishop Bernardito Auza, Permanent Observer of the Holy See to the UN, who emphasized the theme of Jewish-Catholic rapprochement as an example not only for religious harmony but for peacemaking. Martin Budd, chairman of the IJCIC, echoed these sentiments, highlighting the amazing contrast between the past and the present in Vatican-Jewish relations.

Then the group heard a videotaped message from former British Chief Rabbi Lord Jonathan Sacks, who spoke of Nostra Aetate as "one of the most remarkable moments of the religious history of the West." He provided a history of the document and of the changes in Jewish-Catholic relations that have ensued. Rabbi Sacks also addressed the atrocities committed against Christians in the Middle East at the



The crowd at the United Nations Economic and Social Council Hall at the Dec. 15 IJCIC event.

hands of Islamic extremists, an issue that has been discussed over some years between Jewish and Christian organizations. He called on all of us to work together for the sake of the sanctity of human life and for peace.

An inspiring address was delivered by French Jewish philosopher and author Bernard Henri Levy. While highlighting the importance

of Nostra Aetate and its contributions, he strongly addressed the problem of jihadism, stating that its main victims are in fact Muslims. He saw Nostra Aetate as setting an example for how peace could be brought to the warring religious factions of today's world.

Bishop William Murphy of Rockville Centre, N.Y., told of his

days as a seminarian in Rome when the declaration was being prepared. Pope John XXIII was committed to passing such a document in the aftermath of the Holocaust. Bishop Murphy forthrightly acknowledged the difficulties faced by the proponents of the document whose success we were now celebrating. He termed

*continued on page 16*

**The challenge for us both, Jews and Christians, is to be able to assert our distinctive beliefs and disagreements in an atmosphere of friendship and cooperation.**

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# Hope

continued from page 5

it a “paradigm shift.” Since then Bishop Murphy has been continuously involved in Jewish-Christian relations and he exemplifies the kind of naturally friendly interpersonal and intergroup relations between the Jewish and Catholic communities that are increasingly spreading throughout the world.

The practical aspects were spoken about by Brian Corbin, executive vice president of Catholic Charities USA, who told of the close relationships — not only in this country but also abroad — of Jewish and Catholic charities. Some of us had seen this firsthand during a meeting in 2004 held in Buenos Aires during the economic crisis in that country. (Pope Francis was then Archbishop and welcomed us.) Corbin’s firsthand description of this ongoing relationship was especially significant since unbeknownst to the general public Jewish and Catholic organizations often step into situations, in this country or abroad, to help members of either or both communities.

The final speaker, Rabbi Jonathan Stanton of Short Hills, N.J., brought the perspective of younger Jews who had grown up in a world so different from the stories that he had heard from his grandparents. In his words one could truly hear the accomplishments of these past 50 years that we had come together to commemorate. His participation in the program was symbolic of the passing of the torch to a new generation, the purpose of an ongoing program sponsored by IJCIC and the Vatican to bring together emerging leaders of both religious communities for an international conference every two years.

Readers need to know that this program was not some fluff rolled out to convince us that just saying something was enough. Jewish and Catholic organizations and leaders throughout the world have been working together in an unending process of changing our relationship. Neither side thinks that the job has been finished. All of us are aware of pockets of resistance or of apathy. We meet regularly and work continuously to make the dream of this document a reality. The job is not finished but we continue to work together on it.

While this event was being planned, a new document was being prepared by Cardinal Kurt Koch, a Swiss churchman who serves as president of the Vatican’s Commission for Religious Relations with the Jews; Bishop Brian Farrell, the Commission’s vice president; and



Schiffman (front, second from right) at IJCIC’s event. To his right is Rabbi Joseph Karasik, an IJCIC representative for the OU. Behind him is Menachem Genack of the Orthodox Union and to the left of Schiffman is Rabbi Richard Marker, past chair of IJCIC.

Father Norbert Hofmann, secretary of the Commission. These three men have done an enormous amount for Jewish-Catholic relations. Cardinal Koch is a well-trained Catholic theologian and scholar. From Cardinal Koch’s accession to this position in 2010 he has constantly made the point that a document needed to be prepared to explain in Catholic theological terms the Church’s new relationship with the Jewish people. In 1974 the Vatican did issue a document entitled “Guidelines and Suggestions for Implementing the Conciliar Declaration *Nostra Aetate*.” This document, however, did not attempt to explain to Catholics from a theological point of view how to regard the Jewish people and the Church’s new relationship with them. In the meantime, Church documents have dealt with such questions as the Hebrew Scriptures and their Jewish interpretation, the Holocaust and, from a political point of view, relations with Israel.

This new document is entitled “The Gifts and the Calling Are Irrevocable,” a quotation from the New Testament Epistle to the Romans (11:29). The title already makes the point that the status of the Jewish people cannot be negated by the rise of Christianity and asserts that this is indeed the message of the Apostle Paul, who had been interpreted by supersessionists as negating God’s covenant with the Jewish people. The new document was intended to set down in technical theological terms the Church’s attitude toward the Jews and Judaism. We should not underestimate the importance of this effort. Previous documents had skirted the theological side, knowing that the Church had to make amends for anti-Semitism and had to work to abolish it yet not explaining exactly why. The way the Catholic religion works, without a theological explanation the new relationship would not truly have been integrated into Catholic doctrine.

We should emphasize immediately, however, that this is not a docu-

ment with which Jews will agree. After all, it is a document of Catholic faith. It writes in terms that are unfamiliar to us and sometimes in ways with which we disagree. Further, as in the case of our explanations of the *halachic* and conceptual underpinnings of our respect for Christians and other non-Jews, this document resorts to particular hermeneutics (methods of interpretation) that often serve subtly as vehicles and justifications for doctrinal change. It needs to be emphasized that technically this document represents the analysis of the issues it discusses by the Commission and its leadership. It is, as said in its subtitle, “A Reflection on Theological Questions Pertaining

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to Catholic-Jewish Relations on the Occasion of the Fiftieth Anniversary of ‘*Nostra Aetate*’ (No. 4).” (Section 4 of *Nostra Aetate* is the section dealing with Jewish-Catholic relations.)

It is worth briefly summarizing some of the main points of this 16-page single-spaced text. The authors note that they seek to look back with gratitude to the accomplishments and recognize the unique relationship of the Catholic Church and the Jews. This special relationship stems from the dependence of the Church on Hebrew Scriptures as well as its historical origins in the Jewish people from which Jesus sprang. The document hopes to present not only a reflection on the past but also a stimulus for the future. The new relationship, it explains, calls for consideration of issues regarding the relevance of revelation, the relationship between the old and new covenants, between

the universality of salvation through belief in Jesus and affirmation of God’s covenant with Israel as never having been revoked, and the question of how to deal with the Christian mandate to evangelize.

While the press has made much of the document’s statement that the Church will not attempt to evangelize (convert) Jews, this has long been its policy and the Catholic Church makes no effort to recruit Jewish converts. The document further reviews the past history starting with *Nostra Aetate* and emphasizes that dialogue with Judaism cannot be compared to dialogue with any other religions, since Judaism provides the basis for properly understanding Jesus — whom Christians regard as the Messiah of Israel and the son of God. The document notes that while for Jews the word of God is present in the Torah, for Christians it is incarnate in Jesus. The document discusses how Christians see the Old and New Testaments as unified while admitting that Jews and Christians understand them very differently. For Christians, the New Testament is seen as the fulfillment of the promises of the Old, a notion not accepted by Jews. The document recognizes that Jews cannot believe in Jesus Christ as the universal redeemer, yet states that Jews have a part in salvation because God’s

promises to the Jewish people are irrevocable. The document states that from the Catholic point of view, “how that can be possible remains an unfathomable mystery in the salvific plan of God.” This is an extremely important statement since in essence it acknowledges that Jews have an alternative path to salvation while not stating it explicitly.

The obligation to evangelize regarding Jews and Judaism is defined as bearing witness to Catholic faith in Jesus Christ yet refraining from active attempts at conversion or mission towards Jews. The document states fully that the Catholic Church does not envisage any institutional mission toward Jews. The need for Jews and Catholics to understand one another through dialogue is emphasized, as well as the need for both communities to commit themselves together to promote peace and justice, and to

make every effort to oppose anti-Semitism. Both groups should join together to assist the poor, vulnerable and marginalized and to become a blessing for the world.

I think it is fair to say that Jews should join in celebrating this new document. A formal IJCIC statement reads, “We recognize this ‘Reflection’ as a sincere effort. ... The document addresses a range of profound issues that will surely serve to guide and inspire our Catholic partners in dialogue. It is our intent to study the ‘Reflection’ with the close attention it deserves as we continue the fruitful interactions that have marked our deepening relationship.”

Both its intentions and its content are extremely positive. Most of us, however, will be disappointed with the little bit said about the State of Israel. The document seems almost to contradict itself, stating that, “The existence of the State of Israel and its political options should be envisaged not in a perspective which is in itself religious, but in their reference to the common principles of international law.” However, it then sees it as a religious phenomenon, saying that “The permanence of Israel is however to be perceived as an ‘historic fact and a sign to be interpreted within God’s design’ ” (quoting the 1985 Church document, “Notes On the Correct Way to Present Jews and Judaism”). While I am disappointed that the document does not sufficiently recognize the religious significance of Israel to the Jewish people, it should be pointed out that the commission that issued this document is charged with “religious relations” with the Jews, whereas the Secretary of State and Foreign Ministry of the Vatican handle relations with the State of Israel. Nonetheless, Catholic doctrine has still not fully come to terms with the religious significance of land and polity to Judaism throughout its history and certainly to today’s Jewish community for which Israel represents a living sign of God’s ongoing covenant with the Jewish people.

Is this good for the Jews? Certainly, yes! Are the people who authored this document and those who stand behind them really our friends? Certainly, yes! Does that mean that we have no differences with the Catholic Church or that they will never do anything with which we do not agree? Certainly, not! But maybe that’s what friends are for: to agree sometimes and to disagree at others; to argue as friends and to work together despite our differences.

The final development that took place during December was an “Orthodox Rabbinic Statement on

# Nostra Aetate: Accomplishment and the next 50 years

Following is an edited transcript of an address that was given by Bishop William Murphy at the ECOSOC Chamber, UN Headquarters, on Dec. 14.

By WILLIAM MURPHY

It is a privilege and honor to accept the kind invitation of Archbishop Bernardito Auza to speak to all of us gathered here to commemorate the 50th anniversary of Nostra Aetate, fruit of the Second Vatican Council, promulgated by Blessed Pope Paul VI on Oct. 28, 1965. At the time the hope was expressed in the Council that this Declaration would be the basis of a totally new relationship between Catholics and Jews. Recently, speaking about this truly historic declaration by the Pope and all the bishops of the Catholic Church, Pope Francis said, “We are truly grateful to God that a true and appropriate relationship between Christians and Jews has come about in these past 50 years.” Blessed be the name of the Lord!” [1]

Yet, my friends, I can assure you



Bishop Murphy addressing the crowd. To his right is IJCIC representative Rabbi Joshua Stanton and to his left is Martin Budd, chair of the IJCIC.

that no document of the Council elicited more passion, more comment, more misunderstanding and opposition from the beginning to the very end of the Council than did this Declaration that embraces not just Jews but all the great religions of the world. As a seminarian in Rome from 1961 to 1965, one involved in both ecumenical relations and Catholic-Jewish conversa-

tions then and now, I know the history well and it was stormy.

Pope St. John XXIII was eager to have a statement of the Council on Jews. His own experience in Turkey and Bulgaria as a Papal diplomat during the Second World War had given him a keen insight and a warm commitment regarding the plight of the Jews and the horrible realities of the Shoah. On Sept.

Christianity.” The document emerges from the Center for Jewish-Christian Understanding and Cooperation, led by Rabbi Shlomo Riskin. (Full disclosure: I was the advisor to Rabbi Riskin’s Ph.D. dissertation at NYU.) Twenty-five original signatories, plus an additional 25, are drawn from the U.S., Israel, Europe and South America. The document seeks to go further than most Orthodox formulations in that it not only advocates good relations with Christians and recognizes the significance of the efforts of the Catholic Church and others in this regard but attempts to provide a theological justification for our new relationship.

The document states that in accord with Maimonides and Yehuda Halevi, the signers recognize “that Christianity is ... the willed divine outcome and gift to the nations.” It asserts that the division between Judaism and Christianity is meant by God to be “a separation between partners with significant theological differences, not a separation between enemies.” In this regard they quoted a statement by Rabbi Jacob Emden that they take as representing his true opinion, while many scholars think that the statement was designed to say what Christians wanted to hear in order to minimize anti-Semitism. Whatever the case, the document attempts to accent a common covenantal destiny and mission that it understands both sides to have

been hesitant to recognize. The statement emphasizes what Jews and Christians do indeed have in common and calls for a partnership based on an understanding of our common ethical obligations.

To understand the context of this document, one needs to understand something of the reactions of Orthodoxy to the Catholic Church’s steps away from anti-Semitism and toward reconciliation with the Jewish people, and the way in which these have been formative for the

The modern Orthodox community, organized around the Orthodox Union, the Rabbinical Council of America and Yeshiva University, has been much more involved in Jewish-Christian relations. Taking the lead from Rabbi Joseph Soloveitchik (the Rav), their *halachic* authority, modern Orthodox groups have participated in national and international meetings and cooperative endeavors with Christians, to a great extent through IJCIC (in Israel this is done by the chief rabbinate). They have

**It remains to be seen whether relaxing some of the strictures that Rabbi Soloveitchik imposed will actually lead us to close relations or whether they will impede a process that has been proceeding very successfully.**

overall relationship of Orthodox groups to the enterprise of Jewish-Christian relations. The Orthodox community has essentially followed three approaches:

Taking the lead from the views of Rabbi Moshe Feinstein and the Lubavitcher Rebbe, clearly molded in their European upbringing, large segments of the Orthodox and ultra-Orthodox communities have avoided all formal participation in Jewish-Christian encounters, while at the same time cooperating in an ad hoc fashion regarding such things as parochial school funding and abortion, and entertaining visiting groups of Christians while avoiding publicity.

done so while adhering to certain very specific restrictions set down by Rabbi Soloveitchik, chief among them avoidance of discussion of our theological differences. These efforts have been highly successful and Orthodox figures have been among the leaders of IJCIC and related activities.

A third group, represented by quite a number of those who have signed the recent statement, have objected to the limitations imposed by Rabbi Soloveitchik. These rabbis are of the view that the limitation against direct theological dialogue should be set aside in view of the changes that have taken place on the Catholic side and in

18, 1960, he asked Cardinal Bea, president of the Secretariat for Christian Unity, to prepare a draft declaration on the inner relations between the Church and the People of Israel. [2] Cardinal Bea reported back of the interest by many Jews. For reasons he never expressed but which placed the question in the hands of just the right man, the pope decided to ask the cardinal’s office to handle the matter. From that day till the end of the fourth and final session of the Council in 1965, there was much controversy and several drawing of lines, religiously, theologically and political-ly.

I will not give you an extensive history of the discussions except to note that, from the outset, prominent Jewish thinkers such as Jules Isaac and Jewish groups such as B’nai B’rith were active in supporting the idea of a declaration *De Judaes*. Pope John himself had already taken certain actions including revising Good Friday prayers that were demeaning of Jews. Catholic academic institutions also expressed

their support. The famed Pontifical Biblical Institute in Rome weighed in with suggestions written by Fr. S. Lyonnet, SJ and the Institute for Judeo-Christian Studies at Seton Hall University where the well-known Msgr. John Oesterreicher taught also offered their collaboration.

The first proposal had three parts: Dogmatic Principles, Moral and Liturgical Considerations and Concrete Proposals. There were many interventions, discussions and revisions. Work was carried on between the Fall sessions of the Council Fathers and the original text became less and less recognizable as various points of view came to the fore. There were three drafts. The first led the World Jewish Congress to announce they wished to send a representative to the Council to express their views. This elicited a storm of protests from leaders of Arab countries. At that point the draft was withdrawn and some thought it would be the end of the whole project. A second draft placed the statement of the

*continued on page 18*

some other Christian groups. The document just issued seems very much an attempt to provide an Orthodox parallel to a document put forward in 2000 by non-Orthodox rabbis called “Dabru Emet” (“Speak [the] Truth”).

It is easy to sympathize with the view of these scholars that a Jewish theological response is called for as a result of the changes that have been undertaken by our Christian neighbors. However, it was just such a quid pro quo that Rabbi

We should consider ourselves specially blessed by just completing a month filled with steps forward in Jewish-Christian relations. Despite the fact that much of this positive progress results from the horrendous experience of the Holocaust, we should still salute the efforts of all who are involved in bringing Jews and Christians closer together. The challenge for us both, Jews and Christians, is to be able to assert our distinctive beliefs and disagreements in an atmosphere of friendship and cooperation. Good relations are not encouraged by papering over our differences or, even worse, compromising our beliefs with one another. Rather, they are accomplished by becoming sensitive to the commitments and needs of one another, by respecting those beliefs for the ways in which they make us all better people, and by working together in common endeavors to bring peace and reconciliation to the world. The success of Jews and Catholics and other Christians in accomplishing these goals, whether in efforts undertaken in Rome, New York or Israel, should be a sign of great hope for the future. It is up to us to accept the challenge and to continue the process.

*Lawrence H. Schiffman is Judge Abraham Lieberman Professor of Hebrew and Judaic Studies and Director of the Global Network for Advanced Research in Jewish Studies at New York University.*

# Years

continued from page 17

Church's relation to Jews and Judaism as chapter four in the draft decree on Ecumenism.

Finally we come to that Great Debate in the Third Session of the Council in 1964. There were strong defenders, especially German and American, for the Decree on Judaism but many critics raised so many objections that, as Oesterreicher points out, "It was remarkable how the critics saw only the inadequacies of the draft and not its merits ... perhaps a symptom of the way in which many of us have lost all sense of theology." [3] At this point outside forces, especially opposition from both political and religious leaders in Arab countries and commentators in the western world, seemed to be controlling the discussions within the Aula of the Council. The result was a widespread sense of fear and uncertainty about having any text at all, a position that Rabbi Abraham Heschel expressed publicly.

In December of that year, 1964, Blessed Paul VI made his famous pilgrimage to the Holy Land which helped calm the discussion and give new impetus to a wider vision that in turn helped prepare a new declaration that placed the statement on Jews within the broader context of a Declaration on Non-Christian Religions. No longer, as in the third draft, would the Jews be an appen-

dix to the proposed Decree on Ecumenism. Now it would be the center piece placed within a context of the Church's recognition of the value of all religions but with special emphasis on the Jews with whom Christianity always has a deeper, even filial and fraternal, relationship.

Throughout all of this struggle and controversy, the person of the Holy Father, Pope Paul, took on a more and more central role. He did not interfere with the Council deliberations. He did, however speak about the importance of dialogue as the way for the Church (*Ecclesia suam*). He announced a trip to India and began to write about the Church's great respect for other religions. All humankind forms one community with a common origin and a common destiny. The human search for meaning in life, faced with the challenge of suffering and death, underpins all those questions that accompany our journey to God.

These appear in the Final Decree on Non-Christian Religions, *Nostra Aetate*. And they express the broad truths that embrace all of the great religions of the world. Religions are expressions of the search for an absolute that lies deep in the human heart. People look to their religious tradition for an answer to the unsolved riddles of human existence. All religions seek to offer an answer to that search by offering a program of life covering doctrine, moral precepts and sacred rites.

And as NA 5 says, we cannot truly call on God, the Father of all, if we refuse to treat in a fraternal way any man, created as he is in the image of God. Man's relation to God the Father and his relation to men as brothers are so linked together that Scripture says "He who does not love does not know God." No foundation therefore remains for any theory or practice that leads to discrimination between man and man, or people and people, so far as their human dignity and their human rights flowing from it are concerned.

My friend Cardinal Tauran adds, "One cannot love God or one's neighbor without knowing them, and one cannot know them without entering into communion with them." This constitutes a common basis for our dialogues and our relationships.

In terms of the Catholic Church and our relations with Jews, NA puts an end to a tragic history of mutual recrimination and anti-Semitism that has scarred us in the past. It reminds us that we all must continue to be one in condemning all anti-Semitism and in opposing all unjust discrimination based on false ideologies and misuse of the Name of God. NA teaches us Christians about the Christian roots of our faith which are Jewish, nourished as we Christians are by Torah and the Prophets and the Writings. NA teaches us that God's Covenant with His Chosen People is unbroken and remains

with all those who belong to that people who are the fulfillment of God's promise to Abraham. As St. Paul says of the Jews, "They are children of Israel; theirs the adoption, the glory, the covenants, the giving of the law, the worship and the promises; theirs the patriarchs, and from them, according to the flesh is the Christ." We Christians claim the apostles who are of

have grown and matured in our openness and our mutual commitment that is now solid and irrevocable. We invite you join us in thanking the Almighty for the Magnalia Dei represented in this 50-year commemoration of mutual discovery. This has had and will have its moments of pain and struggle. All of us who participated in these know that well. But it is a triumph of human endeavor inspired by the Almighty that has reversed centuries of mutual recriminations, rejections and even hatred.

**'As NA 5 says, we cannot truly call on God, the Father of all, if we refuse to treat in a fraternal way any man, created as he is in the image of God.'**

Permit me to close by looking back to a moment in which I was intimately involved as one of the major organizers: The World Day of Prayer for Peace in Assisi, Oct. 27, 1986. Two days ago, Pope Francis cited that event as having special significance for us all. He pointed to a meeting Pope John Paul had in Casablanca with Muslim youth in 1985 where he called on them and us, believers in God, to support every effort to foster friendship and unity among persons and peoples. As we prepared the path that led to Assisi, we encountered many challenges but it was St. John Paul II who gave us the slogan and the key to its success. He reminded us that we did not gather to pray together as if we had no identities of our own as believers. Instead, he called us then and now *to be together to pray*.

Jewish descent, as the pillars on which the Church stands.

The 50 years that followed that Declaration are the unfolding of the meaning and the profound call the Council has made to us all as we continue in mutual respect and fraternal dialogue to become first neighbors, then friends and now brothers and sisters before the Almighty.

All this has been expressed with great clarity last Thursday when the Commission for Religious Relations of Jews, to which I am a consultant, published a reflection commemorating the 50th anniversary of *Nostra Aetate*. Entitled "The Gifts and the Calling of God are Irrevocable," it is subtitled "A Reflection on Theological Questions Pertaining to Catholic-Jewish Relations on the Occasion of the Fiftieth Anniversary of *Nostra Aetate*." This 12-page reflection offers two very important elements that underscore the remarkable growth in mutual respect, understanding, friendship and, yes, love, that marks our relationships on so many levels. First it offers a brief overview of the documents of the past 50 years from the Catholic Church through which the Church has sought to advance the dialogue and solidify the relationships. Second it gives us a status report on the progress made in theological understanding and in the many fields of mutual collaboration that have so flourished these past 50 years. As one who has lived these years on a local, national and worldwide level, I commend this to you as the best summary I know of in which everyone can grasp just how far we Catholics and Jews have traveled together, just how much we

After that day, the Holy Father shared a thought with us. It was a time of many street protests in Europe funded by the Soviet regime. The pope said to us that we, believers, have offered an alternative to violent protests. May I close with that invitation? We, believers and men and women of good will, come together with all the richness of our faith traditions and spirituality. We must walk together, talk together, deepen our bonds of friendship and mutual respect and fraternal support. But within it all and enriching it all is above all: PRAYER. What men and women of belief offer to the world and to this august body of the United Nations is that prayer is an alternative to violence and hatred. Prayer is what we offer for peace in the world because, as women and men of faith, we believe that ultimately peace is a gift from God.

*William Murphy is the Bishop of Rockville Centre.*

[1] *L'OR* October 14, 2015  
[2] Cf. *Vorgrimler, Commentary on the Documents of Vatican II. Vol. 3. P. 3*  
[3] Cf. *Vorgrimler, p. 67.*

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