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**Friday, May 24**  
Candles 7:56 pm  
Shabbat ends 9:05 pm

**Friday, May 31**  
Candles 8:02 pm  
Shabbat ends 9:11 pm

# Jew Hatred is Everywhere

## Massacre at the Tree of Life Cong. in Pittsburgh

By DEBORAH LIPSTADT

In my neighborhood, there are a number of synagogues and churches. The church doors are open, welcoming all. The synagogues have armed guards, fences,

### COMMENTARY

door codes, and people who will stop strangers as they enter. Ostensibly these are welcomers, but their real job is to check whether these strangers wish to do the people inside harm. Our children look at the church across the street and recognize that, while Jews need protection, the kids there do not.

The attack on a Chabad synagogue in Poway, California, late last month reminded Jews—yet again—that their houses of prayer are not safe spaces. But for the fact that the assailant's gun jammed, the attack could have been far worse than the October attack in Pittsburgh, which claimed 11 lives.

In the wake of the Poway attack, law-enforcement officers, government officials, and the media kept the narrowest technical terms, they may have been correct. But this assailant was no lone



Armed guards stationed outside a New York City synagogue after a white supremacist committed the massacre in Pittsburgh.

stressing that the gunman had acted alone. They may have been trying to reassure the public, and in

Poway all relied on similar language and memes. The Christchurch and Poway shooters both posted manifestos prior to their rampages. They referred their social-media followers to some of the same websites and offered similar justifications for their actions.

These gunmen may not have received direct orders from a leader, but social media have eliminated the necessity for a leader to issue orders, facilitating their radicalization. And though there is no reason to think they've ever met, they are deeply connected, one with the other.

White supremacy—which has at its core anti-Semitism—is nurtured by the extremist rhetoric that has become almost commonplace within the United States. It is growing and flourishing. Had this act of terror been committed by an individual influenced by ISIS or al-Qaeda, it would quickly have been labeled terrorism. Government

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**We assumed that, after the Holocaust, the world recognized where anti-Semitic rhetoric can lead. We were wrong.**

# Jews, Catholics, Parley

*Much accomplished in a convivial atmosphere*

By LAWRENCE H. SCHIFFMAN

For three days, from May 13-16, about 50 Jewish and Catholic clergy, scholars, and lay leaders gathered in Rome for the 24th meeting of the

### FIRST PERSON

International Catholic-Jewish Liaison Committee in an atmosphere of friendship and cooperation. As a result of these meetings and many other positive developments, the Catholic Church has indeed become a friend of the Jewish people and the State of Israel.

The Jewish side in the dialogue is represented by the unique International Jewish Committee for Interreligious Consultations (IJCIC), which represents Jews from all over the world and includes rabbinic and synagogue organizations and defense agencies. It is my privilege to represent the

Orthodox Union on this committee. The group is a paragon of Jewish unity, working together seamlessly to represent the Jewish people to international religious

then chair of this committee. Our opposite number on the Catholic side is the Pontifical Commission for Religious Relations with the Jews. The



Jewish and Catholic representatives mingle before getting down to business.

bodies, including some much less positively disposed to Jews than the Catholic Church.

In past years, I had the privilege of serving first as vice chair and

Jewish delegation was headed by Rabbi Daniel Polish and the Catholics by Cardinal Kurt Koch. The organization of this wonderful event was thanks to Rabbi Noam

Marans and Father Norbert Hofmann.

Since the declaration Nostre Aetate in 1965, which set the Catholic Church on the path of purging anti-Semitism and adopting a positive and respectful attitude towards Jews and Judaism, this commission has worked tirelessly with a variety of Jewish groups and recently with the Chief Rabbinate of Israel. The result has been a complete revamping of the relationship of the Catholic Church to Judaism, the Jewish people, and the State of Israel.

Important examples of this policy are the recognition of Israel in 1993, and the decision to open the secret archives of the Vatican pertaining to World War II and the Holocaust, as of March 2020. This last action could have been foretold by those who read *On Heaven and Earth*, co-authored by Pope Francis – then Cardinal Jorge

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**The Liaison Committee's fruitful meeting is further evidence of the improved relationship between the Jewish community and the Church.**

# Parley

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Mario Bergoglio – and his good friend Rabbi Abraham Skorka, when they were neighbors in Argentina. There the future pope indicated his belief that the archives should be open for scholarly inquiry. The IJCIC had been lobbying for this action for years.

The program ranged over four days (Yes, I did meet the Pope, but more on that later). The festive opening was attended by Prime Minister Giuseppe Conte of Italy, the Israeli ambassadors to Italy and the Holy See, as well as dignitaries from the Roman and Italian Jewish communities and the Catholic Church. Between the speeches there was a beautiful performance of Jewish music. But we really got to work the next morning discussing a variety of issues of importance to our two communities.

One of the major themes was that of migrants and refugees. Several scholarly presentations informed us both of the actual situation in Europe as well as of a variety of Jewish and Catholic responses. This was followed by a field visit to a refugee center conducted by the Sant'Egidio movement, a Catholic organization dedicated to helping the unfortunate.

Important sessions were devoted to anti-Semitism and the persecution of Christians. The Jewish community, since the establishment of organized relations with the Catholic Church, has constantly asked the church for help fighting anti-Semitism. To see how much they have actually done, one only has to look at the numerous times during his 2018 trip to Lithuania that Pope Francis spoke of the Holocaust and the evils of anti-Semitism. Further, he has said that anti-Zionism, meaning opposition to the existence of the State of Israel, is anti-Semitic.

But in this session, to some extent the shoe was on the other foot. We were now discussing the fact that murderous attacks on Christians were becoming more frequent and that Christians were now facing the same kind of threats

that Jews have faced throughout their history and that sadly are still with us today.

The conference also included reports on Jewish-Christian relations in Italy today and, from Oren

America, the Council of European Rabbis, and the Chief Rabbinate of Israel. Also under discussion was another Orthodox rabbinic statement, entitled “To Do the Will of Our Father in Heaven: Toward a

ment he recently authored, entitled “The Gifts and the Calling of God Are Irrevocable (Rom. 11:29),” represents a major step forward in addressing the theological issues that underlie the Church’s positive view of the Jews and Judaism. (Full disclosure: I was indirectly consulted during the preparation of this document, and I was happy to see that some of my suggestions were actually followed.)

In a sense, the title is all you need to know to realize that this document seeks to reverse the theological assumptions of earlier anti-Judaism. It essentially argues that God’s covenant with Israel is eternal, thereby negating supersessionism, and more or less says that Judaism is a legitimate path to salvation for Jews.

During an earlier, meeting in Rome with the Congregation of the Doctrine of the Faith, we inquired whether Cardinal Koch’s new document had the status of official Vatican policy. We were extremely happy to hear that it was indeed authoritative. At this meeting, Prof. David Berger of Yeshiva University analyzed this document carefully and explained that Cardinal Koch had succeeded in overcoming a variety of theological barriers in putting this document, which will become a major pillar of Jewish-Catholic relations. At this same session, Prof. Etienne Veto, of the Pontifical Gregorian University in Rome, pointed as well to the importance of the new Jewish statements as a basis for ongoing progress in those relations.

One of our mornings was devoted

were wasting our time. Besides, I already had a picture of myself with the Pope. All that ran through my mind was that we were standing here, wasting the morning, so that some people who had not met the Pope would manage to get a picture.

But was I wrong! Rain or no rain, we were handed a folded piece of paper with the title “Greeting of His Holiness Pope Francis to the International Catholic-Jewish Liaison Committee.” This was the speech that the Pope would have wanted to give had we been able to have a regular indoor meeting with him.

After the customary greetings and explanation of who was meeting, the Pope went on to speak about the success of the Jewish-Catholic dialogue. After discussing our group’s attention to the refugee crisis, the Pope referred to “the fight against the troubling recrudescence of anti-Semitism, and concern for the persecution of Christians in various parts of the world.” When the Catholic press reported on the Pope’s meeting with us, it picked up on only one theme: it reported that the Pope had again condemned anti-Semitism. The influential character of such news stories among the Catholic faithful, let alone the priests and nuns all over the world, made the wait in the rain worthwhile.

I did get the chance to say hello to the Pope, and even to remind him that I was the one who was shown on Italian television saying *mazal tov!* at the reception for religious leaders held the day after his inauguration.

We as Jews have much to be concerned about in terms of the welfare of both the diaspora communities and the State of Israel. We need to be assiduous in developing and maintaining relationships with friends. Our relationship with the Catholic Church has improved greatly and continues to grow. It is indeed a privilege to be part of that process.

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



Prof. Lawrence Schiffman, representing the Orthodox Union, receives a warm greeting from Pope Francis at St. Peter’s Square.

David, Israel’s Ambassador to the Holy See, a report on the state of diplomatic relations between Israel and the Vatican. Working groups met to discuss approaches for cooperation regarding anti-Semitism, the persecution of Christians, issues of religious freedom, and the refugee crisis.

For me, the particular highlight of the conference was a session devoted to the current state of Jewish-Catholic relations. It centered on some recent statements that had emerged from Jewish and Catholic religious leaders. On the Jewish side, the central statement under discussion was “Between Jerusalem and Rome,” issued by three Orthodox rabbinic organizations, the Rabbinical Council of

Partnership between Jews and Christians.” Both of these statements acknowledged fully the changes in the Catholic Church and indicate the possibility of ongoing

Jewish-Catholic cooperation in matters of common interest.

Extremely important from the Jewish point of view is a detailed Catholic theological document authored by Cardinal Kurt Koch, who serves as President of the Pontifical Commission for Relations with the Jews. The docu-

ment to meeting the Pope. Since it was not possible to schedule a full session, it was decided that we would meet him at the end of the public audience held in St. Peter’s Square. As we waited for the indefatigable pontiff to shake the hands of all the thousands in attendance, in the rain no less, it appeared to me that we

**The Vatican will open its secret archives pertaining to World War II and the Holocaust next March.**



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