



NEWS

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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

CATHOLIC BISHOPS UPDATE JEWISH RELATIONS GUIDES

WASHINGTON--The National Conference of Catholic Bishops has issued revised Guidelines for Catholic-Jewish Relations on the occasion of the 20th anniversary of the Second Vatican Council document on non-Christian religions.

The revised version updates NCCB guidelines issued in 1967 which, according to a NCCB official, "were widely influential as a model for other national and diocesan efforts throughout the world."

Dr. Eugene J. Fisher, Director of the NCCB Secretariat for Catholic-Jewish Relations, said the "present update is a modest one, reflecting, we believe, the maturity and progress in the dialogue that has occurred in the last 20 years."

The Guidelines state that in Nostra Aetate, the Declaration on the Relationship of the Church to Non-Christian Religions promulgated October 28, 1965, the Second Vatican Council "issued an historic statement on the Jews and summoned all Catholics to reappraise their attitude toward and relationship with the Jewish people."

Another NCCB official, Father John Hotchkin, Director of

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the Secretariat of the NCCB Committee on Ecumenical and Interreligious Affairs, pointed to "the great progress in the dialogue between the Catholic Church in the U.S. and the Jewish community" and observed that the updated Guidelines will "serve as a sign of our continued commitment as Catholics to this historic dialogue."

The Guidelines state that the U.S. Catholic Church has "an historic opportunity" to advance the cause of Catholic-Jewish harmony because "the largest Jewish community in the world lives in the United States."

The document describes dialogue as "a favored instrument" in advancing Catholic-Jewish relations "on all levels: clergy and lay, academic and popular, religious and social" and recommends that understanding can be fostered at the "popular level" by open houses in places of worship, mutual visits to schools, joint social events, and living room dialogues.

It calls for participation of diocesan and parochial organizations, schools, colleges, universities "and especially seminaries."

The Guidelines acknowledge difficulties in interreligious marriages and call each party "to know well both religious traditions so as to be cooperative with the religious duties of the spouse."

Proselytism, the Guidelines state, "is carefully to be avoided" because it "does not respect human freedom."

The document recalls that the Vatican II statement requires that "the presentation of the Crucifixion story should be made

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in such a way as not to implicate all Jews of Jesus' time or of today in a collective guilt for the crime." The Guidelines add that "this is important for catechesis and homilies, especially during Lent and Holy Week, as well as for any dramatization of the events, such as Passion Plays."

Noting that "Christians may experience difficulties in sharing Jewish views...regarding specific, contemporary controversies," the Guidelines cite a 1975 NCCB statement calling for efforts "to understand the link between land and people which Jews have expressed in their writings and worship throughout two millenia as a longing for the homeland, holy Zion."

Copies of Guidelines for Catholic-Jewish Relations (Publication No. 966) are available at \$1.95 each (plus \$1.25 postage/handling) from the USCC Office of Publishing and Promotion Services, 1312 Massachusetts Ave., N.W., Washington, D.C.

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