



NEWS

FILE
COPY

DATE: June 22, 1987

FROM: Robert Wonderly

O-202/659-6700

H-703/979-3293

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

ARCHBISHOP MAY CITES POSITIVE RELATIONS WITH JEWISH LEADERS

WASHINGTON--The President of the National Conference of Catholic Bishops, addressing the "serious concerns" raised over this week's meeting between Pope John Paul II and Austrian President Kurt Waldheim, suggested that U.S. Catholic Jewish relations are "strong enough to overcome any specific difficulty of the moment."

Archbishop John L. May of St. Louis added, in a statement, that he expects to accompany the Pope to a Miami meeting with U.S. Jewish leaders on the second day of the Holy Father's September 10-19 pastoral visit to the United States.

He described the year long dialogue between Jewish and Catholic representatives planning the Miami meeting as "a concrete result of the excellent relations we maintain with our Jewish brothers and sisters."

He noted the Miami agenda will include "a significant statement addressed to the Holy Father by a representative of the Jewish community and a response by the Pope."

Text of the statement follows:

NATIONAL CATHOLIC OFFICE FOR INFORMATION

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In view of the current controversy over the proposed visit of Austrian President Kurt Waldheim to Pope John Paul II, I believe that it might be helpful for me to make the following statement as President of the National Conference of Catholic Bishops. Obviously, I have no competence to speak of Vatican diplomacy. However, I do want to express my hope that plans for the September 11, 1987 meeting in Miami between Jewish leaders and the Holy Father will continue despite the serious concerns raised by some that the intention of the Holy Father to receive President Kurt Waldheim will impact negatively on the Miami meeting.

Preparations for the meeting in Miami have been underway for more than a year, carried forward by Jewish and Catholic representatives working together. The National Conference of Catholic Bishops is proud of the dialogue which has taken place concerning this event. In fact, we see it as a concrete result of the excellent relations we maintain with our Jewish brothers and sisters. The bishops are pleased that the Miami meeting will include a significant statement addressed to the Holy Father by a representative of the Jewish community and a response by the Pope.

As the Holy See has stated publicly, the Holy Father did not initiate the meeting with President Waldheim. Moreover, such a meeting is in keeping with the standard practice of the Holy See to receive duly elected political leaders. It can also be noted that to be received by the Pope does not mean that the Holy See is making a statement on the personal character of the one being received. It is the Pope's practice to maintain dialogue with many of the world's political leaders, a duty he exercises frequently as he fulfills his diplomatic and pastoral responsibilities.

I am aware of the sensitivity of this and related issues for the Jewish community in the United States and throughout the world. I see the wisdom of considering further dialogue at some appropriate level with a representative international Jewish agency. How this may be done, is beyond my particular competence to determine.

I pray that the good relations the Conference of Bishops has with our Jewish brothers and sisters in this country will be

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strong enough to overcome any specific difficulty of the moment. I look forward to being present with the Holy Father when he meets with Jewish leaders at one of the first events in his Second Pastoral Visit to the United States next September.

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