



# NEWS

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**FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE**

**POPE JOHN PAUL CITES CONCERN FOR  
JEWS, REMEMBRANCE OF THE 'SHOAH'**

WASHINGTON--In a letter to Archbishop John L. May of St. Louis, president of the National Conference of Catholic Bishops (NCCB), Pope John Paul II declared that he has sought throughout his pontificate to develop and deepen relationships with the Jews "our elder brothers in the faith in Abraham."

The Pope said he has blessed and encouraged the initiatives of all those who "foster relationships of mutual esteem and friendship and promote the Jewish-Christian dialogue in the appropriate places and with due theological competence and historical objectivity."

"The more we try to be faithful in loving obedience to the God of the Covenant, the Creator and Savior...the deeper will be the roots of our dialogue and the more abundant its results," Pope John Paul wrote.

"With our hearts filled with this unyielding hope, we Christians approach with immense respect the terrifying experience of the extermination, the Shoah, suffered by the Jews

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2/Remembrance

during the Second World War, and we seek to grasp its most authentic, specific and universal meaning," he said.

"Reflection upon the Shoah shows us to what terrible consequences the lack of faith in God and a contempt for man created in his image can lead," the Pope told Archbishop May.

"There is no doubt that the sufferings endured by the Jews are also for the Catholic Church a motive of sincere sorrow, especially when one thinks of the indifference and sometimes resentment which, in particular historical circumstances, have divided Jews and Christians," Pope John Paul said. "Indeed this evokes in us still further resolutions to cooperate for justice and true peace."

Pope John Paul wrote to Archbishop May to thank him for sending a copy of a recent volume containing the texts of the Pope's statements on the subject of Jews and Judaism entitled Pope John Paul II on Jews and Judaism, 1979-1986. The book was a joint project of the NCCB Secretariat for Catholic-Jewish Relations and the Anti-Defamation League of B'nai B'rith. It was published in June of this year in anticipation of the Pope's scheduled meeting with American Jewish leaders during his visit to the United States in September.

Archbishop May sent the volume to Pope John Paul last month. "The collection," the Archbishop said then "is a testimony to the care and concern you have for the Jewish people,

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3/Remembrance

and your sensitivity to the suffering inflicted on them in the holocaust."

"As my second Pastoral Visit to the United States approaches," Pope John Paul said in reply, "I wish to express to you my profound gratitude for your kindness in sending me the volume. This significant undertaking is the result of cooperation between Jews and Catholics in America, which is a further source of satisfaction."

Pope John Paul will make a 10-day, nine city pastoral visit to the United States from September 10-19. He will meet with Jewish leaders in Miami on September 11.

On Jews and Judaism, with introduction and commentary by Dr. Eugene J. Fisher, Executive Director of the NCCB Secretariat for Catholic-Jewish Relations, and Rabbi Leon Klenicki of the Anti-Defamation League of B'nai B'rith, is available from the United States Catholic Conference Office of Publishing and Promotion Services, publication no. 151-2.

The full text of Pope John Paul's letter to Archbishop May is attached.

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To my dear Brother  
John L. May  
Archbishop of Saint Louis  
President of the National Conference  
of Catholic Bishops

As my second Pastoral Visit to the United States approaches, I wish to express to you my profound gratitude for your kindness in sending me the volume containing the texts of my statements on the subject of the Jews and Judaism. This significant undertaking is the result of cooperation between Catholics and Jews in America, which is a further source of satisfaction.

In my pastoral concerns, journeys and meetings and in my teachings during the years of my Pontificate, I have constantly sought to develop and deepen our relationships with the Jews, "our elder brothers in the faith of Abraham", and I therefore encourage and bless not only this initiative but the initiatives of all those who, in fidelity to the directives of the Second Vatican Council and animated by good will and religious hope, foster relationships of mutual esteem and friendship and promote the Jewish-Christian dialogue in the appropriate places and with due theological competence and historical objectivity. The more we try to be faithful in loving obedience to the God of the Covenant, the Creator and Savior, contemplating in prayer his wonderful plan of Redemption and loving our neighbor as ourselves, the deeper will be the roots of our dialogue and the more abundant its results.

With our hearts filled with this unyielding hope, we Christians approach with immense respect the terrifying experience of the extermination, the *Shoah*, suffered by the Jews during the Second World War, and we seek to grasp its most authentic, specific and universal meaning.

As I said recently in Warsaw, it is precisely by reason of this terrible experience that the Nation of Israel, her sufferings and her holocaust are today before the eyes of the Church, of all peoples and of all nations, as a warning, a witness and a silent cry. Before the vivid memory of the extermination, as recounted to us by the survivors and by all Jews now living, and as it is continually offered for our meditation within the narration of the Pesah *Haggadah* - as Jewish families are accustomed to do today - it is not permissible for anyone to pass by with indifference. Reflection upon the *Shoah* shows us to what terrible consequences the lack of faith in God and a contempt for man created in his image can lead. It also impels us to promote the necessary historical and religious studies on this event which concerns the whole of humanity today. In this regard I look forward to positive results from the work of the forthcoming Thirteenth Plenary Session of the International Catholic-Jewish Liaison Committee, to be held in Washington precisely on the subject "The *Shoah*, its Significance and Implications seen from a Historical and Religious Perspective".

There is no doubt that the sufferings endured by the Jews are also for the Catholic Church a motive of sincere sorrow, especially when one thinks of the indifference and sometimes resentment which, in particular historical circumstances, have divided Jews and Christians. Indeed this evokes in us still firmer resolutions to cooperate for justice and true peace.

As I said at Assisi, I wish we could create ever newer opportunities for showing "what God would like the developing history of humanity to be: a fraternal journey in which we accompany one another towards the transcendent goal which he sets for us".

In this spirit of peace and universal fraternal solidarity I am preparing to renew to you and to the beloved Jewish community in the United States the joyful proclamation of peace, the *Shalom* announced by the Prophets and awaited by the whole world. I express the hope that this peace will well up like a stream of living water from the bosom of Jerusalem and that there may be accomplished that which was foretold by Zechariah: "The Lord shall become king over the whole earth; on that day the Lord shall be the only one, and his name the only one" (*Zech 14:9*).

And as I look forward to our meeting in your beloved country, I impart to you and to your brother Bishops my Apostolic Blessing.

From the Vatican, August 8, 1987

Joannes Paulus II