



NEWS

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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

**BP. KEELER SUCCEEDS BP. MUGAVERO
IN NCCB CATHOLIC-JEWISH POST**

WASHINGTON--Bishop Francis J. Mugavero of Brooklyn has resigned after 19 years as Episcopal Moderator of Catholic-Jewish Relations in the Secretariat of the Bishops' Committee for Ecumenical and Interreligious Affairs. Bishop William H. Keeler of Harrisburg, Pa. will succeed him in that post.

Archbishop J. Francis Stafford of Denver, Chairman of the BCEIA, made the announcement.

During Bishop Mugavero's tenure, the first major NCCB statement on Catholic-Jewish relations was issued on the occasion of the 10th anniversary of the Second Vatican Council's Declaration on the Jews, Nostra Aetate, No. 4. This statement, referred to in 1985 "Notes" on preaching and catechesis is the only such statement from an episcopal conference ever to be specifically cited in a document of the Holy See's Commission

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for Religious Relations with the Jews.

Bishop Mugavero also served during this period as a Consultor to the Holy See's Secretariat for Christian Unity and as a member of the International Catholic-Jewish Liaison Committee. Archbishop Stafford, in a letter accepting Bishop Mugavero's resignation said these activities had enabled him "to bring to bear on the universal level the particular insights into dialogue which stem from the unique American experience of religious pluralism and the rich diversity of scholarly and local level relationships that we enjoy in this country with the world's largest Jewish community.

Bishop Mugavero greeted Pope John Paul II at Battery Park in 1979 when the Pope addressed American Jews, and for the Pope's first substantive meeting in the U.S. with Jewish leadership, in Miami last September. He also guided pioneering programs at the local level in the diocese of Brooklyn and on the national level through the work of the Secretariat for Catholic-Jewish Relations. Over the years he has received numerous honors from Catholic-Jewish groups including the American-Jewish Committee (1970), the Anti-Defamation League of B'nai B'rith (1973), and the Edith Stein Guild (1982).

"With your resignation as Moderator," Archbishop Stafford told Bishop Mugavero, "an era has closed for the BCEIA. But because of your efforts over the past two decades, the era that

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dawns is bright with promise."

Bishop Keeler, the new moderator of Catholic-Jewish relations, was appointed Bishop of Harrisburg in 1983. A native of Harrisburg, Bishop Keeler attended the Second Vatican Council as a peritus. He was later appointed Secretary for the newly formed Catholic-Jewish relations Commission for the diocese and later served as its ecumenical officer. In 1985 Bishop Keeler became the first Catholic Bishop to receive the "Americanism Award" from the Anti-Defamation League of B'nai B'rith. He served as Chairman of the BCEIA from 1984 to 1987.

In 1987, acting as Chairman of the BCEIA, Bishop Keeler played a central role in the events leading up to the successful meeting between Pope John Paul II and Jewish leaders at Castelgandolfo (September 1) and Miami (September 11). He is, said Archbishop Stafford, "uniquely qualified to oversee the developing and deepening dialogue between Catholics and Jews in America at this critical juncture in our relationship. Even during the controversy of the recent past Bishop Keeler was working with national Jewish leadership to broaden our dialogue and conducting continuing consultation with leaders of the Synagogue Council of America."

Other members of that consultation which Bishop Keeler chairs are Cardinal John O'Connor of New York, Archbishop Stafford, Bishop Basil Losten of the Ukrainian Catholic

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Diocese of Stamford, Bishop Mugavero, and the Secretary of the NCCB/USCC, Auxiliary Bishop Eugene Marino of Washington.

"The many sided meetings and conversations in which you have participated with Jewish leaders will enable you to carry forward your new responsibilities with experience and insight," Archbishop Stafford said.

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