



News - Office for Ecumenical and Interreligious Affairs

September 30, 2005

My dear friends in the Jewish Community,

Allow me to take this opportunity to offer you my prayers and warmest wishes for a happy new year. L'Shana tova! Through the grace of God may the Year 5766 be one of blessings and hope.

This year October 4 is the date of Rosh HaShana, the beginning of Ramadan, and the feast of Francis of Assisi, the patron saint of my religious order. Saint Francis shared his love of God and His creation with all people and is esteemed as an exemplar of peace in the name of God. For this reason, Pope John Paul II chose Assisi as the place to invite religious leaders from around the world to gather together to pray for peace. In that spirit, let us continue to reach out to one another and to pray and work together for peace in the world, especially in the Holy Land of Israel and throughout the Middle East.

This October also marks the 40th anniversary of the Second Vatican Council's "Declaration on the Relation of the Church to Non-Christian Religions," often called by its Latin title, *Nostra Aetate*. This document was a revolution in Catholic thought and practice, especially with regard to Church teaching on Judaism and the Jewish people. The past 40 years of Christian-Jewish relations, while not without misunderstandings and disagreements, have, on the whole, yielded great benefits for which, above all, we must give thanks to God. While meeting recently with the Chief Rabbis of Israel, Pope Benedict XVI observed that, "*Nostra Aetate* has proven to be a milestone on the road towards reconciliation of Christians with the Jewish people." Indeed, the Holy Father's own visit to the Synagogue of Cologne was a poignant sign of that reconciliation.

At this time we also call to mind all that the beloved late Holy Father John Paul II did to advance the cause of Catholic-Jewish understanding. The Catholic community was touched deeply by the outpouring of affection from the Jewish community for John Paul during his pontificate and, especially, at the time of his death. May his memory continue to be for us a blessing.

In Boston we have a long and proud history of good Catholic-Jewish relations. The bond between the Jewish and Catholic community is of great importance to the Archdiocese. Please know that I sincerely value and will continue to foster and strengthen our mutual respect and understanding. It was my privilege to be present on September 18 at the moving ceremony of the 10th anniversary and rededication of the New England Holocaust Memorial, the "beacon of memory and hope." As the Jewish community in particular knows so well, this year was the 60th anniversary of the liberation of the Nazi camps. On behalf of the Archdiocese and the Church I pledge to work with you to teach the lessons learned at such a terrible cost during the Shoah, so that anti-Semitism and any hatred for others may be uprooted from every human heart. May God grant that our work together may also be called "a beacon of hope."

In the words of Psalm 134, especially during your holy days, "The Lord bless you from Zion, he who made both heaven and earth."

Sincerely yours,

+Seán P. O'Malley, OFM Cap
Archbishop of Boston

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