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September 13, 2007

My dear friends in the Jewish community,

At this time of the Jewish New Year, it is a pleasure for me to write to you once again and to wish you, "L'shana tova!" Please accept my prayers for God's blessings upon you to strengthen you, so that, in all you do, you may sanctify God's holy name.

I am deeply grateful for the longstanding friendship between the Archdiocese of Boston and the local Jewish community, a friendship that has been sustained and deepened through many years of dialogue and mutual cooperation. I pray that the approaching 200th anniversary of the Archdiocese of Boston in 2008 will offer us the opportunity to explore new ways to develop the relationship between Christians and Jews in our local communities.

One of the most personally meaningful expressions I have had of Christian-Jewish friendship was the opportunity to participate in honoring Rabbi Leon Klenicki a few weeks ago. I have known the rabbi for many years, and it was entirely fitting that his work in Catholic-Jewish relations should be recognized by the bestowal of the Knighthood of St. Gregory, the highest award that can be given by the Holy Father to a non-Catholic. It was very gratifying to see how touched Rabbi Klenicki was to have received this recognition.

Any relationship is also characterized by the occasional misunderstanding and disagreement. I know that there have been questions and concerns about Pope Benedict's *Motu Proprio*, which expands the permission granted by Pope John Paul II allowing for the celebration of Mass according to the 1962 "Tridentine" Missal. I do not foresee this becoming a widespread phenomenon, and the Holy Father has made it clear that the older Missal does not replace the Missal of 1970, which remains the Catholic Church's normative liturgical form. The expanded permission was granted by the Holy Father primarily out of pastoral concern for those who have been disaffected or alienated from the Church by the changes brought about by the Second Vatican Council.

The specific issue of concern for Catholic-Jewish relations is the 1962 Good Friday prayer "for the conversion of the Jews." Although the term "perfidious" had already been removed in 1959 by Pope John XXIII, the 1962 Good Friday prayer remains understandably objectionable to the Jewish people. A communiqué issued by the Pontifical Commission for Religious Relations with the Jews noted that, "The problem of the Prayer for the Conversion of the Jews requires further reflection. In this regard, it is expected that an adaptation of the 1962 Missal will be needed, and this could provide a way forward. The Commission for the Religious Relations with the Jews is committed to the search for an appropriate solution. It should be stressed that there is no intention whatsoever to change the contents of the teachings of *Nostra aetate* concerning the relations between the Church and the Jewish People."

Indeed, Pope Benedict XVI has continued to stress the importance of our relationship. As I conclude this New Year letter, I will make the Holy Father's words my own: "We must continue to advance along the path of mutual respect and dialogue, inspired by our shared spiritual heritage, committed to an ever more effective cooperation in the service of the human family."

Sincerely,

Archbishop of Boston