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STATEMENT OF THE JOINT COMMISSION OF THE CHIEF RABBINATE OF ISRAEL'S DELEGATION FOR RELATIONS WITH THE CATHOLIC CHURCH AND THE HOLY SEE'S COMMISSION FOR RELIGIOUS RELATIONS WITH THE JEWS

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Riportiamo il testo della dichiarazione congiunta, firmata ieri sera, al termine del terzo incontro tra la Delegazione del Gran Rabbinate d'Israele e la Commissione della Santa Sede per i Rapporti religiosi con l'Ebraismo. L'incontro si è svolto a Gerusalemme dal 1° al 3 dicembre 2003 - 6-8 Kislev 5764.

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1. After two meetings, in Jerusalem (June 2002, Tammuz 5762) and in Grottaferrata/Rome (February 2003, Shvat 5763) the respective high ranking delegations convened in Jerusalem to discuss the theme of The Relevance Of Central Teachings In The Holy Scriptures Which We Share For Contemporary Society And The Education Of Future Generations Accordingly.

2. The deliberations took place in an atmosphere of mutual respect and amity and satisfaction was expressed regarding the firm foundations that have already been established between the two delegations with great promise for continuity and effective collaboration.

3. The participants expressed their profound appreciation for the forthright statements emanating from the Holy See condemning violence against innocents and denouncing the current resurgent manifestations of antisemitism, as declared in the statements of the Cardinals of the Vatican's delegation to the Joint Commission Cardinals Walter Kasper, Jorge Mejia. and Georges Cottier. In, this spirit, His Eminence Jorge Mejia wrote to the Chief Rabbis of Israel: "It is indeed not only cruel but vile and quite incompatible with any acceptable human standards to attack people in their places of prayer." Indeed, at the time of the Joint Commission's meeting, His Holiness Pope John Paul II issued a powerful. appeal "to all men and women of good will to join your voices with mine as I repeat that the holy name of God must never be used to incite violence or terrorism, to promote hatred

or exclusion."

4. The presentations focussed on the foundational teaching in the Holy Scriptures which we share, which declare the faith in the One Creator and Guide of the Universe who has formed all human beings in His Divine Image with free will.

Humankind is thus one family with moral responsibility for one another. Awareness of this reality leads to the religious and moral duty that may serve as a true charter for human rights and dignity in our modern world and provide a genuine vision for a just society, universal peace and wellbeing.

5. We live in a global village of unparalleled technological and scientific advances. These present us with the challenge to use them for good and blessing and not for evil and curse, God forbid. In this regard, the global system of mass communication serves as a key edification vehicle. It behooves us to constructively utilise this opportunity for global edification in keeping with our aforementioned shared religious and moral aspirations.

6. It was emphasised that the response to the challenge of promoting religious faith in contemporary society, requires us to provide living examples of justice, lovingkindness, tolerance and humility, in keeping with the words of the Prophet Micah.

"It has been told to you O man What is, good and the Lord requires of you, but to do justice and lovingkindness and walk humbly with your God" (Mic 5:8)

7. Religious education can and must provide hope and direction for positive living in a human solidarity and harmony in our complex modern times. Above all, it is faith in God that gives us true security and joy, in keeping with the verse in Psalm 16: "I have set the Lord always before me...and my heart rejoice..."(Ps 16:8-9).

8. In particular, religious leaders and educators have the special duty to instruct their communities to pursue the paths of peace for the wellbeing of society at large.

We issue this appeal especially to the family of Abraham and we call upon all believers to put aside weapons of war and destruction - "to seek peace and pursue it" (Ps 34:15).

9. As religious leaders we share in the pain and sorrow of all who suffer in the Holy Land today - individuals, families and communities: and express our fervent hope and prayers for an end to the trials and tribulations in the Land that is holy to us all.

10. Finally, we urge our own communities, schools and families, to live in mutual respect and understanding and to immerse themselves in the study and teachings of our Holy Scriptures which we share, for the ennoblement of humanity, universal peace and justice. Thus will the words of the Prophet be fulfilled: "and they shall beat their swords into ploughshares and their spears into pruning hooks; nation shall not lift up sword against nation and they shall not learn war any more" (Jes 2:4).

Jerusalem, December 3, 2003. Kislev 8, 5764

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