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Sommario:

◆ UDIENZA AD UNA DELEGAZIONE DELL' "INTERNATIONAL JEWISH COMMITTEE ON INTERRELIGIOUS CONSULTATIONS"

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Alle ore 12.15 di questa mattina, nella Sala dei Papi del Palazzo Apostolico Vaticano, il Santo Padre Benedetto XVI riceve in Udienza i membri di una Delegazione dell' "International Jewish Committee on Interreligious Consultations" e rivolge loro le parole di saluto che riportiamo di seguito:

● SALUTO DEL SANTO PADRE

Dear Friends,

I am pleased to welcome this delegation of the International Jewish Committee on Interreligious Consultations. For over thirty years your Committee and the Holy See have had regular and fruitful contacts, which have contributed to greater understanding and acceptance between Catholics and Jews. I gladly take this occasion to reaffirm the Church's commitment to implementing the principles set forth in the historic Declaration *Nostra Aetate* of the Second Vatican Council. That Declaration, which firmly condemned all forms of antisemitism, represented both a significant milestone in the long history of Catholic-Jewish relations and a summons to a renewed theological understanding of the relations between the Church and the Jewish People.

Christians today are increasingly conscious of the spiritual patrimony they share with the people of the Torah, the people chosen by God in his inexpressible mercy, a patrimony that calls for greater mutual appreciation, respect and love (cf. *Nostra Aetate*, 4). Jews too are challenged to discover what they have in common with all

who believe in the Lord, the God of Israel, who first revealed himself through his powerful and life-giving word. As the Psalmist reminds us, God's word is a lamp and a light to our path; it keeps us alive and gives us new life (cf. *Ps* 119:105). That word spurs us to bear common witness to God's love, mercy and truth. This is a vital service in our own time, threatened by the loss of the spiritual and moral values which guarantee human dignity, solidarity, justice and peace.

In our troubled world, so frequently marked by poverty, violence and exploitation, dialogue between cultures and religions must more and more be seen as a sacred duty incumbent upon all those who are committed to building a world worthy of man. The ability to accept and respect one another, and to speak the truth in love, is essential for overcoming differences, preventing misunderstandings and avoiding needless confrontations. As you yourselves have experienced through the years in the meetings of the *International Liaison Committee*, dialogue is only serious and honest when it respects differences and recognizes others precisely in their otherness. A sincere dialogue needs both openness and a firm sense of identity on both sides, in order for each to be enriched by the gifts of the other.

In recent months, I have had the pleasure of meeting with Jewish communities in New York, Paris and here in the Vatican. I thank the Lord for these encounters, and for the progress in Catholic-Jewish relations which they reflect. In this spirit, then, I encourage you to persevere in your important work with patience and renewed commitment. I offer you my prayerful good wishes as your Committee prepares to meet next month in Budapest with a delegation of the Holy See's *Commission for Religious Relations with the Jews*, in order to discuss the theme: "Religion and Civil Society Today".

With these sentiments, dear friends, I ask the Almighty to continue to watch over you and your families, and to guide your steps in the way of peace.

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