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N. 0674

Venerdì 18.10.2013

JOINT STATEMENT OF THE 22nd INTERNATIONAL CATHOLIC-JEWISH LIAISON COMMITTEE MEETING, MADRID (OCTOBER 13-16, 2013)

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The International Catholic-Jewish Liaison Committee (ILC) is the official forum for ongoing dialogue between the Holy See´s Commission for Religious Relations with the Jews and the International Jewish Committee for Interreligious Consultations (IJCIC). The 22nd meeting of the ILC took place in Madrid, Spain, from 13-16 October, 2013, hosted by the Spanish Bishops´ Conference and the Federation of Jewish Communities of Spain. Jewish and Christian representatives from five continents attended the gathering. Ms. Betty Ehrenberg, Chair of IJCIC and Cardinal Kurt Koch, president of the Holy See's Commission for Religious Relations with the Jews, co-chaired the meeting.

The theme of the meeting was ¨Challenges for Religion in Contemporary Society¨. These challenges were addressed in a series of presentations, discussions and workshops on the social, political, cultural, ethical, and religious circumstances in which men and women today seek to express their religious beliefs and follow the teachings of their religious traditions.

Our Shared Heritage

Jews and Christians share the heritage of the biblical testimony of God´s relationship with the human family throughout history. Our Scriptures bear witness to both individuals and the people as a whole being called, taught, guided and protected by Divine Providence. In light of this sacred history, Catholic and Jewish participants in the meeting responded to emerging opportunities and difficulties facing religious belief and practice in today's world.

Nearly fifty years ago the Second Vatican Council promulgated the Declaration Nostra Aetate, setting the Catholic Church on a new path in its relations with the Jewish people. The establishment of the ILC as the instrument for formal relations between the Holy See and the international Jewish community is among the most significant fruits of Nostra Aetate. Open discussion in a spirit of mutual trust and respect characterized our meeting in Madrid and continues the progress made in teaching and implementing the principles enunciated in

that fundamental Declaration. At this 22nd meeting, we reaffirmed the unique relationship between Catholics and Jews based on a common spiritual legacy and our shared responsibility to defend human dignity.

As Catholics and Jews we strive to build a world in which human rights are recognized and respected and where all peoples and societies can flourish in peace and freedom. We commit ourselves to strengthen our collaboration in the pursuit of an ever more just and equitable distribution of resources, so that all may benefit from advances in science, medicine, education and economic development. We see ourselves as partners in healing our created world so that it may reflect ever more brightly the original biblical vision: "And God saw all that God had made, and behold it was very good." (Gen. 1:31)

In small group discussions, the delegates examined the current rise of anti-Semitism, the growing phenomenon of the persecution of Christians in various parts of the world, and threats to religious freedom in many societies. In light of our shared religious ideals, we examined the real difficulties facing our religious traditions today, including violence, terrorism, extremism, discrimination, and poverty. We are deeply saddened to see God's name desecrated by evil couched in religious terms.

Religious Freedom

Encouraged in our work by Pope Francis' expressions of his concern for the universal welfare of all, particularly the poor and the oppressed, we share the belief in the God-given dignity of every individual. This requires that each person be accorded full freedom of conscience and freedom of religious expression individually and institutionally, privately and publicly. We deplore the abuse of religion, the use of religion for political ends. Both Jews and Catholics condemn persecution on religious grounds.

We call on political leaders and governments, on individuals, and on religious leaders and institutions to act to ensure the physical safety and legal protection of all who exercise the fundamental right to religious freedom; to protect the right to change or leave one's religious belief; to protect the right to manifest one's religious beliefs; to educate one's children in accordance with these beliefs. Among the religious claims under attack today that fall within the right to be protected are the right to religious slaughter, male circumcision, and the use and display of religious symbols in public.

Persecution of Christians

The ILC recommends to the Vatican Commission for Religious Relations with the Jews and IJCIC to work together on situations involving the persecution of Christian minorities worldwide as they arise; to call attention to these problems and to support efforts to guarantee full citizenship to all citizens regardless of religious or ethnic identity in the Middle East and beyond. Further, we encourage efforts to promote the well-being of minority Christian and Jewish communities throughout the Middle East.

The Rise of Anti-Semtism

As Pope Francis has repeatedly said, "a Christian cannot be an anti-Semite." We encourage all religious leaders to continue to be a strong voice against this sin. The celebration of the 50th anniversary of Nostra Aetate in 2015 is a privileged moment in which to reaffirm its condemnation of anti-Semitism. We urge that anti-Semitic teachings be eliminated from preaching and textbooks everywhere in the world. Similarly, any expression of anti-Christian sentiment is equally unacceptable.

Education

We recommend that all Jewish and Catholic seminaries include instruction about Nostra Aetate and the subsequent documents of the Holy See implementing the Council's Declaration in their curricula. As a new generation of Jewish and Catholic leaders arises, we underscore the profound ways that Nostra Aetate changed the relationship between Jews and Catholics. It is imperative that the next generation embrace these teachings

and ensure that they reach every corner of the world.

In the face of these challenges, we Catholics and Jews renew our commitment to educate our own respective communities in the knowledge of and respect for each other. We agree to cooperate to improve the lives of those on the margins of society, the poor, the sick, refugees, victims of human trafficking, and to protect God's creation from the dangers posed by climate change. We cannot do this alone; we call on all those in positions of authority and influence to join in serving the common good so that all may live in dignity and security, and so that justice and peace may prevail.

[01515-02.01] [Original text: English]

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