



***IN HIS OWN WORDS***

***POPE JOHN PAUL II***

**ON ISRAEL**

**ON THE HOLOCAUST**

**ON JUDAISM**

A Selection of the Pontiff's Statements

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## ON ISRAEL

### To the Ambassador of Israel

April 10, 1997

*On Thursday, 10 April, H.E. Mr. Aharon Lopez, Ambassador of Israel to the Holy See, presented his Letters of Credence to the Holy Father. The following is the text of the Pope's English language address to the new ambassador. (excerpted)*

The Holy See and the Catholic Church as a whole are deeply committed to co-operating with the State of Israel "in combating all forms of anti-Semitism and all kinds of racism and of religious intolerance, and in promoting mutual understanding among nations, tolerance among communities and respect for human life and dignity" (Fundamental Agreement, article 2, §1). There can be no question that in these areas more can be done and must be done. It is precisely such renewed efforts that will give to the Great Jubilee of the Year 2000 a truly universal significance, not limited to Catholics or Christians but embracing all peoples in every part of the world. I am confident that the Israeli authorities, and their Palestinian counterparts, will do all they can to ensure that those who come to visit the historic and holy places connected with the three great monotheistic faiths will be welcomed in a spirit of respect and friendship. It is my own fervent hope to be among those making such a pilgrimage, and I am grateful for the kind invitations which I continue to receive...

ORE, April 16, 1997

### Palm Sunday Address to Youth on the Jewish Passover

March 27, 1994

*Pope John Paul used the Palm Sunday celebration, which fell in 1994 on the same weekend as the Jewish Passover, to invite people "to pause spiritually" at the site of "the temple of God's covenant with Jerusalem."*

"Only a modest fragment of this remains," he said. "It is called the Wailing Wall because before its stones the children of Israel gather, recalling the greatness of the ancient sanctuary in which God made his dwelling and which rightly was the pride of all Israel."

The wall, he said, "is eloquent for the children of Israel. It is also eloquent for us because we know that in this temple God truly established his dwelling." [*Catholic News Service*]

## **Pastoral Visit to the United States**

September 11, 1987

### **Address to Jewish Leaders in Miami**

7. Necessary for any sincere dialogue is the intention of each partner to allow others to define themselves "in the light of their own religious experience" [1974 *Guidelines*, Introduction]. In fidelity to this affirmation, Catholics recognize among the elements of the Jewish experience that Jews have a religious attachment to the land, which finds its roots in Biblical tradition.

After the tragic extermination of the *Shoah*, the Jews began a new period in their history. They have a right to a homeland, as does any civil nation, according to international law. "For the Jewish people who live in the State of Israel and who preserve in that land such precious testimonies to their history and their faith, we must ask for the desired security and the due tranquility that is the prerogative of every nation and condition of life and of progress for every society" [Apostolic Letter on Jerusalem *Redemptionis Anno*, April 20, 1984].

This land was sanctified by the One God's revelation to men; it continues to bear the mark and does not cease to be a place of inspiration for those who can make a pilgrimage there.

(Speech welcoming Shmuel Hadas, the first ambassador of Israel to the Holy See, September 29, 1994)

## **ON THE HOLOCAUST**

### **Letter of Pope John Paul II To My Venerable Brother Cardinal Edward Idris Cassidy**

From the Vatican, March 12, 1998

On numerous occasions during my Pontificate I have recalled with a sense of deep sorrow the sufferings of the Jewish people during the Second World War. The crime which has become known as the Shoah remains an indelible stain on the history of the century that is coming to a close.

As we prepare for the beginning of the Third Millennium of Christianity, the Church is aware that the joy of a Jubilee is above all the joy that is based on the forgiveness of sins and reconciliation with God and neighbour. Therefore she encourages her sons and daughters to purify their hearts, through repentance of past errors and infidelities. She calls them to place themselves humbly before the Lord and examine themselves on the responsibility which they too have for the evils of our time.

### **Pastoral Visit to Poland**

June 14, 1987

### **Address to Jewish Leaders in Warsaw**

I think that today the nation of Israel, perhaps more than ever before, finds itself at the center of the attention of the nations of the world, above all because of this terrible experience, through which you have become a loud warning voice for all humanity, for all nations, all the powers of this world, all systems and every person. More than anyone else, it is precisely you who have become this saving warning. I think that in this sense you continue your particular vocation, showing yourselves to be still the heirs of that election to which God is faithful. This is your mission in the contemporary world before the peoples, the nations, all of humanity, the Church. And in this Church all peoples and nations feel united to you in this mission. Certainly they give great prominence to your nation and its sufferings, its Holocaust, when they wish to speak a warning to individuals and to nations; in your name, the Pope, too, lifts up his voice in this warning. The Polish Pope has a particular relationship with all this, because, along with you, he has in a certain sense lived all this here, in this land.

**Letter to Archbishop  
John L. May**

August 8, 1987

As I said recently in Warsaw, it is precisely by reason of this terrible experience that the nation of Israel, her sufferings and her Holocaust are today before the eyes of the Church, of all peoples and of all nations, as a warning, a witness and a silent cry. Before the vivid memory of the extermination, as recounted to us by the survivors and by all Jews now living, and as it is continually offered for our meditation within the narration of the Pesah *Haggadah* -- as Jewish families are accustomed to do today -- it is not permissible for anyone to pass by with indifference. Reflection upon the *Shoah* shows us to what terrible consequences the lack of faith in God and a contempt for man created in his image can lead. It also impels us to promote the necessary historical and religious studies on this event which concerns the whole of humanity today.

**On the Occasion of the  
Fiftieth Anniversary of the  
Outbreak of World War II**

August 26, 1989

**Message to the Polish Episcopal Conference**

*...In this message the Pope called attention to the crime of the extermination of the Jews:*

...It is truly difficult to calculate the magnitude of the losses suffered, and even more, of the *sufferings which were inflicted upon individuals*, families and communities. Many facts are already known; many more must yet be brought to light. One particular crime of World War II remains the massive extermination of the Jews, who were doomed to the gas chambers because of racial hatred...

**Apostolic Letter  
on the Fiftieth Anniversary  
of the Outbreak of World War II**

August 27, 1989

*In one section of this apostolic letter, the Pope called attention to the persecution of the Jews.*

...Among all these antihuman measures, however, there is one which will forever remain a shame for humanity: *the planned barbarism which was unleashed against the Jewish people.*

As the object of the "Final Solution" devised by an erroneous ideology, the Jews were subjected to deprivations and brutalities that are almost indescribable. Persecuted at first through measures designed to harass and discriminate, they were ultimately to die by the millions in extermination camps.

The Jews of Poland, more than others, lived this immense suffering: The images of the Warsaw Ghetto under siege, as well as what we have come to learn about the camps at Auschwitz, Majdanek and Treblinka, surpass in horror anything that can be humanly imagined.

I wish to repeat here in the strongest possible way that hostility and hatred against Judaism are in complete contradiction to the Christian vision of human dignity.

**Address the New  
Ambassador of the  
Federal Republic of Germany  
to the Holy See**

November 8, 1990

*On November 8, the Holy Father received H. E. Hans-Joachim Hallier, the new Ambassador of the Federal Republic of Germany to the Holy See. This is a translation of a passage of the Pope's address in German.*

In this context we should also mention the tragedy of the Jews. For Christians the heavy burden of guilt for the murder of the Jewish people must be an enduring call to repentance; thereby we can overcome every form of anti-Semitism and establish a new relationship with our kindred nation of the Old Covenant. The Church, "mindful of her common patrimony with the Jews, and motivated by the Gospels' spiritual love and by no political considerations, . . . deplors the hatred, persecutions and displays of anti-Semitism directed against the Jews at any time and from any source" (Vatican II, Declaration *Nostra Aetate*, No. 4). Guilt should not oppress and lead to self-agonizing thoughts, but must always be the point of departure for

## **Visit to Poland for Celebration of World Youth Day**

August 14, 1991

### **Reflections After Mass in Wadowice**

*Before the celebrations in Czestochowa, the Holy Father went to his hometown of Wadowice, where he celebrated Mass, consecrating the new parish church named in honor of St. Peter. At the end of the Mass in Wadowice, the Pope added the following brief remarks:*

...Nor can I forget that among our classmates in the school of Wadowice and in its high school there were those who belonged to the Mosaic religion; they are no longer with us, just as there is no longer the old synagogue next to the high school. When a stone was found in the place where the synagogue used to be, I sent a special letter through one of our classmates. In it we find the following words: "The Church, and in her all peoples and nations, are united with you. Certainly first of all your people feel your suffering, your destruction -- here we recall how close it is to Auschwitz -- when they want to speak to the individuals and people, and to all of mankind, to admonish them. In your name this warning cry is also raised by the Pope, and the Pope who comes from Poland has a special reason for this because, in a certain way, he experienced all this with you in our homeland...."

### **Reflections on the Fiftieth Anniversary of the Uprising of the Warsaw Ghetto**

April 6, 1993

*Jews from around the world gathered in Poland in April 1993 to commemorate the fiftieth anniversary of the uprising in the Warsaw Ghetto. The Holy Father sent a message to Archbishop Józef Kowalczyk, Apostolic Nuncio in Poland, to be transmitted to the Coordinating Commission of the Hebrew Organizations in Poland. The following is the text of the Pope's message, which was written in English:*

As the fiftieth anniversary of the Warsaw Ghetto uprising approaches, together with the whole Church, I wish to remember those terrible days of World War II, days of contempt for the human person, manifested in the horror of the sufferings endured at that time by so many of our Jewish brothers and sisters.

It is with profound grief that we call to mind what happened then, and indeed all that happened then, and indeed all that happened in the long black night of the *Shoah*. We remember, and we need to remember, but we need to remember with renewed trust in God and in his all-healing blessing.



## **Reflections at the Concert at the Vatican Commemorating the Holocaust**

April 7, 1994

*"Among those who are with us this evening are some who physically underwent a horrendous experience, crossing a dark wilderness where the very source of love seemed dried up," Pope John Paul II said in remarks at the conclusion of a concert in the Vatican's audience hall to commemorate the Shoah, or Holocaust. The concert took place on the day when Jews throughout the world remember the Holocaust victims. Earlier in the day, the Pope met with a group of Jewish leaders and others who helped organize the concert.*

2. Thus we are gathered this evening to commemorate the Holocaust of millions of Jews. The candles lit by some of the survivors are intended to show symbolically that this hall does not have narrow limits. It contains all the victims: fathers, mothers, sons, daughters, brothers, sisters and friends. In our memory they are all present, they are with you, they are with us.

We have a commitment, the only one perhaps that can give meaning to every tear shed by man because of man and to justify it.

We have seen with our eyes, we were and are witnesses of violence and hatred, which are kindled in the world all too often and consume it.

We have seen and we see peace derided, brotherhood mocked, harmony ignored, mercy scorned.

## ON JUDAISM

### **Address to the Jewish Community of Cuba**

January 25, 1998

...4. I also wish to address a particular greeting to the Jewish community represented here. Your presence is an eloquent expression of the fraternal dialogue aimed at a better understanding between Jews and Catholics, and which, promoted by the Second Vatican Council, continues to be ever more widespread. With you we share a common spiritual patrimony, firmly rooted in the Sacred Scriptures. May God, the Creator and Saviour, sustain our efforts to walk together and, encouraged by the divine word, may we grow in worship and fervent love of him. May all of this ever find expression in effective action for the benefit of each and every person.

### **Letter to the Latin-Rite Diocese of Jerusalem**

November 28, 1997

*The Holy Father wrote a Letter to the Latin-rite Diocese of Jerusalem to mark the 150<sup>th</sup> anniversary of Pope Pius IX's reorganization of that see. The Pope called on Catholics to prepare in every way to celebrate the coming Holy Year. Here is a translation of those paragraphs of his letter pertaining to relations with the Jews.*

...Regarding the ties with those who belong to the Jewish religion it should be recalled that Jews and Christians have a common heritage which links them spiritually (cf. Gn 12:2-3), to the extent that they work together so that peace and justice prevail among all people and all individuals and do so in fullness and in depth, according to the divine plan and in the spirit of sacrifice which this noble project can demand.

## **To Symposium on “The Roots of Anti-Judaism, in the Christian Milieu**

October 31, 1997

*On Friday, 31 October, the Holy Father received the Catholic, Protestant and Orthodox scholars attending a symposium on “The Roots of Anti-Judaism in the Christian Milieu,” sponsored by the Historical-Theological Commission of the Committee for the Great Jubilee of the Year 2000. “The Church firmly condemns all forms of genocide, as well as the racist theories that have inspired them and have claimed to justify them... Racism thus a negation of the deepest identity of the human being, who is a person created in the image and likeness of God,” the Pope told the group of 60 scholars.*

*Here is a translation of his address, which was given in French. (excerpted)*

The subject of your symposium is the correct theological interpretation of the relations between the Church of Christ and the Jewish people. The Council’s Declaration *Nostra Aetate* laid the foundations for this and I myself, in exercising my Magisterium, have had occasion several times to speak on them. In fact, in the Christian world -- I do not say on the part of the Church as such -- erroneous and unjust interpretations of the New Testament regarding the Jewish people and their alleged culpability have circulated for too long, engendering feelings of hostility towards this people. They contributed to the lulling of consciences, so that when the wave of persecutions inspired by a pagan anti-Semitism, which in essence is equivalent to an anti-Christianity, swept across Europe, alongside Christians who did everything to save the persecuted even at the risk of their lives, the spiritual resistance of many was not what humanity rightfully expected from the disciples of Christ. Your lucid examination of the past, in view of a purification of memory, is particularly appropriate for clearly showing that anti-Semitism has no justification and is absolutely reprehensible.

## **Historic Visit to the Synagogue of Rome**

April 13, 1986

*On Sunday, April 13, the Holy Father made his historic visit to the Synagogue in Rome. After an address of welcome by Prof. Giacomo Saban, President of the Jewish Community of Rome, Chief Rabbi Elio Toaff then spoke. In reply, the Holy Father gave the following address:*

I would like once more to express a word of abhorrence for the genocide decreed against the Jewish people during the last War, which led to the *Holocaust* of millions of innocent victims.

## **"Relations with Non-Christian Religions" at General Audience**

June 5, 1986

*At the general audience in St. Peter's Square on Wednesday, June 5, the Holy Father resumed his series of talks on faith and revelation after a reading from the Book of Revelation [21:23-26]. While speaking of non-Christian religions in general, the Pope singled out the Church's "special relationship" with the Jewish people. The pertinent section, 6 follows:*

6. A special relationship--with non-Christian religions--is the one that the Church has with those who profess faith in the Old Testament, the heirs of the patriarchs and prophets of Israel. The Council in fact recalls "the spiritual bond linking the people of the New Covenant with Abraham's stock" [*Nostra Aetate*, 4].

## **Second Angelicum Colloquium**

November 6, 1986

*The second international Catholic-Jewish scholars' colloquium, like the first, was held at the Pontifical University of St. Thomas Aquinas (the Angelicum). The Pope's statement lists the sponsors of both colloquia. There follows here the statement of Nathan Perlmutter, director of the Anti-Defamation League, and then the response and welcoming statement of the Pope during his audience with the participants.*

Theological reflection is part of the proper response of human intelligence and so gives witness to our conscious acceptance of God's gift. At the same time, the other human sciences, such as history, philosophy and art, also offer their own contribution to an organic deepening of our faith. This is why both the Jewish and Christian traditions have always had such high appreciation for religious study. Honoring our respective traditions, theological dialogue based on sincere esteem can contribute greatly to mutual knowledge of our respective patrimonies of faith and can help us to be more aware of our links with one another in terms of our understanding of salvation.

**Homily at Mass Marking  
the Close of the Year**

*December 31, 1986*

*During the Homily the Pope recalled his visit to the synagogue:*

There is one other event which transcends the limits of the year, since it is measured in centuries and millennia in the history of this city and of this Church. *I thank Divine Providence* that I was able to visit our "elder brothers" in the faith of Abraham in their Roman Synagogue! Blessed be the God of our fathers! The God of peace!

**Letter to Archbishop  
John L. May**

August 8, 1987

There is no doubt that the sufferings endured by the Jews are also for the Catholic Church a motive of sincere sorrow, especially when one thinks of the indifference and sometimes resentment which, in particular; historical circumstances, have divided Jews and Christians. Indeed, this evokes in us still firmer resolutions to cooperate for justice and true peace.

**Address to Representatives  
of United Bible Societies**

October 26, 1989

*The following passage was included in the Pope's address:*

...Holy Scripture nourishes faith, strengthens ecclesial unity and is an important element of our common spiritual patrimony with Abraham's stock, our Jewish brothers and sisters...

## Address to Jewish Community

June 9, 1991

*On Sunday morning June 9, the Holy Father met with members of the Jewish community who reside in Poland. They were presented by Bishop Henryk Muszynski of Wloclawek, president of the Episcopal Commission for Dialogue with Jews. The Holy Father then gave the following address:*

1. Meetings with the representatives of the Jewish communities constitute a constant element of my apostolic journeys. This fact possesses its own meaning. It emphasizes a unique common faith, which connects the children of Abraham, who confess the religion of Moses and the prophets to those who also acknowledge Abraham as their "father in faith" (John 8:39) and accept in Christ, "son of Abraham and son of David" (cf. Matt. 1:1), the entire rich heritage of Moses and the prophets as well.

## General Audience: Against Anti-Semitism and Xenophobia

October 28, 1992

*During the general audience on October 28, the Holy Father spoke out against recent expressions of anti-Semitism and xenophobia. The Pope spoke in Italian as follows:*

I would now like to express a word of fraternal solidarity to the members of the Jewish people. Today, in fact, is the anniversary of the promulgation of Vatican II's Declaration *Nostra Aetate* on the Church's relations with non-Christian religions, and in a special way with the descendants of "Abraham's stock." In addition, last week marked the close of the solemn festivities for the beginning of the year according to the Jewish calendar with the celebration of *Simhath Torah*, the Exultation for the [divine] Law."

I mention these facts as I bear in my heart the sadness over reports of attacks and profanations which for some time have been offending the memory of the victims of the *Shoah* in the very places which witnessed the suffering of millions of innocent people. As the Council teaches, and as I myself repeated in the Synagogue of Rome, the Church "deplores all hatreds, persecutions, displays of anti-Semitism leveled at any time or from any source against the Jews" [*Nostra Aetate*, n. 4].

More generally, in the face of the recurrent episodes of xenophobia, racial tension and extreme, fanatical nationalism, I feel it is my duty to emphasize that every form of racism is a sin against God and humanity, since every human person bears the stamp of the divine image.

**Address to German  
Bishops of Berlin Region  
on Ad Limina Visit**

November 14, 1992

*On Friday November 14, the Holy Father received the first group of German Bishops on their visit Ad Limina Apostolorum. The bishops of the Berlin region are the pastors of the Church in the new federal states, the territory formerly included in the German Democratic Republic. This was their first visit since the "change," the word which Germans use to refer to the collapse of Communism and the unification of Germany, and the Holy Father took advantage of the occasion to look at their past and their present challenges, emphasizing especially the need for protecting Jews, and other minority groups, and working with others in overcoming past divisions.*

Therefore, I make this urgent plea to you to be committed to the protection of your Jewish fellow citizens. The desecration of synagogues and the profanation of the memorials that have meant so much to Jews throughout their sorrowful history can never be condoned. The Fathers of the Second Vatican Council were aware of the special relationship between Christians and Jews, as they expressed it in their Declaration on the Relationship of the Church to Non-Christian Religions: "Since Christians and Jews have such a common spiritual heritage, this sacred Council wishes to encourage and further mutual understanding and appreciation. This can be obtained, especially, by way of biblical and theological enquiry and through friendly discussions" (*Nostra Aetate*, n. 4). You should therefore make your contribution so that your Jewish fellow citizens do not become discouraged, and that they remain in your land, which is also their homeland, and continue to participate in its religious, cultural and scientific life....

**Address to Young  
Leadership of the International  
Council of Christians and Jews**

July 2, 1993

*On Friday, July 2, the Holy Father received a group of Jewish and Christian young people who were on pilgrimage together to Rome and Jerusalem. The Pope addressed them in English, congratulating them on their efforts to promote understanding among people of monotheistic faiths.*

Together you are going up to Jerusalem, the City of Peace," a "symbol of coming together, of union and of universal peace for the human family" [*Apostolic Letter on the City of Jerusalem*, April 20, 1984). Your pilgrimage is one more hopeful sign of the cooperation which the world of today needs so desperately from believers [cf. *Message for the World Day of Peace*, 1992, No. 1]. Through such deeds of solidarity may the power of the Lord of all righteousness triumph over the antagonisms of the past and the strife of the present, so that in the days to come all men and women will live together in mutual concord and respect.

## **Interview in *Parade* Magazine with Tad Szulc**

April 3, 1994

...It must be understood that Jews, who for 2,000 years were dispersed among the nations of the world, had decided to return to the land of their ancestors. This is their right.

And this right is recognized even by those who look upon the nation of Israel with an unsympathetic eye. This right was also recognized from the outset by the Holy See, and the act of establishing diplomatic relations with Israel is simply an international affirmation of this relationship.

We trust, that with the approach of the year 2000, Jerusalem will become the city of peace for the entire world and that all the people will be able to meet there, in particular the believers in the religions that find their birthright in the faith of Abraham.

## **Audience with Delegation of the Anti-Defamation League**

September 29, 1994

*On September 29, Pope John Paul II received a delegation from the Anti-Defamation League at his summer residence at Castel Gandolfo. Their visit immediately followed the presentation of credentials by the first Ambassador of Israel to the Vatican. David H. Strassler, ADL national chairman, addressed His Holiness, who then responded.*

These convictions lie behind the following words which I wrote on the occasion of the Commemoration of the 50th Anniversary of the Uprising in the Warsaw Ghetto: "As Christians and Jews, following the example of the faith of Abraham, we are called to be a blessing for the world [cf. Gen. 12:2]. This is the common task awaiting us. It is therefore necessary for us, Christians and Jews, to be first a blessing to one another. This will effectively occur if we are united in the face of evils which are still threatening: indifference and prejudice, as well as displays of anti-Semitism" [April 21, 1993].

Was it not the bond of friendship which in many cases during the terrible days of the past inspired the courage of Christians who helped their Jewish brothers and sisters, even at the cost of their own lives? Truly, nobody has greater love than the one who lays down his life for his friends [cf. John 15:13]. Friendship stands against exclusion and makes people stand together in the face of threat.

Let our friendship, strengthened by our respect for divine Providence, bring us ever closer, for the good of the whole world.