

# Religion News Service

## Religion Press Release Services

### **Wiesenthal Center applauds Vatican's statement on the divine covenant with the Jewish people**

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The Simon Wiesenthal Center applauds a new Vatican document that instructs Catholics not to target Jews for conversion, affirms G-d's continued covenant with the Jewish people, and asks Catholics to work with Jews to eradicate anti-Semitism.

**"The sentiments expressed by Pope Francis come at a time of unprecedented anti-Semitism, especially across Europe. His Holiness has added a new pillar for interfaith relations begun 50 years ago with Nostra Aetate, and strengthened by every pope that followed. We offer our profound thanks and appreciation to His Holiness,"** said Center officials.



Nostra Aetate, a product of the Second Vatican Council and the urging of Pope John XXIII, argued that Jews could not be collectively guilty for the crucifixion, and declared anti-Semitism a sin. Pope Paul VI created much of the implementation for the findings of that watershed document. Pope John Paul II called Jews the "elder brother" of Christians, was the first to walk from the throne of St. Peter to the Rome synagogue, and asked G-d's forgiveness at the Western Wall in Jerusalem for the Church's mistreatment of Jews through the centuries. Pope Benedict authored much of the theological support for the thrust of Nostra Aetate. Today's announcement follows on the heels of several other important contributions by Pope Francis, including one that spoke of what Christians can learn from Jews ("God continues to work among the people of the Old Covenant and to bring forth treasures of wisdom which flow from their encounter with his word"), and a recent statement that "To attack Jews is anti-Semitism, but an outright attack on the State of Israel is also anti-Semitism."

**“This remarkable document from the Vatican’s Commission for Religious Relations with Jews will affect not only the 1.25 billion Catholics world-wide, but serve as a lodestar to other Christians,”** said Rabbi Yitzchok Adlerstein, the Center’s director of interfaith affairs. **“Some church groups are working, at the urging of Palestinians, to reintroduce Replacement Theology that demeans Jews and Judaism, and severs any connection of Jews with their land. The Pope has moved in the opposite direction, to affirm biblical covenants with Jews, and to remind Christians of their roots in Judaism. It is an historic move,”** he added.

Recently, ambassadors from 20 nations joined Rome’s Chief Rabbi, Cardinal Kurt Koch, and others for the opening of the Simon Wiesenthal Center’s historical exhibition *People, Book, Land: The 3,500-Year Relationship of the Jewish People and The Holy Land*, at the Pontifical Urbaniana University in Rome. The exhibit ( seen in the accompanying photo)can be seen through December 18, 2015. Rabbi Adlerstein said that the exhibit could never have happened without *Nostra Aetate* and the steps that followed.

Last year, the Center’s Dean, Rabbi Marvin Hier, told the Pope that the Wiesenthal Center was actively reciprocating his generosity of spirit by taking a leadership position in the struggle to protect persecuted Christians in places like Nigeria, Iraq, Afghanistan, and Pakistan.

The Simon Wiesenthal Center is one of the largest international Jewish human rights organizations with over 400,000 member families in the United States. It is an NGO at international agencies including the United Nations, UNESCO, the OSCE, the OAS, the Council of Europe and the Latin American Parliament (Parlatino).

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