

Address by Pope Benedict XVI to Latin American Jewish Congress Delegation

Vatican City
May 10, 2012

"It is cause for thanksgiving that we are committed to walking together the path of dialogue, reconciliation and cooperation"

Dear Jewish friends,

I am very pleased to welcome this delegation of the *Latin American Jewish Congress*. Our meeting is a particularly significant one, since you are the first group representing Jewish organizations and communities in Latin America which I have met here in the Vatican. Throughout Latin America there are vibrant Jewish communities, especially in Argentina and Brazil, which live side by side with a great majority of Catholics. In the years since the Second Vatican Council, relations between Jews and Catholics have been strengthened also in your region, and various initiatives continue to deepen our mutual friendship.

As you know, this October marks the fiftieth anniversary of the beginning of the Second Vatican Council, whose Declaration *Nostra Aetate* remains the charter and guide in our efforts to promote greater understanding, respect and cooperation between our two communities. The Declaration not only took up an unambiguous position against every form of anti-Semitism; it also laid the groundwork for a theological reassessment of the Church's relationship with Judaism and it expressed confidence that an appreciation of the spiritual heritage shared by Jews and Christians would lead to ever greater mutual understanding and esteem.

As we consider the progress which has been made over the past fifty years in Jewish-Catholic relations throughout the world, we can only give thanks to the Almighty for this evident sign of his goodness and providence. With the growth of trust, respect and good will, groups which initially approached one another with some hesitation have step by step become reliable partners and even good friends, capable of coping with crises together and overcoming conflicts positively. Certainly, much remains to be done in overcoming the burdens of the past, fostering better relations between our two communities, and meeting the challenges which believers increasingly face in today's world. Yet it is cause for thanksgiving that we are committed to walking together the path of dialogue, reconciliation and cooperation.

Dear friends, in a world which is increasingly threatened by the loss of the spiritual and moral values which alone can guarantee respect for human dignity and lasting peace, a sincere and respectful dialogue between religions and cultures is crucial for the future of our human family. It is my hope that our visit today will be a source of encouragement and renewed hope in taking up the challenge of building ever stronger bonds of friendship and cooperation, and in bearing prophetic witness to the power of God's truth, justice and reconciling love, for the welfare of all mankind.

With these sentiments, dear friends, I ask the Thrice-Holy to bless you and your families with every spiritual gift and to guide your steps in the way of peace.

Shalom aleikhem!

(Translated from original Spanish)