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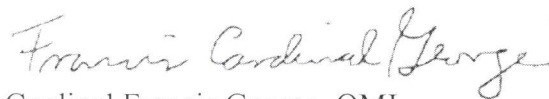
Statement of Principles for Catholic-Jewish Dialogue

October 2, 2009


On June 18, 2009 two of our committees issued a statement on a document written in 2002 by scholars who were part of a standing consultation between the United States Conference of Catholic Bishops and the National Council of Synagogues. The “Note on Ambiguities Contained in *Reflections on Covenant and Mission*,” while intended as a clarification of Church teaching primarily for the benefit of Catholics, has been misinterpreted by some Catholics and some Jews and has led to misunderstanding and feelings of hurt among members of the Jewish community. Because we are dialogue partners, this hurt is ours as well. As a means of removing any doubt as to our commitment to respect Jewish self-identity in our dialogues, and to promote deeper bonds of friendship and mutual understanding between the members of our two communities, we bishops affirm the following:

1. Pope John Paul II summed up the teaching of the Catholic Church when he said that “God chose Abraham, Isaac and Jacob, and made with them a covenant of eternal love, which was never revoked.” Jewish covenantal life endures till the present day as a vital witness to God’s saving will for His people Israel and for all of humanity.
2. At the same time, in the faith that comes to us from the apostles, Jesus Christ is the unique savior of all humankind, who fulfills in himself all of God’s promises and covenants with the people of Israel. Faith in him as the divine Son of God is first and foremost a gift of God, and the free human response to that gift can never be coerced.
3. Catholics have a sacred responsibility to bear witness to Christ at every moment of their lives, but lived context shapes the form of that witness to the Lord we love. Jewish-Catholic dialogue, one of the blessed fruits of the Second Vatican Council, has never been and will never be used by the Catholic Church as a means of proselytism—nor is it intended as a disguised invitation to baptism. In sitting at the table, we expect to encounter Jews who are faithful to the Mosaic covenant, just as we insist that only Catholics committed to the teachings of the Church encounter them in our dialogues.
4. While the work of theologians makes an invaluable contribution to interreligious dialogue, it falls to the bishops of the Church, acting in harmony with the Pope, to represent authoritatively what Catholics believe. As our dialogue continues to move forward, we on the Catholic side have a responsibility to our Jewish partners to distinguish for them when a statement refers to Church teaching and when it is a theological opinion of scholars.
5. A catechism is a compendium of the articles of faith, and therefore contains only settled teaching. The recent change in the *United States Adult Catholic Catechism*, which concerned the matter of the Mosaic covenant, was made to meet the pedagogical needs of catechumens and other adult learners while reflecting the solid teaching of Vatican II on God’s fidelity to the Jewish people.

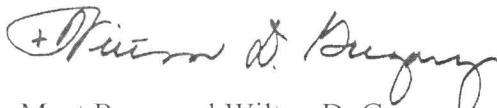
6. We remain deeply committed to dialogue and friendship with the Jewish people, who are, in the words of Pope John Paul II, “our elder brothers and sisters in the faith.” Our shared witness to the faithfulness of God, and to the peaceable kingdom to which the Most High calls us, is for the sake of healing the world.



Cardinal Francis George, OMI
Archbishop of Chicago
President



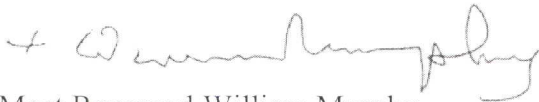
Cardinal William H. Keeler
Archbishop Emeritus of Baltimore
USCCB Liaison to Jewish Community



Most Reverend Wilton D. Gregory
Archbishop of Atlanta
Chairman
Committee on Ecumenical
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Most Reverend William E. Lori
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Most Reverend William Murphy
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