



United States
Conference of
Catholic Bishops

Committee on
Ecumenical and
Interreligious Affairs

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Memorandum

To: All Bishops

From: Most Rev. Joseph C. Bambera
Bishop of Scranton
Chair, Bishops' Committee on Ecumenical and Interreligious Affairs

Date: 13 March 2026

Re: Catholic preaching on Jews and Judaism during Holy Week and Easter

During the first hearing of the White House Religious Liberty Commission held a few weeks ago, Carrie Prejean Boller, a recent convert to Catholicism, sparked widespread controversy when she disputed that blaming Jews for Jesus' death is antisemitic, defended public figures accused of promoting antisemitic conspiracy theories, declared that Catholics do not embrace Zionism, and repeatedly pressed Jewish witnesses on Israel's actions in Gaza. There were witnesses at the hearing who rebutted Ms. Prejean Boller's assertions about Catholic teaching, but it was her claims and not the rebuttal that have circulated in the media.

In light of this recent public debate, as our clergy prepare for the liturgies of Palm Sunday and the Sacred Triduum, when the Passion narratives are proclaimed and preached throughout the Church, it is important that they strive to present clearly the Church's teaching about the Jewish people and Judaism. Because these liturgies recount the events surrounding the death of Jesus, they have long required pastoral sensitivity so that the Gospel is proclaimed faithfully and without fostering misunderstanding or prejudice.

On behalf of the Committee on Ecumenical and Interreligious Affairs, I would encourage you to invite the clergy of your dioceses to be attentive, especially in their preaching on Palm Sunday and during the Sacred Triduum, to the following "basics" of Catholic teaching about Jews, Judaism, and their relationship to the Holy Land. A summary is offered first, on the following page, with links to documentation from the Second Vatican Council and the Holy See's Commission for Religious Relations with the Jews. Brief commentary follows on pages 3-4.



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Summary of essential teaching:

1: “The Jews” didn’t kill Jesus:

See especially paragraphs 4-6 of *Nostra aetate*, 4: [Nostra aetate](#)

2: God’s covenant with the Jewish people has not been revoked, but continues:

See especially paragraphs 37-39 of: [“The Gifts and the Calling of God are Irrevocable” \(Rom 11:29\)](#), as well as paragraph 6 of *Nostra aetate*, 4.

3: Catholics can appreciate the religious attachment that the Jewish people have to the land of Israel, but interpret the re-emergence in 1948 of a Jewish state in a historical rather than theological context:

See section VI.1 of the [“Notes on the correct way to present Jews and Judaism in preaching and catechesis in the Roman Catholic Church”](#)

4: The Church condemns hatred, persecution, and displays of antisemitism directed against the Jewish people “at any time and by anyone”:

See especially paragraphs 7-8 of *Nostra aetate*, 4, as well as the whole of section 5.

The misleading statements made by media personalities about the Church’s teaching on these matters have been troubling not only to us, but to our brothers and sisters in the Jewish community. My hope—the hope of all members of the Committee on Ecumenical and Interreligious Affairs—is that our clergy might use the opportunity afforded by the approaching celebrations of Holy Week and Easter, when church attendance is up, to re-emphasize these basic points of Catholic teaching in relation to the people and the land of Israel. I would be grateful if you would share this memo with them, which summarizes the essential points and includes links to the original documents for further study.

Wishing you God’s blessings as our Lenten journey continues, and a grace-filled celebration of the mystery of the Lord’s death and resurrection.

N.B. Brief commentary follows on pp. 3-4.



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1: “The Jews” didn’t kill Jesus:

Nostra aetate, the Declaration on the Relation of the Church to Non-Christian Religions promulgated at the conclusion of the Second Vatican Council, firmly rejects the charge of deicide leveled collectively for many centuries against the Jewish people. The Declaration affirms that though “the Jewish authorities and those who followed their lead pressed for the death of Christ; still, what happened in His passion cannot be charged against all the Jews, without distinction, then alive, nor against the Jews of today” (*Nostra aetate*, 4).

2: God’s covenant with the Jewish people has not been revoked, but continues:

Nostra aetate affirms that “God holds the Jews most dear for the sake of their Fathers; He does not repent of the gifts He makes or of the calls He issues—such is the witness of the Apostle [Rom. 11:28-29]. In company with the Prophets and the same Apostle, the Church awaits that day, known to God alone, on which all peoples will address the Lord in a single voice and ‘serve him shoulder to shoulder’ [Zeph. 3:9]” (*Nostra aetate*, 4). Paragraph 6 of the same section declares that the Jewish people should not be understood or presented as rejected or cursed by God, as if this follows from Holy Scripture.

On the occasion of the fiftieth anniversary of *Nostra aetate*, and building on the teaching of popes since the Second Vatican Council, the Holy See’s Commission on Religious Relations with the Jews affirmed that the Church holds in tension **both** “belief in the universal salvific significance of Jesus Christ” **and** “the equally clear statement of faith in the never-revoked covenant of God with Israel” (*The Gifts and the Calling of God Are Irrevocable*, ‘37).

If God’s covenant with the Jewish people has not been revoked, what, then, of God’s promises to Abraham concerning, not only descendants, but land?

3: Catholics can appreciate the religious attachment that the Jewish people have to the land of Israel, but interpret the re-emergence in 1948 of a Jewish state in a historical rather than theological context:

See the following from the 1985 *Notes on the Correct Way to Present Jews and Judaism in Preaching and Catechesis in the Roman Catholic Church*, issued by the Holy See’s Commission for Religious Relations with the Jews:



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“Christians are invited to understand this religious attachment which finds its roots in Biblical tradition, without however making their own any particular religious interpretation of this relationship (cf. *Declaration* of the US Conference of Catholic Bishops, November 20, 1975). The existence of the State of Israel and its political options should be envisaged not in a perspective which is in itself religious, but in their reference to the common principles of international law” (*Notes*, VI.1).

In other words, Catholics are asked to avoid the sort of theological claims made by those who believe that the re-emergence of a Jewish state in our times holds eschatological significance, but are also invited to recognize that citizens of the State of Israel have the same right to self-determination and responsibilities under international law held by citizens of other countries.

The *Notes* add that “the permanence of Israel (while so many ancient peoples have disappeared without trace) is a historic fact and a sign to be interpreted within God’s design” (*Notes*, VI.1). Here the Holy See is making an implicit but important distinction between the people of Israel and the State of Israel:

Nation-states, including Christian, Muslim, and Jewish states, have arisen in and passed from history. Catholic faith affirms that what will endure, until God establishes His Kingdom in the fullness of time, is not this or that nation-state, but the Church, together with the people of Israel. Catholic faith thus holds that, like the Church, the **people of Israel** will endure, but makes no claim, as many Evangelical Christians assert, that the existence of the **State of Israel** has eschatological significance.

The Holy See therefore relates to the **people of Israel** through its Commission for Religious Relations with the Jews, and to the **State of Israel**, as to any nation-state, through its Secretariat of State.

4: On the Church’s efforts to recognize and combat antisemitism:

See the resource recently developed by the Bishops’ Committee on Ecumenical and Interreligious Affairs in partnership with the American Jewish Committee: [Translate Hate: The Catholic Edition | USCCB](#)