



SCHWEIZER BISCHOFSKONFERENZ
CONFÉRENCE DES ÉVÊQUES SUISSES
CONFERENZA DEI VESCOVI SVIZZERI
CONFERENZA DLS UESTGS SVIZZERS



Statement of the Jewish/Roman Catholic Discussion Commission of the Swiss Bishops' Conference of the Swiss Federation of Jewish Communities

60 years after Nostra Aetate: a commitment that remains

Social context

Sixty years after the end of the Second Vatican Council, the historical and political context for Jewish-Catholic dialogue has changed: Hamas' terrorist attack on Israel on October 7, 2023, and the ensuing war, represent a turning point that tests the trust that has grown. New forms of aggressive anti-Semitism are on the rise worldwide and are spreading in wide circles under the umbrella of criticism of Israel. The culture of remembrance of the Shoah and the motto "Never again!" is being supplanted by a conception of Zionism as colonialism. The church in Europe and North America, where Jewish-Christian dialogue has developed, is also losing social weight. Christianity is gaining strength in Africa and Asia, where lively relationships with Jews are hardly possible and there is a lack of sensitivity to the Jewish-Christian relationship.

Reliable basis for dialogue

In contrast, important statements of the recent past have provided a reliable basis for dialogue. These include "Dabru emet – Speak Truth" (2000), as well as from Orthodox Judaism "Doing the Will of Our Father in Heaven" (2015) and "Between Jerusalem and Rome" (2017). The document of the Pontifical Commission for Religious Relations with Judaism "For the Gifts and Calling of God are Irrevocable (Rom 11:29)" (2015) reflected theologically on the relationship between Judaism and Christianity. All these declarations are supported by a commitment to peace and justice as well as to a value-based society that focuses on minorities and the preservation of creation. The common reference to the one God also takes into account the irreconcilable differences between Judaism and Christianity.

The Church's Enduring Commitment

- No Christian identity without Judaism: The people of God consists of the Jewish and Christian people, one people of God in two communities because "God continues to work among the people of the old covenant" (Pope Francis). The biblical history of the covenant continues to this day and is meant to be a blessing for all people because all people are created in the image of God.
- No forgetfulness of Israel when looking at the Bible: The church does not only share the writings of the Old Testament with Judaism. Most New Testament writings also are composed by Jews. The pattern of promise-fulfillment cannot mean a replacement of Israel. Rather, it is important to understand more deeply the Jewish identity of Jesus and his significance for the church.
- No Christian practice without reference to Judaism: Christians are related to Judaism not only in the interpretation of Holy Scripture, but also in faith in the one God, in liturgical

celebrations, in the struggle for contemporary ethics and jurisprudence, and in the commitment to contemporary society. Judaism must be a cross-cutting topic in all areas of education.

- No Christian anti-Judaism: If the constitutive bond of the church to Judaism is submerged, contempt for Jews arises. Therefore, the Church must act and fight Christian anti-Judaism even in its subtle forms, such as simply obscuring Judaism.

Current challenges for both faith communities

- The land and state of Israel must be reflected on in depth in their relationship to Judaism in the Diaspora. Care must be taken to ensure that the Jewish-Christian dialogue is not politically instrumentalized.
- The phenomenon of anti-Semitism appears in new forms in a globalized world. Together with other religious and civil actors, anti-Semitism must be researched and combated from multiple perspectives.
- With regard to Islam and Jewish-Islamic dialogue, the question must be asked about the common as well as the respective vocations of Judaism, Christianity and Islam in the service of humanity.

What we hope for

"The gifts and the calling of God are irrevocable" (Rom 11:29). As brothers and sisters, we are entrusted to each other. Trust has also brought the dialogue through the irritations and crises of the last sixty years. Friendships have grown. We have become partners. It is not for us to complete things, but we are obliged to begin them and pursue them persistently (Avot 5).

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Bishop Joseph Maria Bonnemain, Swiss Bishops' Conference
President Ralph Friedländer, Swiss Federation of Jewish Communities

Prof. Dr. Christian M. Rutishauser SJ, Co-President of the JRDC

Rabbi Dr. habil. Jehoshua Ahrens, Co-President of the JRDC

Prof. em. Dr. Verena Lenzen

Prof. em. Dr. Mariano Delgado

Dr. Jonathan Kreutner

Dr. Simon Erlanger

Dr. Richard Breslauer

Dr. Martin Steiner

Rev. René Alain Arbez

Mr. Michel Bollag