

ECUMENICAL, INTERFAITH, AND JEWISH RELATIONS

Pope John XXIII called the Second Vatican Council which opened the Catholic Church to discussion with the world at large. Among the many documents issued by the Council was the Decree on Ecumenism known as; *Unitatis Redintegratio* and *Nostra Aetate*, the Declaration on the Relation of the Church to Non-Christian Religions.

The goals of Ecumenical dialogue and Interfaith dialogue differ from each other. There are two goals of Catholic Ecumenical dialogue: the first is to affect the reunion of all Christians and the second is to discover the unity which now exists among us even if it is an imperfect union. When we enter into conversation with other Christians, we are sharing our mutual faith in Christ Jesus. To accomplish these two goals, there exists ongoing dialogue and friendly relationships among the Diocese of Brooklyn, the Greek Orthodox Archdiocese, the Metropolitan Lutheran Synod and various Episcopal and Presbyterian Congregations.

While there is unity among Catholics and other Christians in many areas, there still exists divergence over such important issues as the Eucharist, ordination, moral issues, Church structure, and the Papacy. Due to the fact that full unity does not yet exist we are prevented from celebrating the sacraments together. The Eucharist calls us not only to individual communion with Jesus, but also to a union with the whole church. Since this deep unity does not yet exist we cannot celebrate the Eucharist together. We can only hope that one day true union will be restored to the Church.(cf. *Unitatis Redintegratio*, paragraph 1-4, paragraphs 7-11.)

Catholic/Jewish Dialogue may be placed between Catholic Ecumenical Dialogue and Catholic/Interfaith Dialogue. In some ways Catholics and Jews share a common faith. It is from Judaism that Christianity comes. Jesus, Mary, the apostles, St. Paul, as well as other members of the early Christian

community, were of the Jewish faith. We share many sacred texts such as the Torah, the writings of the Prophets, Proverbs, the Psalms and many other writings. Through dialogue both Catholics and Jews come to better understand their respective sensitivities. The Diocese of Brooklyn is in dialogue with members of the Orthodox, Conservative, Reform and Reconstructionist Jewish Communities. The Diocese of Brooklyn is home to one of the largest Orthodox Jewish Communities in the world.(cf. *Nostra Aetate*, paragraphs 4, 5)

The goal of Catholic and Interfaith Dialogue is to build bridges of mutual respect and understanding through sharing our faith in Christ. Interfaith dialogue involves discussion with non-Christian religions such as Islam, Hinduism and Buddhism. These dialogues are important to us. In many ways, the culture and the religious beliefs of these faith traditions are interwoven and it is through dialogue that we come to understand their various customs and celebrations. Through mutual interaction and faith sharing, what at first may appear strange takes on a benign appearance and helps us to grow in appreciation of the dignity of the other. It is in our appreciation of the human dignity of the other that we live out our faith in Christ Jesus. (cf. *Nostra Aetate*, paragraphs 1-3.)

Ecumenical, Catholic/Jewish Relations and Interfaith Relations are vital in today's world. The rate of inter-marriage has brought the concerns of these dialogues from the realm of academia to the dining room table. The closeness of our living conditions has demanded greater understanding among all of us. The best dialogue takes place among people of faith who are faithful in their beliefs and who, because of their spirituality, can see and respect others whose faith differs from their own. The conviction that *God is* and *God loves* unites people of all faiths.

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