

# **Learning about Ourselves while Learning about Each Other: Proposals for Jewish and Catholic Education**

Lawrence H. Schiffman, New York University

Joseph Sievers, Pontifical Biblical Institute and Pontifical Gregorian University

## **Prolegomenon**

In what follows we present outlines of what ought to be stressed in educational programs aimed at the Catholic and Jewish communities. We propose to approach each community bearing in mind its particular theological and religious character, and community organization. This is often referred to as part of the asymmetry between the two communities, a factor that we have taken into consideration and have embraced as a necessary feature in our planning. We expect that tailor-made programs for various subsections of the community will be essential to the success of our program. We hope to speak to Catholics in theological and catechetical language and to Jews in the language of history and Jewish law. We are convinced that only such an approach, coupled with adequate staffing and funding, can bring about the success of that to which we are committed.

We have also prepared reports about current efforts in both the Catholic and Jewish communities to educate our children and adults about the issues we are concerned with at our meetings. These reports show that much less has been done than we might wish. However, they also demonstrate that many of our colleagues have developed successful and meaningful approaches. With the help of these already developed approaches, we can begin a process in which the new relationship of the Catholic Church

presentation of Christianity and Catholic doctrine in the context of Jewish education, similar to which has been so successful.

Here is a brief list of some of the main important issues that need to be explored:

1. The Jewish Christian schism and its historical context
2. Jewish-Christian relations in antiquity and the Middle Ages, the bad and the good, including the role of popes in protecting Jews
3. Jewish-Christian relations in modern times, with emphasis on the important changes, and the new relationship that Jews and Catholics enjoy
4. The significance of changes in Catholic doctrine about the Jews, their covenant and traditions of interpretation
5. Catholic withdrawal from proselytizing Jews
6. Catholic approaches to the Holocaust
7. Catholic documents that highlight this new relationship
8. Diplomatic relations between the State of Israel and the Vatican

These topics need to be presented honestly, not hiding the difficulties of the past. At the same time, we need to emphasize the positive future that has already begun to unfold. We seek to make known to the entire Jewish community the respect and cooperation that currently typifies Jewish-Catholic relations and that provides the platform for the new joint efforts we are planning.

## **Educational Objectives for the Catholic Community**

In the years since the Second Vatican Council and its declaration , much progress has been made in the Catholic Church toward a more accurate knowledge about Jews and Judaism and about Christian-Jewish relations. Several Church documents have been specifically addressed to the furtherance of more adequate education. Taking its cue from and from the 1974 ,<sup>3</sup> the 1985 document

has indicated specific areas where a new understanding of and appreciation for Judaism and Christian-Jewish relations makes possible and requires changes in educational materials. Quoting Pope John Paul II it affirms:

“Because of the unique relations that exist between Christianity and Judaism - "linked together at the very level of their identity" (John Paul II, 6th March, 1982) - relations "founded on the design of the God of the Covenant" ( ), the Jews and Judaism should not occupy an occasional and marginal place in catechesis: their presence there is essential and should be organically integrated.”<sup>4</sup>

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<sup>2</sup> Available at [http://www.bc.edu/research/cjl/meta-elements/texts/cjrelations/resources/documents/interreligious/within\\_context.htm](http://www.bc.edu/research/cjl/meta-elements/texts/cjrelations/resources/documents/interreligious/within_context.htm)

<sup>3</sup> Available at [http://www.vatican.va/roman\\_curia/pontifical\\_councils/chrstuni/sub-index/index\\_relations-jews.htm](http://www.vatican.va/roman_curia/pontifical_councils/chrstuni/sub-index/index_relations-jews.htm)

<sup>4</sup> #2, available at [http://www.vatican.va/roman\\_curia/pontifical\\_councils/chrstuni/relations-jews-docs/rc\\_pc\\_chrstuni\\_doc\\_19820306\\_jews-judaism\\_en.html](http://www.vatican.va/roman_curia/pontifical_councils/chrstuni/relations-jews-docs/rc_pc_chrstuni_doc_19820306_jews-judaism_en.html)



3. As part of the continuing education for teachers, catechists, clergy and lay leaders, courses, seminars, visits to Jewish sites should be organized, where feasible, in order to increase first-hand knowledge and to communicate the Church's new attitude.
4. As indicated in the Recommendations of the 2001 ILC meeting, "the curricula of Catholic seminaries and schools of theology should reflect the central importance of the church's new understanding of its relationship to Jews."
5. Educators should be made aware of teaching aids and other educational resources that are available in different languages on the Internet at sites such as [www.jcrelations.net](http://www.jcrelations.net), [www.sidic.org](http://www.sidic.org), [www.bc.edu/cjlearning](http://www.bc.edu/cjlearning), in printed form or through other media.

## **Joint Educational Objectives**

Much of what has been accomplished thus far depends on increasing understanding of the historical and religious aspects of our respective traditions and their interaction throughout the centuries. We recommend that we seek to reach large numbers of students, seminarians and lay leaders with a deep appreciation of our history, theology and new modes of cooperation.

The following joint projects are intended to provide avenues for a deepening of our understanding:

1. Existing websites dealing with Jewish-Christian relations need to be expanded and developed in order to provide a central source of materials for educators and leaders. Such sites need to provide an expanding library of materials in all languages used by members of the two faiths. We should aim to provide resources on all levels.
2. A series of exchange programs and reciprocal visits of an educational nature need to be organized to bring seminarians to meet one another directly and learn together about issues of common concern. Where feasible, faculty and course exchanges should be arranged on the university level between Catholic and Jewish institutions and/or between academic programs that teach Judaism and Christianity.
3. Seminars or conferences should bring clergy, educators and lay leaders together for the explicit