

Pope warns of worrying reappearance of anti-Semitism

Francis stresses the importance of mutual respect, for Jews and Christians to rediscover themselves as brothers, children of the same Father



A handout picture provided by the Vatican Media shows Pope Francis meeting with members of the Amitié Judéo-Chrétienne group in the Vatican, 12 December 2022. (Photo by EPA/MAXPPP)

Ivan Fernandes, *La Croix International*, 13 December 2022

Pope Francis, lamenting the reappearance of anti-Semitism as well as violence against Christians, has called on Christians and Jews together to grow in mutual knowledge, understanding, respect and friendship.

"Given the burden of mutual prejudices and of the sometimes painful history that must be assumed... I encourage you to persevere in this way of dialogue, fraternity and joint initiatives. Because this fine work, which consists of creating bonds, is fragile, always to be resumed – always to be resumed! – and consolidated, especially in these hostile times in which attitudes of closure and rejection of the other are becoming more common, also with the worrying reappearance of anti-Semitism, in particular in Europe, as well as violence against Christians," Pope Francis on December 12 told visiting members of the Amitié Judéo-Chrétienne. The group of French Christians and Jews is dedicated to dialogue and collaboration between the two religions was founded in 1948 by Jules Isaac, a French historian who worked to improve Christian-Jewish relations after World War II and met with popes Pius XII and John XXIII.

"To grow in mutual knowledge, understanding, respect and friendship"

Pope Francis praised Isaac's contribution, saying he "played a leading role in the rapprochement between Jews and Christians after the tragedy of the Second World War." He recalled the historian's work on the Seeligsberg Conference, a post-war council on anti-Semitism which concluded its work with the famous "Ten Points of Seeligsberg" that Christians must keep in mind when speaking with or about Jewish people.

Some of those points were adopted in *Nostra Aetate*, the Second Vatican Council's document on the relationship between the Church and other religions. Isaac had advocated for the drafting of that text that highlighted the "spiritual patrimony common to Christians and Jews", seeking to "foster and recommend that mutual understanding and respect which is the fruit, above all, of biblical and theological studies as well as of fraternal dialogues", the pope said.

The pope also spoke admirably of the work of the Amitié Judéo-Chrétienne, which he said was "resolutely and actively committed" to the study and dialogue to help Jews and Christians "to grow in mutual knowledge, understanding, respect and friendship." "Thank you for this work you have carried out tirelessly for seventy years. It has amply contributed to helping Jews and Christians to rediscover themselves as brothers, children of the same Father, and to serve him shoulder to shoulder who "await the day, known to God alone, when all peoples will call upon the Lord with one voice", the pope said. "I therefore assure you of my support for your initiatives, and for those of all people, Jews and Christians together, who strive for ever-greater fraternity. I pray that your work and your commitment may bear abundant and lasting fruits," Francis added.

Pope Francis has often spoken out about the "anti-Semitic attitudes" present in today's European society. "As I have often repeated, a Christian cannot be an anti-Semite; we share the same roots. It would be a contradiction of faith and life," he had said.