

## “A Pope, a Sheikh and a Rabbi”

<http://www.dici.org/en/news/a-pope-a-sheikh-and-a-rabbi/>

16 May 2014



*Cardinal Bergoglio, Rabbi Abraham Skorka and Omar Abboud.*

This is the title of an article dated May 6 on the website of the Latin Patriarchate of Jerusalem to remind readers of the forthcoming journey of Pope Francis to the Holy Land. Indeed, this is the first time that two representatives of other religions will travel officially to accompany a pope. Father **Federico Lombardi**, director of the Press Office of the Holy See, confirmed on May 4 that Rabbi **Abraham Skorka**, rector of the Latin American Rabbinical Seminary in Buenos Aires, and **Omar Abboud**, Muslim president of the Institute for Interreligious Dialogue in Buenos Aires and former Secretary General of the Islamic Center of Argentina, will be part of the delegation that will accompany Pope Francis to the Holy Land from May 24 to 26, 2014.

“We hope for the sake of our Christian community that it will not be content with the ‘show business’ that will surround this visit, but that it will be able to hear the message that the Pope wants to leave with us,” the Latin Patriarch of Jerusalem **Fouad Twal** declared on April 16. He added that although “his visit is a pastoral visit to commemorate the meeting between **Paul VI** and Patriarch **Athenagoras**”, and “we do not expect that he will come to resolve all the political problems of the region, which are so great, we still have hope and we await his visit with joy.”

Abraham Skorka and Omar Abboud are “two friends from Argentina with whom he worked to promote interreligious dialogue as Archbishop of Buenos Aires. They have been acquainted for more than twenty years,” the article of the Latin Patriarchate of Jerusalem explains. Citing an interview with **Andrea Tornielli** published by *Vatican Insider* in January 2014, the author adds that the rabbi and the pope “share a common dream: ‘to pray together’ and ‘to show the world that that is possible’”. And so they decided to go pray together at the Wailing Wall and in Bethlehem. Similarly Omar Abboud confided to *Vatican Insider* on May 3 that this corresponds to the incentive given by Cardinal Bergoglio, Archbishop of Buenos Aires “to create spaces so that a culture of encounter might see the light of

day”. There is much to be expected from the dialogue between religions, he explains, for it is not “just a photo-op” but rather an engagement without which “we cannot make progress”. The Latin Patriarchate of Jerusalem recalls that in November 2012 “during the violent tensions between Israelis and Palestinians, the future pope had invited Jews, Muslims, Protestants and Greek Orthodox to pray together for peace in the cathedral in Buenos Aires.”

On April 30, during a meeting on communication in the Church, Fr. Lombardi said, with reference to the forthcoming journey of the Pope to the Holy Land: “We have not yet seen all of the communication of Pope Francis,” and expressed the opinion that the Church is headed toward “new stages in the communication of the message” of the Supreme Pontiff to the world.

*(Sources: lpj/apic/imedia/radiovatican – DIC1 no. 296 dated May 16, 2014)*