

Full text: joint statement from Chief Rabbinate of Israel and Vatican Commission for Religious Relations with Jews

The Bilateral Commission of the Delegations of the Chief Rabbinate of Israel and the Holy See's Commission for Religious Relations with the Jews met this week. Below is the full text of their joint communiqué.

Bilateral Commission Meeting of the Delegations of the Chief Rabbinate of Israel and the Holy See's Commission for Religious Relations with the Jews

(Rome, March 27 – 29, 2012; Nissan 4 – 6, 5772)

Joint Statement

1. The Jewish co-chair Rabbi Shear Yashuv Cohen opened the meeting, giving thanks to God for the historic transformation in Catholic-Jewish relations since the Second Vatican Council (1962-65) and for the establishment of the bilateral commission of the Chief Rabbinate of Israel and the Holy See, after the historic visit of Pope John Paul II to Israel.

Cardinal Peter Turkson, the new Catholic co-chair, responded paying tribute to his predecessor Cardinal Jorge Mejía and welcomed the delegations, in particular those who had just joined the bilateral commission. Cardinal Mejía together with Cardinal Cottier, as the former senior members of the Catholic delegation, accompanied by Cardinal Kurt Koch, President of the Holy See's Commission for Religious Relations with the Jews, visited with the delegations and expressed their joy at the continuity of this work as a blessing for both communities and for humanity.

2. The theme of this the 11th meeting of the bilateral commission was titled "Religious perspectives on the current financial crisis: vision for a just economic order". The special guest on the first evening was Prof. Ettore Gotti Tedeschi, President of the Vatican's Istituto per le Opere di Religione, who provided an analysis of the causes of the financial crisis and shared thoughts on possible ways forward. Papers on the theme were provided by Dr. Meir Tamari, former chief economist of the Bank of Israel, and Prof. Stefano Zamagni from the Economic Science Department of the University of Bologna.

3. Following from the presentations and discussion, the following points were highlighted:- While many factors contributed to the financial crisis, at its roots lies a crisis of moral values in which the importance of having, reflected in a culture of greed, eclipsed the importance of being; and where the value of truth reflected in honesty and transparency was sorely lacking in economic activity.

4. At the heart of Jewish and Catholic visions for a just economic order is the affirmation of the sovereignty and providence of the Creator of the world with whom all wealth originates and which is given to humankind as a gift for the common good.

5. Accordingly, the purpose of an economic order is to serve the wellbeing of society, affirming the human dignity of all people, each created in the Divine Image. While this concept of dignity affirms the value of the person, it is antithetical to egocentricity. Rather, it requires the promotion of the wellbeing of the individual in relation to community and society, emphasizing human obligations and responsibilities accordingly and thereby

affirming human solidarity and fraternity.

This posits the obligation to guarantee certain basic human needs, such as the protection of life, sustenance, clothing, housing, health, education and employment.

Particular attention must therefore be given to the vulnerable – the poor, the orphan, the widow the sick and disabled; and the stranger, which in today’s society is particularly relevant to migrant and foreign workers – whose condition serves as a measure of the moral health of society or lack thereof, and the degree of solidarity within it.

6. Furthermore, just as the Divine gift of wealth places obligations upon the recipient in relation to those less fortunate materially; similarly countries with developed economies have the obligation to recognize their responsibilities and duties towards countries and societies in need – especially in this era of globalization.

7. Concepts highlighted for the promotion of a more just economic order included:- the universal destination of the goods of the earth; a culture of “enough” that implies a degree of self-limitation and modesty; responsible stewardship; an ethical system of allocation of resources and priorities; and the critical importance of honesty, transparency, gratuitousness and accountability.

8. Just as the crisis has required partial remission of debts on national and international levels, there is a need to extend this to families and individuals for their economic self-rehabilitation.

9. The members of the bilateral commission underscored the role that the faith communities must play in contributing to a responsible economic order and the importance of their engagement by government, educational institutions, and the media, to this end.

10. In addition to the ethical wisdom drawn from our spiritual heritages, religious communities are an integral part of civil society, which must play a central role together with politics and business, in ensuring the subsidiarity necessary for a just social and economic order.

11. Furthermore the crisis has revealed the profound lack of the ethical component in economic thinking. Hence, it is imperative that institutes and academies of economic studies and policy formation include ethical training in their curricula, similar to that which has developed in recent years in the field of medical ethics; and also ethical counselling to decision makers on a national and international level.

12. The meeting concluded with prayer to the Source of all blessing that the words of the Psalmist will be fulfilled “Mercy and truth are met together; righteousness and peace have kissed (each other). Truth shall spring out of the earth and righteousness shall look down from heaven. Yea, the Lord shall give (that which is) good; and our land shall yield her increase. Righteousness shall go before Him; and shall set (us) in the way of His steps” (Ps 85,11-14).

Rome,
March 29th, 2012 – Nissan 6th, 5772

Rabbi Shear Yashuv Cohen
(Chairman of the Jewish Delegation)

Peter Cardinal Turkson
(Chairman of the Catholic Delegation)

Rabbi David Rosen
Rabbi Prof. Daniel Sperber
Rabbi Prof. Avraham Steinberg
Mr. Oded Wiener

Archbishop Elias Chacour
Archbishop Antonio Franco
Archbishop Bruno Forte
Bishop Giacinto-Boulos Marcuzzo
Msgr. Pier Francesco Fumagalli
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