

A few words about myself.

My name is Daniel Alejandro Cutri.

I was born in Buenos Aires, Argentina on November 17th, so I am 38 years old. I am the youngest of 4 brothers (2 brothers and 1 sister). My family is a middle-class one, of workers, employees.

The education was an investment since the beginning. We all went to very good private and Catholic schools.

When I finished high-school, I started studying physics. I have always loved sciences. Only one year, because in that summer I felt the calling to be a priest. That summer was my 4<sup>th</sup> "mission" in the interior of my country; in poor and needed areas.

My Christian family education was always open to respect and dialogue to different religions, especially Judaism, the root and matrix of my Christian faith.

When I entered to the Seminary in the year 1999 (Bergoglio just assumed the Buenos Aires Diocese the year before) I could add to my familiar heritage the formal study of the Bible and the Judaism. My profile inclination to the sciences became immediately in a passion for studying the Bible, history, archeology, even in the 3rd year of the seminary started studying biblical Hebrew once a week in the afternoon, with a professor. We were only 5 students, and I was the only one from the seminary of Buenos Aires.

More advanced in the studies, we had ecclesiology, and with that a couple of seminars that we could choose for studying other religions and the dialogue between them and the Catholic Church.

I, of course, choose Judaism, given by a Rabbi: Angel Kreiman-Brill (It's important to notice that Judaism was given by the named Rabbi, Lutheranism by the Pastor René Krüger, and I don't remember the third one. It's important, I believe, because there was not a catholic priest teaching about other religious communities, but the own ministers. That is an important opening of the Argentinian Catholic University... of which the Big Chancellor was the bishop, Bergoglio).

So I became friend of Rabbi Angel. He invited the students to one of the most historical and beautiful synagogues of Buenos Aires. Also invited me to his house several times, for lunch and to talk. He made in the class a reproduction of the *Pesah* rites, with mazzá and wine included. That was so fascinating for us, that we started inviting him to our parishes in the Passion Week, the Holy Week, for showing the *Pesah* rites in relation with the Last Supper, open to the all the people.

I was honoured to be part and carry out, for the very first time in Buenos Aires, a project in 2004 to promote the Judeo-Catholic dialogue among seminarists. Thus I represented the Catholic seminarists, along with an advanced seminarist of the Latin American Rabbinical Seminary "Marshall Meyer" in our city, we met to prepare two meetings (in the two seminars). The events featured football (soccer) match, kosher snacks, visit the library, time of prayer (prayer of Vespers) and a lot of fraternity. The fruits of that meeting are still visible. For example, one of my partners who was ordered with me, works in a very very poor parish and he works with the young rabbi of the neighbourhood in social activities.

On another occasion we visited the synagogue on a Friday night to celebrate in the temple the Welcome of the Shabbat and then we had a dinner, prayers and even dancing with members of the community.

During my years as a seminarian and as a priest, I always took and transmitted this enthusiasm both in lectures and meetings with children and young people and in my sermons. Also in schools where I worked, primary level and especially high school, spiritual retirements and camps, always trying to contribute to the knowledge of the Jewish background of the Christian faith.

Paraphrasing what Saint Augustine said about Jesus: "You cannot love who is not known", I believe that knowledge is very important to demystify prejudices and starting loving other religions, in my case with Judaism. Rabbi Angel Kreiman invited me to the first meeting of Latin-American Catholic priests and rabbis organized by the Center for Jewish Christian Understanding and Cooperation (with the help of the World Jewish Congress) in Efrat, and to visit other important places for Judaism and Christianity in Israel. That was my first visit to this land, two years ago. In that trip I met the director of the CJCUC, Rabbi Shlomo Riskin, Rabbi Eugene Korn and David Nekrutman (who invited me the past month to a lecture he made in the Garden Tomb, here in Jerusalem). And also became friend of other rabbis.

This May I came with my parish of Buenos Aires, first visiting the Pope in Rome. Celebrating a private Mass with him and another 3 priests in Santa Martha's chapel (where he lives in the Vatican). Then he invited me to have breakfast, so we could talk nearly half an hour.

Now I am living in Jerusalem, studying with the Franciscans Biblical Sciences and Archaeology. It will be like 4 years. I just started. When I was working in Buenos Aires in the parish and schools, every year (it's usual) the priests went to talk with the bishop. Every November or December I used to have a private conversation with Bergoglio for about one hour. He always wanted I study Bible outside Argentina to get specialized and then teach in Buenos Aires. I remember once I asked "and where would you like I study? Rome?" and he answered me "for you, I prefer Jerusalem".

So he is the mentor of me being here, living and studying. However, the sending and the papers was made by the following bishop of Buenos Aires, because as everybody know, he became Pope!

In May I told him "in September I'm going to live to Jerusalem" and he was very very happy. For all these reasons, personal and pastoral, is based my great interest in further deeper study of the Holy Scriptures, Judaism and Jewish-Christian dialogue is based.

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