

**Benedict XVI Tells Rabbi of Church's Love for Jews
Pope Is Invited to Rome's Synagogue**

VATICAN CITY, JAN. 16, 2006 (Zenit.org).- Benedict XVI talked of the Church's love for the Jewish people when he received the chief rabbi of Rome in audience.

"Shalom!" was the greeting the Pope expressed today when welcoming Rabbi Riccardo Di Segni and a Jewish delegation, on the eve of Italy's national day to further Catholic-Jewish dialogue.

"The Catholic Church is close to you and is your friend," the Holy Father told the rabbi. "Yes, we love you and cannot but love you, 'through the Fathers.'"

Benedict XVI stressed that "we cannot fail to denounce and fight firmly against the hatred and misunderstanding, the injustice and violence that continue to worry the soul of men and women of good will."

He added: "How can we not be pained and concerned over the renewal of manifestations of anti-Semitism?"

For his part, the Jewish representative invited Benedict XVI to visit Rome's main synagogue, on the 20th anniversary of Pope John Paul II's historic visit to that temple, on April 13, 1986.

Solidarity

In the audience, Benedict XVI observed: "Many are the needs and challenges of Rome and the world, which invite us to unite our hands and hearts in concrete initiatives of solidarity, 'tzede' [justice] and 'tzedekah' [charity]."

"Together, we can work to transmit the torch of the Ten Commandments and of hope to the young generations," he said.

The chief rabbi thanked the Pope for his public commitment against anti-Semitism and fundamentalist terrorism.

On referring to relations between the Catholic Church and Judaism promoted by John Paul II, Rabbi Di Segni acknowledged that "since the first moments of the new pontificate the conviction was clear that not only would there be no going back on the path undertaking, but that the path marked out would continue."

"This conviction of ours," he said, "is confirmed by your already numerous acts, by your statements, by the sensitivity shown in the denunciation of past and present anti-Semitism, by the condemnation of fundamentalist terrorism, and by the attention to the state of Israel, which for the whole Jewish people is an essential and central reference." ZE06011602

DOCUMENTS

**Benedict XVI's Address to Chief Rabbi of Rome
"The Catholic Church Is Close to You and Is Your Friend"**

VATICAN CITY, JAN. 16, 2006 (Zenit.org).- Here is a translation of the address Benedict XVI delivered today at an audience attended by Chief Rabbi Riccardo Di Segni of Rome and a delegation from the Jewish community.

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Illustrious Chief Rabbi,

Dear Friends: "Shalom!"

"The Lord is my strength and my song, and he has become my salvation" (Exodus 15:2): This was the song of Moses and of the children of Israel, when the Lord saved his people as they crossed the sea. Isaiah sang in the same way: "Behold, God is my salvation; I will trust, and will not be afraid; for the Lord God is my strength and my song, and he has become my salvation" (12:2).

Your visit fills me with joy, and it motivates me to renew with you this song of thanksgiving for salvation. The people of Israel have been liberated many times from the hands of their enemies and, in times of anti-Semitism, in the dramatic moments of the Shoah, the hand of the Almighty guided and sustained them. The favor of the God of the Covenant has always accompanied them, giving them the strength to overcome trials. Your Jewish community, present in the city of Rome for more than 2,000 years, can also bear witness to this divine loving attention.

The Catholic Church is close to you and is your friend. Yes, we love you and cannot but love you, "through the Fathers": Because of them you are very dear to us and favorite brothers (cf. Romans 11:28b). Following the Second Vatican Council the reciprocal esteem and trust between us has increased. Ever more fraternal and cordial contacts have developed, becoming even more intense during the pontificate of my venerated predecessor, John Paul II.

In Christ we partake in your heritage of the Fathers, in order to serve the Almighty, "with one accord" (Zephaniah 3:9), grafted onto the one "holy tree" of the people of God. As Christians, this fact makes us aware that, with you, we share in the responsibility of cooperating for the good of all people, in justice and peace, in truth and freedom, in holiness and love.

Keeping in mind this shared mission, we cannot fail to denounce and fight firmly against the hatred and misunderstanding, the injustice and violence that continue to worry the soul of men and women of good will. In this context, how can we not be pained and concerned over the renewal of manifestations of anti-Semitism?

Esteemed Lord Chief Rabbi, a short time ago you were entrusted with the spiritual guidance of the Roman Jewish community; you have assumed this responsibility with the wealth of your experience as scholar and doctor, who have shared the joys and

sorrows of so many people. To you I express my heartfelt best wishes for your mission and assure you of both my and my collaborators' esteem and cordial friendship. Many are the needs and challenges of Rome and the world, which invite us to unite our hands and hearts in concrete initiatives of solidarity, "tzedek" (justice) and "tzedekah" (charity). Together, we can work to transmit the torch of the Ten Commandments and of hope to the young generations."

May the Eternal watch over you and over the whole Jewish community of Rome! In this particular circumstance, I take up the prayer of Pope Clement I, invoking the blessings of Heaven upon all of you. "Give us and all who inhabit the earth concord and peace, as you gave our fathers when they invoked your name in faith and truth" ("To the Corinthians" 60,4). "Shalom!"

[Translation by ZENIT]
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