



The Holy See

**ADDRESS OF HIS HOLINESS POPE FRANCIS
TO MEMBERS OF THE DELEGATION
OF THE "CONFERENCE OF EUROPEAN RABBIS"**

Monday, 20 April 2015

[Multimedia]

Dear Friends,

I welcome you, members of the delegation of the Conference of European Rabbis, to the Vatican. I am especially pleased to do so, as this is the first visit by your Organization to Rome to meet with the Successor of Peter. I greet your President, Rabbi Pinchas Goldschmidt, and I thank him for his kind words.

I wish to express my sincere condolences for the death last evening of Rabbi Elio Toaff, former Chief Rabbi of Rome. I am united in prayer with Chief Rabbi Riccardo Di Segni – who would have been here with us – and with the entire Jewish Community in Rome. We gratefully remember this man of peace and dialogue who received [Pope John Paul II](#) during his historic visit to the Great Synagogue of Rome.

For almost fifty years, the dialogue between the Catholic Church and the Jewish community has progressed in a systematic way. Next 28 October we will celebrate the fiftieth anniversary of the conciliar Declaration [Nostra Aetate](#), which is still the reference point for every effort we make in this regard. With gratitude to the Lord, may we recall these years, rejoicing in our progress and in the friendship which has grown between us.

Today, in Europe, it is more important than ever to emphasise the spiritual and religious dimension of human life. In a society increasingly marked by secularism and threatened by atheism, we run the risk of living as if God did not exist. People are often tempted to take the place of God, to consider themselves the criterion of all things, to control them, to use everything according to their own will. It is so important to remember, however, that our life is a gift from God, and that we must depend on him, confide in him, and turn towards him always. Jews and Christians have the

blessing but also the responsibility to help preserve the religious sense of the men and women of today, and that of our society, by our witness to the sanctity of God and human life. God is holy, and the life he has given is holy and inviolable.

Anti-Semitic trends in Europe these days are troubling, as are certain acts of hatred and violence. Every Christian must be firm in deploring all forms of anti-Semitism, and in showing their solidarity with the Jewish people (cf. *Nostra Aetate*, 4). Recently we marked the seventieth anniversary of the liberation of Auschwitz, the concentration camp which has come to be synonymous with the great tragedy of the *Shoah*. The memory of what took place there, in the heart of Europe, is a warning to present and future generations. Acts of hatred and violence against Christians and the faithful of other religions must likewise be condemned everywhere.

Dear friends, I heartily thank you for this very significant visit. I extend my best wishes to your communities, with the assurance of my closeness and prayers. And, please, do not forget to pray for me.

Shalom alechem!