

# Abandoning Christ's Call - Catholic Church will cease all missionary activity among Jews

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After meeting the grand mufti of Jerusalem, Muhammad Ahmad Hussein, and praying at the Western Wall on Tuesday, Pope Benedict XVI arrived for a historic meeting with the chief rabbis at Heichal Shlomo, next to the capital's Great Synagogue, and agreed that the Catholic Church will cease all missionary activity among Jews.

In his welcoming address, Chief Ashkenazi Rabbi Yona Metzger thanked the pope for his announcement, calling it an "historic agreement and, "for us, an immensely important message."

Metzger also congratulated the pope on his arrival to "our holy land - the land to which we prayed to return during 2,000 years of exile... And, with God's help, our meeting today is taking place in the Land of Israel, in our city of Jerusalem - the eternal capital of the Jewish people."

In a hint of criticism over Benedict's speech at Yad Vashem on Monday, which was received with disappointment for its failure to apologize on behalf of the Catholic Church while paying tribute to the memory of the six million Jews who were killed in the Holocaust, Metzger hailed Benedict's predecessor, "Pope John Paul II, who visited us nine years ago, placed a note between the stones of the Western Wall, and in it a request for forgiveness from the Jewish people for the suffering caused to them throughout history, and of the Christian commitment toward true fraternity between our peoples."

Metzger also thanked Benedict for preventing the full reinstatement of Holocaust-denying Bishop Richard Williamson. (The Vatican lifted Williamson's excommunication in January, but after his views attracted widespread media coverage, the Vatican declared that "in order to be admitted to episcopal functions within the Church, [he] will have to take his distance, in an absolutely unequivocal and public fashion, from his position on the Shoah.")

"Had you not done so," Metzger explained, "a message may have been understood by another Holocaust denier - the president of Iran, granting legitimacy to his sinful declarations of his will and intention to destroy our country."

"I commend with appreciation your clear proclamation that anti-Semitism is not only a sin against the Jews, but also a sin against God," the chief rabbi continued.

Metzger then asked the pope to act on the issue of lost Jewish refugees; children saved by Christians during the Holocaust who were never told by their adoptive parents that they were Jews.

"Your Holiness, as you know, during the Holocaust many parents deposited their children in trust with the various churches throughout Europe," he said. "To our sorrow, six million Jews did not return."

Metzger also mentioned the pope's visit to the Western Wall, which is a "house of prayer for all nations," but lamented that "unfortunately there are those who have transformed their houses of prayer into warehouses of weapons and terror."

"One thing alone still threatens us all," he said, "the use of religion as a means for the killing of innocent people."

Metzger concluded by saying "It is my heartfelt blessing that together we will merit to add love, mutual respect and peace in our world. For each people will walk in the name of their God; And we will walk in the name of the Lord our God..."

Chief Sephardi Rabbi Shlomo Amar also took the podium, telling Benedict, "You represent a great and enormous nation, that knows and reads from the Bible and the Prophets."

Amar also focused on the fulfillment of God's promise to restore the Jewish People to their land, even in the face of despair.

"Who would have imagined, in the wake of the Holocaust, that our nation would not only return to its land, but also begin to fulfill the mitzvot given to them from God," Amar said.

"We, those who merit living here today," he continued, "see this happening to us. Our nation is standing on its feet, like the dry bones, taking on 'skin and sinews,' with the banner of Torah and Judaism waving above it."

Speaking after Amar, the pope vowed to continue the dialogue between Christianity and Judaism in an effort to advance the process of reconciliation.

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