



The Holy See

LETTER OF JOHN PAUL II TO CARDINAL WALTER KASPER

To Cardinal Walter Kasper

President of the Commission for Religious Relations with the Jews

Informed of the meeting organized on 28 and 29 January in Paris by the European Jewish Congress in which you will be taking part, together with Cardinal Jean-Marie Lustiger, Archbishop of Paris, I would like to join by prayer all those who have come together to address the question: After the Second Vatican Council and [Nostra aetate](#), Improving Relations between Jews and Catholics in Europe in the Pontificate of His Holiness John Paul II.

I am delighted by this initiative that is called to contribute to the dialogue and draws support from the development of the Catholic Church, as the Council desired. *Shalom*, peace! With this Biblical term, I would like to greet warmly all the participants in this meeting. It is particularly timely, as a continuation of the recent [Day of Prayer for Peace in the World](#), which was held in Assisi on 24 January. All the religions accepted the mission of working for peace, thus offering a sign of hope for the world and recalling that the spiritual and transcendent dimension of man invites him to promote peace and respect for the dignity of every human person. Jews and Christians have a special relationship. The message that comes to us from the God of the Covenant with Moses, the patriarchs and the prophets, is part of our common heritage and invites us to collaborate in the life of the world, for the Most High is calling us to be holy as He is holy, and at the same time, to love our neighbour as ourselves.

Since the Conciliar Declaration [Nostra aetate](#), great progress has been made - and I am very glad of it - towards better mutual understanding and reconciliation between our two communities. A text of this kind constitutes a starting point, an anchor and a compass for future relations. After the sorrowful events that scarred Europe's history, especially in the 20th century, it is right to give fresh energy to our relations, so that the religious tradition that inspired the culture and life of the continent may continue to be part of its soul and thus enable it to serve the growth of the whole

human person and the whole of mankind.

Jews and Christians are bound to one another because of their respective identity and should pursue that culture of dialogue that Martin Buber envisaged. It is our task to pass on to the new generations the treasures and values we have in common, so that never again will man despise his own brother in humanity and never again will conflicts or wars be unleashed in the name of an ideology that despises a culture or religion. On the contrary, the different religious traditions are called together to put their patrimony at the service of all, in the hope of building the common European home together, united in justice, peace, equity and solidarity. Then will begin to be realized the word of God announced by the prophet (cf. Is 11,6-9). Youth need our witness and our joint commitment if they are to believe, to sanctify God's name by their lives and to hope in a future for the world that will be rich in promise. In this way, they will be determined to affirm the ties of brotherhood to establish a renewed humanity.

I ask the Almighty to inspire the work of the Paris meeting and to make the efforts of the participants fruitful. May God's peace dwell in the heart of each one!

From the Vatican, 25 January 2002

JOHN PAUL II