



# IJCS NEWS

The Institute of Judaean-Christian Studies Annual Newsletter | Volume 3

2015

## From the Director

This year flew by as we marked two significant milestones of great importance to the Institute of Judaean-Christian Studies (IJCS): 1) the fiftieth anniversary of the promulgation of *Nostra Aetate*; and 2) the fortieth anniversary of the founding of the Master of Arts in Jewish-Christian Studies (JCST) graduate program.

The first milestone is particularly meaningful to us as our mission of answering God’s call to serve and be a blessing to the world is guided by the underlying principles of the constitutions and decrees of the Second Vatican Council, especially *Nostra Aetate*. Additionally, our founding director Monsignor John M. Oesterreicher was a principal architect of the "Statement on the Church’s Bond to the Jewish People" in the fourth paragraph of *Nostra Aetate*. I was therefore invited to participate in several commemorative events marking the anniversary of this watershed document. You can read brief synopses of these events throughout 2015 and their various outcomes and impacts on pages 3-4.

Regarding the second milestone, Msgr. Oesterreicher and the IJCS founded the JCST graduate program at Seton Hall University in 1975. For four decades this master’s program has offered opportunities for our students to explore major questions of interfaith dialogue and prepare for the future. The IJCS continues to provide scholarship funding to many of these students. Learn about how one of our alumna, Sister Agnes Njume, is applying what she learned in the program to make a difference in Buea, Cameroon in Africa on pages 5-6.

Be sure to also read about and access the link to the podcast of Dr. John Borelli’s keynote presentation, “The Complicated Journey of *Nostra Aetate*,” which he delivered at this year’s Msgr. Oesterreicher Memorial Lecture, on page 2, and “meet” our new graduate assistant on page 6.

In closing, I wish express my heartfelt gratitude to all of our volunteers, students and friends who helped us this year at our events and on various projects. We could not advance our peace-building efforts without your support!

*Reverend Lawrence E. Frizzell, D.Phil.*

Director, Institute of Judaean-Christian Studies  
Director, Jewish-Christian Studies Graduate Program



Our scholarship recipients have come from 21 countries across five continents

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John Borelli, Ph.D. presenting at the 22nd John M. Oesterreicher Memorial Lecture

## The Complicated Journey of *Nostra Aetate*

The Twenty-Second Monsignor John M. Oesterreicher Memorial Lecture was hosted by the Institute of Judaeo-Christian Studies at Seton Hall University on November 1, 2015 and featured prominent keynote speaker, John Borelli, Ph.D., who presented, “The Complicated Journey of *Nostra Aetate*.”

Dr. Borelli is the current Special Assistant for Interreligious Initiatives for the President of Georgetown University. He also served as Associate Director of the Secretariat for Ecumenical and Interreligious Affairs at the United States Conference of Catholic Bishops, where he focused on ecumenical dialogue with Orthodox Christians and with Anglicans and on interreligious dialogue and relations with Muslims, Buddhists, Hindus and other interfaith groups.

Drawing from his extensive research during his presentation, Dr. Borelli detailed the precarious and fragile historical origins and development of *Nostra Aetate* (Latin: *In Our Time*), the “Declaration on the Relation of the Church with Non-Christian Religions” of the Second Vatican Council. He threaded the contributions of key individuals, such as Popes John XXIII and Paul VI, Cardinal Augustin Bea, Monsignor John M. Oesterreicher, Father Thomas Stransky, Gregory Baum, Jules Isaac and others, with the details of the many internal and external obstacles and crises they faced in getting *Nostra Aetate* approved by the members of the twenty-first ecumenical council of the Catholic Church. Dr. Borelli also highlighted the differences between the many drafts of *Nostra Aetate* to show how it evolved into the final version of the declaration that eventually was promulgated by Pope Paul VI on October 28, 1965.

You can listen to Dr. Borelli’s full account of the various complexities and intrigues he outlines in his presentation by viewing a podcast of it online at the Institute’s free iTunes channel. Simply click [here](#) to get started.

Dr. Borelli is presently working with Father Thomas Stransky, C.S.P. on an extensive manuscript about the history of *Nostra Aetate*. He anticipates its publication by 2017. If you are interested in reading Dr. Borelli’s other publications, he and Archbishop Michael L. Fitzgerald co-authored *Interfaith Dialogue: a Catholic View* (Orbis Books, 2006), and he is also the editor of *A Common Word and the Future of Christian-Muslim Relations* (Georgetown University, 2009).

## The Kinship of Catholics & Jews



Tune in to WSOU 89.5 FM every Sunday morning from 8:30 am - 9:00 am for the IJCS radio program, *The Kinship of Catholics & Jews*.

Moderated by Father Lawrence E. Frizzell, the show promotes the shared values of Christians and Jews and features a wide variety of special guests, including Jewish and Christian academics and specialists.

You can also listen to past shows 24/7 from any computer, iPhone, iPad or mobile device for free on *The Kinship’s* iTunes channel.

Click [here](#) to start listening now!

The IJCS has another iTunes channel where we publish podcasts of our most popular events, including the annual Msgr. John M. Oesterreicher Memorial Lecture.

Visit our other [iTunes channel](#) today and start watching free videos from our lectures and conferences that cover a wide variety of topics such as Catholic-Jewish Relations; Pope John XXIII; Jewish Dietary Laws; and much more!



Father Lawrence Frizzell meeting Pope Francis in the piazza in front of St. Peter's Basilica on October 28, 2015

## Fiftieth Anniversary of *Nostra Aetate*

by Rev. Lawrence E. Frizzell

The last weeks of the Second Vatican Council's fourth session brought the approval of major documents and their promulgation by Pope Paul VI. The shortest, "The Declaration on the Church's Relation with Non-Christian Religions," also known by the initial words *Nostra Aetate* (*In Our Age*) from the official Latin text, was promulgated on October 28, 1965.

Throughout 2015, celebrations of the golden anniversary of *Nostra Aetate* took place in a number of dioceses and universities. Many of these meetings focused on the specific religions mentioned in the first three sections of *Nostra Aetate*: incidentally, these sections were added belatedly to the section on the Jewish people, which ultimately became the fourth section of *Nostra Aetate* following several edited versions in previous sessions of the Council. I participated in several of these celebratory meetings in 2015 and offer a brief chronological summary of each below, and where applicable, also make reference to where you may find additional information about the event and any developments such as official declarations and publications.

- The United States Conference of Catholic Bishops' Office of Ecumenical and Interreligious Affairs and the Catholic University of America (CUA) held a wide-ranging conference from May 19-21, 2015 in Washington, D.C. Besides a number of lectures and panel discussions, sharing of meals allowed the 200 invited participants to have personal contact that led to the following evaluative comment by one of the organizers, Dr. Pim Valkenberg who is a professor of religion and culture at CUA: "...the best thing that we did at the Catholic University conference was to offer Jews and Muslims our hospitality... the center of the dialogue was not the lectern - but the table" (See [Dr. Pim Valkenberg's article](#) in the *New Jersey Jewish News*).

The symposium's lectures explored aspects of Muslim-Catholic relations and addressed topics focusing on the Church and Judaism. Father F.X. Clooney, S.J. spoke on Hinduism. The proceedings will be published by the CUA Press in July 2016 and may be preordered [here](#) from Amazon.

- The National September 11 Memorial and Museum (World Trade Center) in New York was the site for a multi-religious gathering with Pope Francis on September 25, 2015. This ceremony was called "A Witness to Peace" and linked the Church's hope for world peace to the call for authentic exchange of ideas for the world. The program for this event featured the Council's declaration: "For fifty years, *Nostra Aetate* has served as the blueprint for the Catholic Church's efforts to promote peace, harmony, and understanding with other religions. It continues to inspire Catholics and their interreligious partners to pursue these essential goals."

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# Fiftieth Anniversary of *Nostra Aetate* - continued

Because the 500 people invited to this ceremony were in place well in advance, there was ample opportunity for us to share informally. The assembly of representatives from various religious communities in the New York area heard Pope Francis pray in remembrance of victims in the attack that destroyed almost 3,000 lives. We also listened to revered texts on peace from the major religious traditions that originated in Asia before listening to the chanting of a Jewish prayer in memory of the deceased. The Young People's Chorus of New York City sang "Let there be peace on earth," followed by Pope Francis' reflection, which you may read [here](#). You can also access Pope Francis' address at the end of the event on [Zenit's website](#).

- The Pontifical Councils for Interreligious Dialogue and for Promoting Christian Unity joined with the Pontifical Gregorian University for a conference in Rome from October 26-28, 2015. Again *Nostra Aetate* was celebrated in the wider context of the entire text. About 400 participants from 35 countries represented many religions and philosophies.

The conference theme, "education for peace," was explored by speakers who represented angles from which life-long learning should advance the search for mutual understanding as a basis for collaboration in the process of fostering peace. All of us who participated were invited to a special section of the piazza in front of St. Peter's Basilica for the papal audience on October 28. Pope Francis addressed the vast assembly on the theme of *Nostra Aetate*. Click [here](#) to read his full address.

Additionally a video in "The Leaven of Good" series offered an impressive sequence of interviews and places where the Church's commitment to interfaith dialogue has spread over the decades. This video can be ordered by visiting the [Pontifical Council for Interreligious Dialogue's website](#): individuals and organizations working in interreligious dialogue will receive a complimentary copy and only have to pay a shipping fee.

Following this conference, the Holy See's Commission for Religious Relations with the Jews in the Pontifical Council for Promoting Christian Unity presented a document, "[A Reflection on Theological Questions pertaining to Catholic-Jewish Relations on the occasion of the 50th Anniversary of \*Nostra Aetate\* \(no.4\)](#)." Formally issued on December 10, 2015, this text reviews the past fifty years and presents a number of points which have been developed in the Church's understanding of her relation with Judaism.

- The IJCS sponsored two events to commemorate *Nostra Aetate*. On October 22, 2015 my colleague Dr. Gregory Glazov of the School of Theology and I reflected on "Jesus and Jewish Prayer." This event, which also celebrated the fortieth anniversary of the IJCS's founding of the Master of Arts in Jewish-Christian Studies program at Seton Hall University, showed the importance of the Biblical and Jewish matrix of Christian prayer. On November 1, 2015 Dr. John Borelli of Georgetown University traced the complicated journey of *Nostra Aetate*, developed from Pope John XIII's call for a statement on the Jewish people to the wider introductory statement of the Church's view of other religions. Click [here](#) to watch the video of Dr. Borelli's presentation on IJCS's free iTunes channel.

As I reflect on these meetings and the first fifty years since the Second Vatican Council, it is clear the past five decades have brought a deeper appreciation of the Jewish people along with many experiences of working together for a better world. It is also evident in looking at the larger context of interfaith relations throughout the world, especially in areas of persecution and warfare, that we have much to do to assist in the process of bringing people of different religions together to foster the mutual understanding that should lead to true peace. This essential and challenging task is at the heart of IJCS's mission. May God continue to bless our work and strengthen us and all others who take on this challenge and commit to peace-building throughout our world!

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***As I reflect on these meetings and the first fifty years since the Second Vatican Council, it is clear the past five decades have brought a deeper appreciation of the Jewish people along with many experiences of working together for a better world."***

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Sister Agnes Njume

## Sister Agnes: That They May Be One

One of the most important ways the Institute of Judaeo-Christian Studies (IJCS) fulfills its mission is by providing scholarships to students who have matriculated into the Master of Arts in Jewish-Christian Studies program at Seton Hall University. Our scholarship recipients have come from 21 countries across five continents, and many have become intellectual and spiritual leaders across the globe. Sister Agnes Njume is one of these leaders to whom we reached out to this year to learn how she is making a difference in Cameroon, Africa.

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**IJCS:** So nice to reconnect with you! We hear you have settled back in Buea, Cameroon after graduating in 2014. Have you resumed teaching since returning home?

**SAN:** Yes, I am currently head of the Bishop Jules Peeters Memorial Secondary School, which has a small population of 240 students but represents over 100 tribes between staff and students.

**IJCS:** More than 100 tribes? That sound incredibly challenging.

**SAN:** Cameroon has more than 300 tribes so one of the biggest challenges we face is tribalism and corruption. Promoting unity among such a diverse population is therefore a top priority. In fact, the motto of our school, taken from the 17th chapter of St John's Gospel, is one and the same with the motto of Bishop Jules Peeters: "That they may be one."

**IJCS:** In what ways do you promote this *oneness*?

**SAN:** Drawing in large part from my Jewish-Christian studies, I try to inculcate the students with little ways of oneness, such as caring for each other in school and making a difference at home and in the society in which they live. For example, they are taught to visit fellow students who are sick in the hospital and to further assist students who are sick by copying notes from class for them and walking with them to where they can take a taxi. Also, the students attend funerals of their friends' relatives and pray for the sick by name. Students with physical or mental disabilities are also supported very specially.

Our students come from more than 10 Christian denominations, including Jehovah Witness members, and a few are also Muslims. Yet, we don't show any differences in any of these activities.

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# Welcome, Irmina Czapiewska



Irmina Czapiewska

The IJCS is pleased to welcome Irmina Czapiewska, our newly appointed Graduate Assistant.

Irmina holds a Bachelor of Arts degree with majors in English and English Literature and a Master of Arts degree in Archival Sciences from Nicolaus Copernicus University in Toruń, Poland. She plans to focus her studies on various aspects of Jewish history, an interest as she explains, which began while visiting Israel:

My parents have always been into different cultures and religions, which is why it was only natural for me to develop the same interest in this early stage of my life. When I went to Israel in 2009 for the first time, but not the last, I immediately fell in love with everything connected to Jewish life, especially with the language, which I was later able to study in my hometown [of Toruń].

We know Irmina will make many meaningful contributions as she joins with us to forward our mission, and we wish her well as she simultaneously works to earn her Master of Arts in Jewish-Christian Studies!

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## Sister Agnes - *continued*

**IJCS:** It's encouraging to learn how you are uniting such a diverse student body at Bishop Jules Peeters Memorial Secondary School. Are you also promoting oneness in your parish?

**SAN:** Most definitely - I work with the Catholic Women's Organization, where I serve as a spiritual director. There are about 50 active members, and we regularly participate in ecumenical activities that promote unity and oneness. For example, during certain feast days, such as "Our Lady of the Rosary," we invite the Baptist and the Presbyterian women in our community to share our faith, prayers and meals. They too share their understanding and express various lessons they have learned. The Catholic Women also attend Jubilees and other occasions when the non-Catholic women invite them.

**IJCS:** Thank you for updating us on the ways in which you are promoting unity and *tikkun olam* in Cameroon among your students and the women in your parish. We pray for continued blessings in 2016 for your educational and pastoral work.

**SAN:** I will keep you informed of my progress in various ways towards encouraging unity. I remain grateful for my studies in the Jewish-Christian program in Seton Hall University. God bless you all.

## Follow Us Today on Our Social Network





## New Resource Page

Our director Father Lawrence E. Frizzell recently added the new page, [Online Resources for Jewish-Christian Relations](#), to the Research & Resources section of his personal website and blog. This new page, which was designed to assist students with their studies, contains a cross section of resources and links to websites that highlight various aspects of Jewish-Christian relations.

In 2016 Father Frizzell will add the page, Online Resources for Holocaust Studies, to aid both students and educators in the area of Holocaust and Genocide studies. To be notified of this and other additions to his website, be sure and subscribe to his blog at <http://blogs.shu.edu/lawrencefrizzell/blog/>.

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## Michael Wyschogrod (1928-2015)

*by Rev. Lawrence E. Frizzell*

The Institute of Judaeo-Christian Studies lost a long-time friend and a major benefactor on December 17, 2015 with the passing of Dr. Michael Wyschogrod. His first book review was his publication on Father John M. Oesterreicher's *Walls are Crumbling*. Dr. Wyschogrod was also a speaker for the first Menorah Institute at Seton Hall University in July 1969. Seton Hall University celebrated his academic accomplishments, including his tenure as a professor in Baruch College's Department of Philosophy, by awarding him an honorary doctorate in Hebrew Literature in 1983. Later the Institute presented Dr. Wyschogrod with the University's *Shalom Award* in 2005.

Dr. Wyschogrod contributed the essay, "Israel, the Church and Election," to the fifth volume of *The Bridge: Brothers in Hope*, which was published by the Institute in 1970. He also wrote the "Foreword" to Msgr. Oesterreicher's monograph, *God at Auschwitz?* in 1993.

We are very grateful for the gift of Dr. Wyschogrod's personal papers and books from a lifetime in Jewish-Christian relations. These papers are housed in the Archives of Seton Hall's Walsh Library, a fine complement to the collections of Msgr. Oesterreicher and Father Edward Flannery's papers.

As a neophyte in Catholic-Jewish relations, I first met Dr. Wyschogrod at the Dominican Sisters College in Memphis, Tennessee in July 1968. Reading Pope Paul VI's encyclical "Humanae Vitae" in the *New York Times*, he detected a significant "typo." The negative particle was omitted from a key sentence! Dr. Wyschogrod read texts with great care and saw beneath the surface.

Dr. Wyschogrod will be remembered as a first-class theologian whose work will continue to have impact on the understanding of Judaism and the impact of Jewish thought on Christians, both Catholic and Protestant. May his soul be caught up in the bonds of life eternal!

## Your loving-kindness is better than life! (Psalm 63:3)

Please consider supporting the mission of the Institute of Judaeo-Christian Studies by making a donation.

Your gift will help us continue to unite and empower Jewish and Christian scholars, educators and students who are dedicated to exploring and promoting their shared values, practices, traditions and peaceful pursuits.

All donations are tax deductible and may be sent to:

**Institute of Judaeo-Christian Studies**  
400 South Orange Avenue  
South Orange, NJ 07079

For more information, please contact Fr. Lawrence Frizzell via phone at (973) 761.9751 or by email at [lawrence.frizzell@shu.edu](mailto:lawrence.frizzell@shu.edu).

**Website:** [www.shu.edu/go/judaeo-christian](http://www.shu.edu/go/judaeo-christian)

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IJCS has been promoting peace for more than 60 years

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### Faculty & Staff

**The Rev. Lawrence E. Frizzell, D. Phil.**  
Director, Institute of Judaeo-Christian Studies and  
the Jewish-Christian Studies Graduate Program  
[lawrence.frizzell@shu.edu](mailto:lawrence.frizzell@shu.edu) / (973) 761.9751

**Jay Wolferman, M.A.**  
Assistant to the Director  
[jay.wolferman@shu.edu](mailto:jay.wolferman@shu.edu) / (973) 761.9751



**Institute of Judaeo-Christian Studies**  
400 South Orange Avenue  
South Orange, NJ 07079

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