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The Day of Judaism in the Catholic Church of Poland

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The Day of Judaism in the Catholic Church of Poland

by

Piotr Dudek

Submitted in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree

Master of Arts

Department of Religion

Seton Hall University

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Abstract: The Day of Judaism in the Catholic Church of Poland

This master's thesis discusses "The Day of Judaism in the Catholic Church of Poland," a special time in the Polish Church calendar to rediscover her roots in Judaism. Thus, the aim of this study is to present the changes taking place in the Catholic Church in Poland in the wake of the Second Vatican Council—changes that seek to present Judaism in an impartial and authentic way, and changes that seek to understand the Christian identity of Catholics.

The scope of the current work covers the history of Polish-Jewish relations from Communist Poland to the present day (2015), in parallel with the history of the Catholic Church in the same time frame. The study also employs the method of comparative-historical analysis regarding Polish-Jewish relations and the plight of the Church in the Communist era and today, to indicate why the interfaith dialogue gained momentum in recent years.

The First Chapter presents a historical analysis of Polish-Jewish relations from 1945-1989 and shortly after the fall of Communism. The description includes in particular the postwar difficulties in the coexistence of Poles and Jews, State-citizen relations, the brutal repressions of Jews and Poles by the Communist regime, and the problem of antisemitism.

The Second Chapter covers the situation of the Church in Communist Poland along with a description of the first incentives that led her to the dialogue with Jews. This chapter is divided into the four subsections. Subsection 1 is devoted to the overall situation of the Church in Poland, including the relation on the level of Catholic Church-

Communist state authorities, which touches upon persecutions of the priests and Church adherents. Subsection 2 addresses the reception of the Second Vatican Council by the Church in Poland. Subsection 3 presents the controversy around the Carmelite convent at Auschwitz. Finally, Subsection 4 focuses on the issue of the Church's approach to Judaism.

The Third Chapter raises, among other subjects, the origins of the Day of Judaism in the Catholic Church in Poland, an analysis of its documents, content of the brochures disseminated for the Day of Judaism, the evaluation of the initiative by Catholics and Jews, and in conclusion the fruits that this Day brings to the Church.

Finally, the analysis of the Day of Judaism confirmed that the reforms of the Second Vatican Council have been applied in Poland. Another question that has been answered to a large extent in this master's thesis was how the post-conciliar changes, in particular development of the Day of Judaism, are adopted in practice—in the parishes and in the public opinion.

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Abbreviations

DKR (Ger.) Deutscher Koordinierungsrat der Gesellschaften für Christlich-Jüdische Zusammenarbeit (German Coordinating Council of Societies for Christian-Jewish Cooperation)

ICCJ (Eng.) International Council of Christian and Jews

KAI (Pol.) Katolicka Agencja Informacyjna (Catholic News Organization)

NSZ (Pol.) Narodowe Siły Zbrojne (National Armed Forces)

PPR (Pol.) Polska Partia Robotnicza (Polish Workers' Party)

PRL (Pol.) Polska Rzeczpospolita Ludowa (Polish People's Republic)

PZPR (Pol.) Polska Zjednoczona Partia Robotnicza (Polish United Workers' Party)

SB (Pol.) Służba Bezpieczeństwa (Security Service)

UB (Pol.) Urząd Bezpieczeństwa (Office of [State] Security), Predecessor of SB

ŻUL (Pol.) Żydowski Uniwersytet Ludowy (The Jewish People's University)

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Introduction

The subject of this master's thesis is the Day of Judaism in the Catholic Church of Poland. This theme is important for the Church, because the Day of Judaism is a special time in her life, a time that allows her to realize and acknowledge her own identity—to see her roots in the Jewish faith—the faith of Abraham. This goal is achieved mainly through [common] prayer of the both groups of believers—Catholics and Jews.

Indirectly, this special time gives an opportunity for a valuable encounter—to bring together the followers of Judaism, the Catholic Church, and to the extent possible, other Christian Churches. Furthermore, the Day is important in Poland, which after the World War II became predominantly Catholic. In contrast, during the pre-war years, because of different borders and other reasons, the country was home to followers of numerous different religions, and one tenth of its inhabitants was a follower of Judaism. Therefore, it must be noted that the War brought a change in the Polish national consciousness. A country that for centuries had been diverse basically became a mono-denominational nation-state.

Essential for the creation of this work was the fact that as a result of the war atrocities and unprecedented genocide of the *Shoah*, 6 million Jews, including over 3 million Polish Jews, perished. In this way, the centuries-old vibrant life, history, and rich cultural heritage of Jews in Poland had been almost completely obliterated. The traumatic

war experiences, and repressions that affected Jews, Polish Catholics, and the anti-government opposition during the years of Communism in Poland, could not heal the festering wounds of historical injustice. Neither could they foster the agreement between Poles and Jews, nor the dialogue between Jews and Christians in Poland. On balance, these rough relations largely fueled distrust in the relations between Jews and Catholics worldwide.

Key to the topic of this work was the change initiated within the Church in the wake of the Second Vatican Council, which opened the Catholic Church to non-Christian religions. In addition, the reorientation of the Council, often taken for granted or unrealized by today's generation, set out the reconciliation of the Church with Judaism. It is no exaggeration to say that in the long term this reorientation brought forth the Day of Judaism in Poland. From this perspective, and from the aftermath of the Second Vatican Council reforms, the topic in question seems to be meaningful.

Another crucial factor for addressing the subject of this work is the fall of Communism in Poland in 1989. It allowed people to embark on the dialogue and encourage greater understanding between Polish Catholics and Jews. To some extent, due to the constraints of the political system, the conciliar reforms began to be implemented with some delay in Poland. The complexity of all these factors must be taken into consideration in order to understand fully the importance of the Day of Judaism for the Catholic Church in Poland.

For this reason, the aim of this study is to present the positive changes taking place after the Second Vatican Council in the Catholic Church in Poland—changes that seek to present Judaism in an impartial and authentic way, and changes that seek to

understand the Christian identity of Catholics and the relation of Judaism and Christianity to each other. Furthermore, this study aims to present the Polish model of the Day of Judaism to people from abroad interested in reconciliation between religions. This example may inspire other individuals, organizations, and countries to implement similar enterprises in their respective environments. Another goal of this study was to promote a better understanding between Poles and Jews.

The scope of the current work covers the history of Polish-Jewish relations from Communist Poland to the present day, in parallel with the history of the Catholic Church in the same time frame. Then, the work covers the history, origins and the course of the developments of the Day of Judaism in the Catholic Church in Poland from its beginning in 1998 to 2015.

The material gathered for this thesis is primarily based on analysis of cited scholarly papers, books, journals, interviews, and articles—in Polish and English, and, importantly, the brochures prepared by the Conference of the Polish Episcopate for the Days of Judaism from 2011-2015, which have been translated by the author of this thesis from Polish into English and are attached in the appendices to this work. Another research component of this work is a series of interviews conducted by the author with the main organizers and supporters of the initiative in Poland. The study also employed the method of comparative-historical analysis regarding Polish-Jewish relations and the plight of the Church in the Communist era and today, to indicate why the dialogue gained momentum in recent years. This relatively broad historical perspective, which comprises a significant part of this work, has been necessary for the objective assessment of the

current events and developments in relations between Poles and Jews, and between the Church and Jews in Poland.

Going into detail, this master's thesis consists of Introduction, List of Abbreviations, Three Chapters, and the Conclusion, which offers a summary of the work. The First Chapter presents a historical analysis of Polish-Jewish relations from 1945-1989 and shortly after the fall of Communism. The description includes in particular the postwar difficulties in the coexistence of Poles and Jews, State-citizen relations, the brutal repressions of Jews and Poles by the Communist regime, and the problem of anti-Semitism.

The Second Chapter covers the situation of the Church in Communist Poland along with a description of the first incentives that led her to the dialogue with Jews. This chapter is divided into the four subsections. Subsection 1 is devoted to the overall situation of the Church in Poland, including the relation on the level of Catholic Church-Communist state authorities, which touches upon persecutions of the priests and Church adherents. Subsection 2 addresses the reception of the Second Vatican Council by the Church in Poland. Subsection 3 presents the controversy around the Carmelite convent at Auschwitz. Finally, Subsection 4 focuses on the issue of the Church's approach to Judaism.

The Third Chapter raises, among other subjects, the origins of the Day of Judaism in the Catholic Church in Poland, an analysis of its documents, content of the brochures disseminated for the Day of Judaism, the evaluation of the initiative by Catholics and Jews, and in conclusion the fruits that this Day brings to the Church.

After the War—Rising From the Ashes

Polish-Jewish Relations 1945-1989

The year 1945 marked a longed-for daybreak for Europe and the world, so badly crushed by the vastness of Nazi atrocities during World War II. Even though, by May 8, the war was over in Europe, it would be too simplistic to assume that the inhabitants of the Old Continent became free of the concomitant implications of war. As a matter of fact, the new reality had serious consequence for all belligerent countries and their populations. In the aftermath of war, numerous countries in Central-Eastern Europe, trying to restore their statehoods and ravaged economies, imminently came into the Soviet sphere of influence. Thus, the speech of former British Prime Minister Winston Churchill, condemning the Soviet Union's policies in Europe, became acutely illustrious for the bleak period to come: "From Stettin in the Baltic to Trieste in the Adriatic, an iron curtain has descended across the continent."¹ Truly, the newly coined term "iron curtain" cast light on the wall of division between the West and the Soviet Russia backed up by its satellites. Among them, Poland, the first country to fight the German Nazi aggression, was inescapably becoming an integral element of the Soviet jigsaw.

A large number of intricate issues meant that it was difficult for Poland to enjoy the war victory to its utmost. First, the country suffered enormous damages on the theatre of war, not to mention the loss of human lives, national wealth, cultural life, industry,

¹ History. <http://www.history.com/this-day-in-history/churchill-delivers-iron-curtain-speech> (accessed January 20, 2015).

agriculture, devastated and depopulated cities, and so forth. We should remember that the country's economy, with enormous material losses in virtually every area, was ruined. Within this gloomy landscape, the inhabitants of the country were attempting to restore their life to normal. However, other serious dramas were lurking around the corner. Among numerous problems, the relations between Poles and Jews, who had lived together for generations, turned out to be especially complicated.

Neither were Polish-Jewish relations smooth shortly before or during the War, despite a long period of relatively peaceful coexistence. Apparently, after the atrocities of the Holocaust, nothing bad should have befallen the Jewish community: "It would seem that the knowledge of what happened to the Jews, should have removed the old animosities and antagonisms, erase stereotypes, induce compassion for the survivors, those few who managed to survive, having lost all their relatives."² On the other hand, the prose of everyday life left the Jewish people with no illusion: "Shortly after liberation, Jewish survivors returned to their native villages, towns, and cities, but no one awaited them; no relatives, friends, or neighbors were there to greet them. Each one had to begin anew, alone and without means, in a country that had been more extensively devastated than any other under the Nazi rule."³

Many times the Jews returned to their abandoned homes, which were now occupied by their Christian neighbors. They were surrounded by "the cemetery," tragic memories, and reluctance to reach out to them on the part of their neighbors, who were

² Romuald Jakub-Weksler Waszkinel, "Antysemityzm wobec Żydów," [*Antisemitism toward Jews-TRANS*] Miesiecznik.znak.com.pl, December 2008, <http://www.miesiecznik.znak.com.pl/10297/calosc/antysemityzm-wobec-zydow> (accessed December 15, 2014).

³ Lucjan Dobroszycki, *Survivors of the Holocaust in Poland: A Portrait Based on Jewish Community Records 1944-1947* (Armonk, New York: M. E. Sharpe, 1994), 5.

afraid that they would try to regain their possessions.⁴ The Polish Jews were daunted, even if they were able to seek restitution, because the property was often nationalized. (After WWII the Polish Communist government nationalized all major farms, real estates, and industrial sector. The process included the entire Polish society, Jews and non-Jews to a similar degree. Many people of the nobility had to flee the country to avoid persecution for being “rich” and “noble”). Also, the neighbors presented indifferent, reluctant or even hostile attitudes toward returning Jews: “It can be explained due to moral savagery caused by war, that in those years the price of human life was very low, that we—as Antoni Gołubiew wrote—were infected by death. But this is not an excuse! (*Tygodnik Powszechny* 11/1991).”⁵

It is no wonder that the history of mutual Polish-Jewish relations remained an unspoken and forbidden topic over many years of the Communist regime, when attempts were made to obliterate Jews from Polish memory. This calls for deeper analysis so as to understand the noticeable progress in the most recent relations between those two groups. Truly, in order to comprehend their current relations, one has to hark back to the early postwar days and even beyond. This historical excursion would provide an indispensable outline for discussing the contemporaneous topics. Indeed, neither Poles nor Jews should escape from assessing these aspects of the past, because they throw a shadow on the current affairs. As a matter of fact, the accounts of all historical events laid out in this

⁴ Zygmunt Woźniczka, “Powojenne dzieje Żydów w Polsce i ich wpływ na losy społeczności żydowskiej w Zagłębiu Dąbrowskim,” [*The postwar history of Jews in Poland and their influence on the fate of the Jewish community in the Dąbrowa Basin-TRANS*] http://www.ipsir.uw.edu.pl/UserFiles/File/Katedra_Socjologii_Norm/TEKSTY/ZWozniczkaPowojenneDziejeZydowWPolsce.pdf (accessed February 12, 2015).

⁵ Romuald Jakub-Weksler Waszkinel, “Antysemityzm wobec Żydów,” [*Antisemitism toward Jews-TRANS*] *Miesięcznik.znak.com.pl*, December 2008, <http://www.miesiecznik.znak.com.pl/10297/calosc/antysemityzm-wobec-zydow> (accessed December 15, 2014).

study are still subject of numerous ongoing debates. Nevertheless, this chapter would give the reader a broader perspective and understanding of the specific plight of Poles and Jews in the period in question.

To begin with demographic losses during the War, a publication (from 1947) of a respective government office on war reparations, called *Biuro Odszkodowań Wojennych przy Prezydium Rady Ministrów*, estimated the wartime death toll of Poland to be 6.028.000 Polish citizens, including some 3 million Jews. However, it should be stressed that this reckoning included only Poles and Jews (especially on the eastern borderland), but did not include White Russians, Lithuanians, Ukrainians, and even Germans, who before the war had lived in the country.⁶ A subsequent commission, working in the years 1949-1951 for the Polish Ministry of Finance, provided another approximate death toll of 5,085,000, including 1,706,700 Poles and 3,378,000 Jews. Furthermore, the analyses drafted for the United Nations verified the numbers, and determined the number of victims as 2.6 million for Poles, and 3.2 million for Jews, which altogether equaled 5.8 million casualties. In addition, 800,000 victims of ethnic minorities were not included in this total.⁷

Thus, in the Second World War, Poland suffered undoubtedly the biggest demographic losses and damages among all countries fighting and occupied by Nazi Germany—writes Kazimierz J. Latuch, a demographic specialist.⁸ The magnitude of damages, national and denominational structure, as well as geographic and chronological details have not been finally determined even today. Nevertheless, according to the

⁶ Wojciech Materski, Tomasz Szarota (ed.), *Polska 1939-1945: Straty osobowe i ofiary represji pod dwiema okupacjami* [*Poland 1939-1945: Victims of Repression under the Two Occupations-TRANS*] (Warszawa: IPN, Komisja Ścigania Zbrodni przeciwko Narodowi Polskiemu, 2009), 14.

⁷ *Ibidem*, 15.

⁸ *Ibidem*, 39.

Central Statistical Office of Poland, the country's population on January 1, 1939 amounted to 35.1 million people. Then, on February 14, 1946 the population counted only 23.9 million (the number was additionally diminished by immigration, deportation, and changes in citizenship status as a consequence of relocated borders, etc.). Accordingly, the population has shrunk by 11.2 million, that is 31.9 percent, in the course of those six war years. In addition, including the demographic prognosis for 1945, the real loss totaled as many as 14.2 million people.⁹

A noted British historian, Norman Davies, explores and comments on this tragic data in his book *God's Playground: A History of Poland* as to point to a problem of one-sided approach to the victims by Poles and Jews:

The brute statistics speak for themselves. In six years of the war, the population of the former Polish Republic was reduced by 6,028,000. Of these, some 2.9 million were Polish Jews. Some 644,000 Polish citizens (10.7 per cent) lost their lives as the direct result of war operations. A total of 5,384,000 citizens (89.3 per cent) were killed in executions, in pacifications, and above all in the camps. Of an estimated 18 million Nazi victims of all nationalities, over 11 million died in the occupied Polish lands. Of these, over 5 million were Jews. Sadly enough, the statistical breakdown of these terrible totals continues to be a subject to dispute. Jewish investigators tend to count Jewish victims. Polish investigators tend to count Polish victims. Not everyone, it seems, is content to count human beings.¹⁰

It seems that Norman Davies touched on the core of the issue, which has remained crucial until today. Namely, prompted by enormous trauma, some people have tended to focus solely on their own victims, forgetting about the others. Finally, it turned out that these gross numbers became at times a bone of contention, rather than a reflection to bring the two nations together. On top of that, moreover, the psychological suffering caused by

⁹ Ibidem, 41.

¹⁰ Norman Davies, *God's Playground: A History of Poland, vol. 2* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2005), 344.

annihilation of so many people, families, relatives, and friends, was followed by political problems and dire material shortages.

Peculiarly, following the decisions of the superpowers on the Yalta Conference, held February 4-11, 1945, Poland lost half of its prewar territory, regaining instead some ethnically Slavic grounds on north and west—at the cost of Germany.¹¹ This arbitrary drawing of the new map of the country, performed under the auspices of Joseph Stalin, and approved by the United States, England, and France, was the price for interim peace, a price that would become agonizing for the future of the people within the borders of The Polish People's Republic.

Thereby, it became more than evident that Stalin decided to ignore the natural, historical development of the borders as well as minorities within them. Moreover, his controversial division was symptomatic of the new changes in so called people's democracies, where the policy of the mainstream party dwarfed national, ethnic, religious, and other minorities. As one Jewish Communist, Marek Bitner, pointed out in 1945, all minorities, not only Jews, had been scrupulously pushed aside of the state affairs; and a new tide of anti-Semitism came.¹² One should not forget, though, that this political reality was largely an imposed one: "It is often said that the Polish Communist movement had few native roots. It can be regarded as a plant grown mainly in a foreign frame and transplanted into the post-war Polish garden by Soviet political gardeners."¹³

The policy of the newly established country did not encourage fostering interpersonal bonds in such domains as intercultural exchanges or interfaith dialogue;

¹¹ Ibidem, 35.

¹² Alina Cała, *Mniejszość żydowska [Jewish Minority]* [in:] Piotr Madajczyk (ed.), *Mniejszości narodowe w Polsce [National Minorities in Poland-TRANS]* (Warszawa: Instytut Studiów Politycznych PAN, 1998), 250; *Protokół [Minutes]*, AŻIH, CKŻP, Wydż. Org. sygn. 304, t. 15.

¹³ Norman Davies, *God's Playground: A History of Poland*, vol. 2, 401.

quite the contrary, the new system was designed to ensure that the relation of citizenship is the only important factor for bonding. In doing so, the policymakers ruthlessly neglected the past sentiments, bringing up frustration instead. Indeed, public dissatisfaction was prevalent among those who were deported from their erstwhile small homelands. Not only was the map of Poland drafted somewhat artificially and from top-down, but also the entire economy was planned centrally.¹⁴ Apparently, the Communist authorities had their own priorities: “Planned economic growth, socialist industrialization and the priority development of heavy industry were also major elements of the Soviet model applied in Central Europe.”¹⁵ Moreover, the sheer adverse conditions of everyday existence and imposed government censorship in Poland were far greater than expected.

To begin with, the economic situation of the country following the end of the war, seen through the eyes of its citizens and foreigners, was miserable:

The severity of the warfare in Central Europe, high levels of material destruction and enormous social dislocation combined with extensive population movement in terms of the migration of refugees, liberation of prisoners of war, forced laborers and the displacement of national groups, to produce a situation of massive devastation and disruption. A representative of the United States Control Commission thus wrote of the ‘complete economic, social and political collapse’ in Central Europe as one, which probably had no parallel since the end of the Roman Empire.¹⁶

With this in mind, it is not hard to predict that the economic hardships in the first years after the war had an impact on people affected by high unemployment and social dissatisfaction. The loss and damage to property, according to Polish assessment from 1947, was 50 billion dollars, compared to the prices from 1939. It is difficult to compare the sum with today’s monetary values, but it would be at least one trillion US dollars—

¹⁴ Maps of Poland before and after WWII are attached in the appendix.

¹⁵ Paul G. Lewis, *Central Europe since 1945* (New York: Longman Publishing, 1994), 10.

¹⁶ Hugh Thomas, *Armed Truce. The Beginnings of the Cold War 1945-46* (London: Atheneum, 1988), 461.

explains Andrzej Chmielarz of the Military History Research Office in Poland. Besides, some losses continued after the war due to Soviet politics. For example, those who withdrew their money before the war lost their entire savings, not being allowed to exchange the currency after the introduction of the ruble by Soviets.

In addition, even after the end of the war, the Soviets burnt a few cities in Poland, thereby aggravating people's material situation. Another key thing to remember is that during World War II, Poland was also stripped of cultural goods. According to estimates of the post-war government in London, the country lost 75 percent of its heritage. Others pointed out that 516,000 items from the state collection were lost, whereas 63,000 items from private collections have been sought until today. Among the losses one can count artists such as Van Dyck, Raphael and Bruegel.¹⁷

It should be pointed out as well that there was a significant difference in perceiving the Soviets by Poles and Jews, especially at the beginning of Communist regime. That is to say, Poles mistrusted Russians and Germans to a similar degree, since the history of mutual military conflicts stretched over centuries, and finally both countries had attacked Poland in September 1939. On the other hand, the Jewish people had even more reasons to be particularly afraid of Germans who performed their systematic annihilation in concentration camps. By contrast, the Jewish people, unlike Poles, put considerably more trust in Russians—and their reaction was not groundless. It was the Red Army who liberated the concentration camps and it was in Soviet Russia where some Jews were able to survive the Holocaust.¹⁸ The ethnic Poles, simply put, felt repulsion

¹⁷ Ewa Syta, "Straty po II wojnie światowej niepowetowane do dziś," [*Losses after WWII irreparable to this day-TRANS*], <http://www.polskieradio.pl/7/129/Artykul/1221201,Straty-po-II-wojnie-swiatowej-niepowetowane-do-dzis> (accessed February 5, 2015).

¹⁸ Władysław Bartoszewski, *The Convent at Auschwitz* (New York: G. Braziller, 1991), 15-17.

toward the Soviet Union as an imposed reality. The Jews, however, so severely afflicted by poverty, hunger, repressions, imprisonment, and so on during the “Final Solution,” and even by their next-door neighbors perceived the Soviet Union more in terms of a possible refuge, and the Red Army was seen as a rescuer. At the same time, the fear against the Polish right wing fueled their hope in the Soviet state.¹⁹

Moreover, even before the War, the Communist ideals of social justice, brotherhood, and equality were appealing to the Jews, who suffered discriminations and fought for civil rights. For these reasons, and because of their desired educational and intellectual background, Jews emerged as a potential asset in the Communist party. In comparison, the Soviets were much more suspicious toward Polish intellectuals, who could have served in the ranks of the Home Army during the war. However, in each case, there was a multifaceted set of factors behind a decision to support Communism. Czesław Miłosz, a Polish poet and prose writer, set forth one of major reasons why Jewish intellectuals were much desired in the state apparatus: “The Russians regarded them as more reliable instruments of Soviet desires in the belief that they would be less inclined to Polish patriotism because of the discrimination to which the Polish rightists had subjected them before the war.”²⁰

Generally speaking, Jews were largely marginalized in political life of prewar Poland, and for many of them, the first possibility to pursue a career in public administration emerged only after the War. The Communists were “calling primarily for

¹⁹ Alina Cała, *Mniejszość żydowska [Jewish Minority]*, 252.

²⁰ Tadeusz Piotrowski, *Poland's Holocaust: Ethnic Strife, Collaboration with Occupying Forces and Genocide in the Second Republic, 1918-1947* (Jefferson, North Carolina: McFarland and Company, 1998), 59.

educated people, who were then in short supply.”²¹ On the other hand, Poles approached the new system with more reserve: “Many educated Poles were ready to help in the rehabilitation of their country; they were not, however, ready to participate in the ruling of the country under Communists.”²² For many Jews, the left side of the political stage was a choice of necessity. They were disadvantaged not only before the War, but also after the War “the hundred-percenters” consciously pushed them away from the right side. This social pressure, exacerbated by xenophobic attitudes of a certain part of Polish society, left Jews with no real alternative as to their political affiliation.

In this complicated reality, where both Jews and Poles kept in mind their own collective memories, this conflict of interest could easily boil over into open enmity, as at times it really did. Thereby, distrust and antipathies threw a very dark light on Polish-Jewish relations in that period. Finally, however, it could not be forgotten that it was also the flawed political system that precluded communication and understanding between those two groups. After all, there were Polish and Jewish Communists side by side at the top of the government, whereas the average citizens, regardless of their origin, suffered persecutions due to their political convictions. Persuasively, as the Communist regime rejected any confession, religious Jews and Polish Catholics were equally vulnerable to oppression.

Therefore, the overall postwar situation in Poland was anything but peaceful. For the Jewish people coming back to Poland, it was a very restless and bleak period. Soon, they had to realize that there was nothing to which to return. Not only were their houses overtaken, and people turned out to be unwelcoming, but some pogroms spread out in the

²¹ Ibidem.

²² Ibidem.

cities like Kielce.²³ On top of that, the struggle for power between Polish and Jewish Communists was still to come.

To begin with, however, the mass murder inflicted on the Jewish people during the War was followed by their intense immigration to Palestine (from 1948 Israel), the United States, Sweden, and other Western countries. Nevertheless, all numbers regarding the Jewish demography are approximated. In reality, looking for their relatives, the Jewish people would register themselves in a couple of towns, while an unknown number of the survivors did not register at all. Therefore, in the peak period 280,000-300,000 Jewish people could have lived in Poland in the first postwar years. The vast majority of them had almost instantly headed off to the West, like 120,000 Jewish people, who emigrated in the years 1945-1946. Following this wave, in the years 1949-1950 around 20,000-30,000 Jews left the country. Whereas approximately 67,000 Jews lived in Poland in 1951, almost half of them left the country in 1956-1957, and 15,000-20,000 did so from 1968 until 1971.²⁴

As a matter of fact, none of the neighboring countries fostered the Jewish immigration. Quite the opposite, the Soviet Union agreed to relocate the Jews to Poland, which prompted clandestine, illegal immigration. Above all, the real dream of many Jews was to immigrate to Palestine, even though before 1948 this was not an easy task. According to Alina Cała, a historian specializing in Polish-Jewish history, there were several motives behind leaving Poland. The most common were the lack of security and the emotional factor—the flight from tragic memories and from “living in the graveyard.” Little by little, though, the identity of those survivors who decided to stay in Poland had

²³ Virtual Shtetl. <http://www.sztetl.org.pl/en/term/482,anti-jewish-post-war-pogroms/> (accessed March 3, 2015).

²⁴ Alina Cała, *Mniejszość żydowska [Jewish Minority]*, 245.

changed. To illustrate this point, the connection between the Jewish nationality and religion has diminished, and many of those who claimed their Jewish nationality did not confess Judaism anymore. In fact, the process of acculturation had been well underway—Jewish cultural distinctiveness was withering as well as the knowledge of Yiddish. Formerly sharp criteria of Jewishness became replaced with those of common descent and collective memory. Therefore, there were two distinctive circles emerging within the somewhat vague definition of “Jew”; the first one identified itself as *Jewish*, and the other as *of Jewish origin*. Despite the apparent difference between these groups, they both were subject to assimilation, but only the latter considered itself a part of Polish nation. Furthermore, some individuals would describe themselves as equally Jewish as Polish. Thus, the sharp boundary line between “nationality” and “national minority” became, at times, floating.²⁵

On the one hand, some of the Jewish Communists, adhering to the ruling ideology, negated the need of national references, which could, albeit did not have to, lead to the dilution of Jewish identity, and possible assimilation.²⁶ On the other hand, some part of Polish society preserved a racist definition of a Jew, which did not encompass a cultural or denominational aspect—a Jew was a person of whom at least one parent or grandparent was Jewish. Ultimately, this way of perceiving the Jewish community largely influenced its postwar fate in Poland.²⁷

As it was previously delineated, the years 1944-1950 were marked by the restoration of public administration along with installation of the new regime, amid

²⁵ Ibidem, 246.

²⁶ Irena Hurwic-Nowakowska, *Żydzi polscy (1947-1950). Analiza więzi społecznej ludności cywilnej [A Social Analysis of Postwar Polish Jewry-TRANS]* (Warszawa: Wydawnictwo Instytutu Filozofii i Socjologii PAN, 1996).

²⁷ Alina Cała, *Mniejszość żydowska [Jewish Minority]*, 246-247.

defiance from legal and armed opposition. Additionally, from the point of view of Polish-Jewish relations, another aspect played a particularly significant role. Namely, both the Communists and the opposition agreed upon the fledgling state becoming a national one. Clearly, not only the Communists, but also the nationalists deemed traditional ethnic diversity to be a peril. And by the same token, the actions of the underground troops having been aimed at White Russians, Ukrainians, and Jews met with universal acceptance. Alina Cała contends that this attitude reflected the current condition of Polish consciousness, achy and full of frustration after the turbulent years of war and misfortunes. It cannot be forgotten that certain prewar nationalism had been inflamed and aggravated by the magnitude of German brutality during the war. In the wake of the Hitlerian chauvinistic ideology mixed with rational and irrational reckoning of injuries, the country tended to marginalize the existence and needs of ethnic minorities living in Poland, and forced their assimilation.²⁸

Interestingly enough, the postwar leftists found fighting anti-Semitism a vital part of their agenda, obviously expecting not only votes from the Jews, but also their political endorsement for the new system. The revival of the Jewish life appeared to them as a factor that could be employed in overseas propaganda and to entice the financial aid of American Jewry. That is to say, The Central Committee of Polish Jews, the goal of which was to reestablish Jewish life, fostering religious practices and immigration, was a state-sponsored representation of Jews in Poland. However, this entity as well as other organizations of the time had to comply with the Communist party. There is no secret that also the Committee's authorities were elected in harmony with the party guidelines. Regardless of these constraints, the legal activity of Jewish political parties in postwar

²⁸ Ibidem, 247.

Poland was phenomenal. All major organizations were forced to cooperate with Jewish Communists in the ranks of the leading party that manifested the political will of the state. The Jewish Communists, however, strove to keep their program independent from that of the mainstream party.²⁹

Instead, as it was emphasized in some works (Alina Cała, Jerzy Tomaszewski, and others), the Jewish approval for the Communist state was only external. Their accord with the ruling party stood for the only feasible way to stay on the political stage. Only in the case of Zionists, sympathies for Communism were more vigorous, due to the Eastern Bloc support for the creation of the State of Israel, for example in the United Nations. Repeatedly noted in scholarship, there were several reasons why Jews followed socialists to a larger extent than the rest of society.³⁰ The most crucial of all was the belief in postulated equality between people. The Communist party, especially at the beginning, emerged as a defender of the Jews, whereas almost all rightist Polish parties were considered anti-Semitic. Any political alliances of Jewish politicians were thereby feasible with the leftist parties only. Although this deliberate dealing influenced Jewish political sympathies, they were dreaming of personal stabilization in the first place. However, little is known about a real political climate in the Jewish community.³¹ The

²⁹ Ibidem, 248-249.

³⁰ Władysław Bartoszewski, *The Convent at Auschwitz* (New York: G. Braziller, 1991), 29; Tadeusz Piotrowski, *Poland's Holocaust: Ethnic Strife, Collaboration with Occupying Forces and Genocide in the Second Republic, 1918-1947* (Jefferson, North Carolina: McFarland and Company, 1998), 58-65; Covenant. Global Jewish Magazine <http://www.covenant.idc.ac.il/en/vol1/issue3/jews-communists-and-jewish-communists.html> (accessed April 4, 2015).

³¹ Ibidem, 251.

initial equality, guaranteed by the Communists, changed rapidly, and with time Jewish people fell prey to the purges.³²

What is clear from many accounts, and emphasized in this work, is that Poles and Jews approached the Soviet Union from different angles, largely due to their war experiences. Through these opposite perceptions, the myth of “Judeo-Communism” [*Żydokomuna*] was coined, and subsequently popularized by the anti-Communist Polish underground, to be finally preserved in collective memory of several generations up to the present. In this antisemitic propaganda Jews had been accused of subjugating Poland. They were viewed not only as alien, but enemy, who once again posed a threat to the oppressed nation. In light of this ostensible threat, some people went so far as to justify their violence—politically motivated crimes or random plunder. Historians estimate that in the years 1944-1947 over a thousand Jews were murdered. Whereas some of these incidents were, beyond any doubt, politically motivated, a substantial number of victims came from the non-aligned civilian population. For instance, 200 Jewish displaced persons were killed, in all likelihood, by National Armed Forces [*Narodowe Siły Zbrojne—NSZ*] in so called “train action,” when the travelers were being taken out of trains and killed, because of their Jewish origins.³³

Several examples of similar violence against Jews, regardless of age or political sympathies, are well documented: “Lack of discrimination in choosing Jewish victims was demonstrated in other ways as well. For example, an order from the NSZ central

³² Ibidem, 251-252.

³³ Ibidem, 252-253; Sebastian Bojemski, *Poszli w skier powodzi: Narodowe Siły Zbrojne w Powstaniu Warszawskim* [*They went in a flood of sparks: National Armed Forces in the Warsaw Uprising-TRANS*](Warszawa: Glaukopis, 2002), 25; Witold Bereś, Krzysztof Brunetko, Marek Edelman. *Życie. Po prostu.* [*Marek Edelman. Life. Simply-TRANS*] (Warszawa: Świat Książki, 2008), 246.

command to district commanders, dated March 25, 1945, recommended certain elements of the population [among them German and Soviet spies, all Jews and Jewesses, and all those who hid Jews during the German occupation-P.D.] for swift execution.”³⁴ The Jews were still looked upon as outlaws, just as during the occupation, because acceptance of the Nazi discriminatory policy toward them was increasing in the last phase of the occupation.³⁵ Taking into account this volatile social atmosphere, some acts of antisemitism went unpunished, and even the public officials at times shared anti-Jewish attitudes.³⁶

Then, a dark page in the Jewish history in Poland was written during the Kielce Pogrom. On July 4, 1946, rumors had been spread that a boy was missing in reference to the ancient blood libel. A lynch mob gathered, inflamed by accusations toward Jewish people. The outbreak of violence, which resulted in the deaths of 42 Jews, has been further investigated, but many details remained unknown. Immediately, right and left political factions accused each other of performing violence. It is no wonder that the opinions on this topic remain divided to this day. Some authors, such as Alina Cała, ascribe most of the responsibility for this pogrom to the rightists. However, many other scholars, like Krystyna Kersten or Norman Davies, seem to be more accurate in discerning an underlying Communist impact on this case as to gloss over some electoral

³⁴ David Engel, *Patterns of Anti-Jewish Violence in Poland 1944-1946*: http://www.yadvashem.org/odot_pdf/Microsoft%20Word%20-%203128.pdf (accessed February 21, 2015).

³⁵ Paweł Szapiro, *Wojna żydowsko-niemiecka. Polska prasa konspiracyjna 1943-1944 o powstaniu w getcie Warszawy [Jewish-German War. The Polish Underground press about the Warsaw Ghetto Uprising-TRANS]* (Londyn: Aneks, 1992).

³⁶ Alina Cała, *Mniejszość żydowska [Jewish Minority]*, 254.

fraud³⁷: “On the same day that the fraudulent results of the Referendum were awaited—4 July 1946—a vicious pogrom was perpetrated in the town of Kielce.”³⁸ The British historian explains further:

Officials of the regime shamelessly told western reporters that the atrocity had been carried out by remnants of the Home Army and NSZ on orders of the Government-in-Exile. This was a total fabrication. Decades later, it was confirmed that a senior Soviet officer had been present, that armed Communist militia had initiated the affray, and that the missing boy had actually been kidnapped by the police. So it had been a ‘provocation.’ But it was a provocation with which some local people had co-operated.³⁹

Davies, analyzing the course of pogrom in detail, points out how well it worked from the regime’s point of view. In conclusion, the historian draws attention to some international repercussions for these actions: “The world did not forget the Kielce Pogrom. But it hardly noticed that the Polish nation had been robbed of its democratic rights.”⁴⁰ All in all, in Polish-Jewish discussion on postwar years it is usually impossible to run away from political issues.

Some researchers have shown that the generation brought up in the years 1945-1947 has evinced higher antisemitism than generations before and after that. In the wake of this incident, the Jewish people realized how their plight and hopes for the restoration of their life in Poland were fragile. The more their alienation and lack of understanding in society became pronounced, the more they were tilting toward the left side. Following this incident, also a large part of the Polish intelligentsia started sharing the belief that leftism was the best way out for the society as a whole.⁴¹

³⁷ Krystyna Kersten, *Narodziny system władzy: Polska 1943-1948 [The Establishment of Communist Rule in Poland, 1943-1948-TRANS]* (Paris: Libella, 1986), 169-174.

³⁸ Norman Davies, *God’s Playground: A History of Poland, vol. 2*, 425.

³⁹ *Ibidem*.

⁴⁰ *Ibidem*.

⁴¹ Alina Cała, *Mniejszość żydowska [Jewish Minority]*, 255.

The hostile atmosphere remained a serious problem for Jewish community of 1944-1947. After the Kielce Pogrom, the Jews holding high positions in administration were encouraged to change their family names or were transferred to other positions. In the following years, acts of anti-Jewish violence ceased, but reluctance toward Jews still persisted in society, having burst into periodical crises.⁴² Krystyna Kersten comments on reluctant attitudes toward Jewish people: “Even then, in the early years of the Communist regime, not so much a Jew was the enemy, as the enemy was a Jew, and the sentence fell so deeply into the collective memory, generating that paradoxical antisemitism without Jews, which astounds foreigners today.”⁴³

Despite their rough situation, the Jews were able to create strong political representation on the central level. Nevertheless, it happened that some local authorities from the social service refused to provide Jewish people with requisite food supplies. Besides, the urgent housing problems as well as restitution for property to the Jews caused much tension. A troublesome economic situation resulted in Jewish people trying to reclaim their property. Nevertheless, even the positive court judgments were not easily executed due to enmity from the current tenants. However, regaining sacral property, such as cemeteries, synagogues and so on, did not meet bigger obstacles. The situation became really hopeless when the property of Jewish communities, such as manufacturing plants or luxury mansions, became nationalized or occupied by state offices.⁴⁴

The first postwar years revealed a great number of personal dramas. As a matter of fact, Jewish children were being taken from orphanages or their foster families to

⁴² Ibidem, 256.

⁴³ Krystyna Kersten, *Polacy—Żydzi—komunizm. Anatomia półprawd 1939-1968 [Poles-Jews-Communism. The Anatomy of Half-Truths 1939-1968-TRANS]* (Warsaw: Niezależna Oficyna Wydawnicza, 1992), 79.

⁴⁴ Alina Cała, *Mniejszość żydowska [Jewish Minority]*, 256-259.

reunite with their relatives. Many times, however, the foster families did not want to give up these children, and, in the heat of the moment, the caretakers even decided to run away with their charges. Undoubtedly, there was always a strong emotional bond behind such decisions, often reinforced by a pious conviction that the foster family deserves credit for bringing up these children in Catholic faith.⁴⁵

Going further, Jewish parties and organizations were not interested in maintaining relations with other minorities, that is Ukrainians or Germans, both of whom were associated with war atrocities. Nonetheless, it cannot be overlooked that the archives, as if by nature, documented conflicts rather than reflect upon the variety of everyday relations between Jewish minority and the majority of society, the day-to-day relations that at times could be described in positive terms. This was due to the preventive character of those archives that this purely grim picture of Jewish life came to light. Their hope for a revival came to grief, for the Jewish people could not feel at home amid the displays of dislike. The initial appearances of equality, thereby, turned out to be an illusionary and unachievable privilege.⁴⁶

Then, the year 1949 went down in history as another turning point for the Jewish population of Poland. First, the majority of Jewish institutions were liquidated, largely at the hands of the Jewish Communists, who would soon lose their autonomy within the Communist structure. Notwithstanding, at the turn of 1948 and 1949 plenty of Jewish outposts, including orphanages, hospitals, retirement homes and so on, were taken over by the state and given for public use. The agricultural communities (*kibbutzim*) have been transformed into cooperative farms, where Poles were allowed to work as well.

⁴⁵ Ibidem, 260.

⁴⁶ Ibidem, 262-263.

Communists sought to accelerate secularization of the Jewish population that was strengthened by the emigration of many rabbis in this period. Their emigration was followed by the elimination of territorial structures of Jewish religious communities. Since most ardent followers of Judaism emigrated, the non-denominational group became dominant.⁴⁷ Very acutely, all Jewish political parties had been dissolved in the same period. This bold move did not put a stop to the chain of events, because Jewish Communists had to break their connection to the World Jewish Congress. The Zionist activists, as the most susceptible to potential repressions, had to leave the country hastily. In 1950, only two newspapers remained out of the impressive quantity of 70 Jewish periodicals, i.e.: “*Folks-Sztyme*” and “*Ojfgang*.” It should be added that like restrictions were enforced upon the Catholic newspapers. As a result of this violent policy, until 1961, only nine public schools in Poland provided students with an opportunity to learn Yiddish and Jewish history.⁴⁸

Some Jews, who were being handed their “immigration documents” instead of passports, had to sign an expatriation statement. This practice, regulated in 1951, in fact took place illegally in 1949 and 1950. In addition, a propaganda trick at the hands of Jewish Communists, designed to paralyze Jewish institutions, turned out to be effective. Knowingly and deceptively, the Yiddish broadcasts in Polish Radio became more frequent in the respective period. Alina Cała, pondering those days, draws a more general conclusion: “Liquidation of the institutional independence of the Jews was a part of the

⁴⁷ Zygmunt Woźniczka, “Powojenne dzieje Żydów w Polsce i ich wpływ na losy społeczności żydowskiej w Zagłębiu Dąbrowskim,” [*The postwar history of Jews in Poland and their influence on the fate of the Jewish community in the Dąbrowa Basin-TRANS*] http://www.ipsir.uw.edu.pl/UserFiles/File/Katedra_Socjologii_Norm/TEKSTY/ZWozniczkaPowojenneDziejeZydowWPolsce.pdf (accessed February 12, 2015).

⁴⁸ Alina Cała, *Mniejszość żydowska [Jewish Minority]*, 263-267.

broader socio-technical procedures, introduced under dictation of Stalin, against societies of all the socialist countries. His death in 1953 stopped the terror machine, whose victims were also Jewish.”⁴⁹ The author pays attention to divergent concerns of Poles and Jews under Stalinism. To sum up, this period was filled with processes against spies, show trials and death sentences, aimed at ethnic Poles. In this way, tauntingly, Poland came to resemble the Soviet Union in having only three categories of people: “those who were in prison, those who are in prison, and those who will be in prison.”⁵⁰ Considering the aforementioned persecutions, this period was not very bloody for Jews. The main problems, which the Jews faced over the span of these few years, were connected with taking away their property and humiliating conditions of emigration. Last but not least, they were also subject to purges, during which the Jewish officials were being removed from the political apparatus or moved to lower positions or fired.⁵¹

In the years 1956-1960, a new frustrating process encroached upon Jewish cultural life. Previously vigorous and authentic, then it was replaced with an artificial and propagandist substitute. A great deal of attention was paid to the Soviet revolutionary performances in Yiddish instead of placing emphasis on Jewish classics. Frugal state financial aid for Jewish art resulted in cultural life rolling down on an inclined plane. Eventually, only one Jewish newspaper in Yiddish, the *Folks-Sztyme*, endured. Concurrently with the assimilation process moving forward, the traditional Jewish customs, cuisine, apparel, and appearance diminished. The Jewish identity had been fading away, depending roughly on the common history and ancestry. Fewer antisemitic

⁴⁹ Ibidem, 269.

⁵⁰ Jan T. Gross, *Revolution from Abroad: The Soviet Conquest of Poland's Western Ukraine and Western Belorussia* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1988), 144.

⁵¹ Alina Cała, *Mniejszość żydowska [Jewish Minority]*, 270.

incidents were noticed in that period, but this good news might have been influenced by the fact that their public life was practically non-existent. Since 1956 Jews have been eligible to keep Polish citizenship even if they decided to have a passport issued. Even though the limitations regarding personal property were still in force, they became less restrictive than previously.⁵²

In those years, the stigma of Judeo-Communism [*Żydokomuna*] got around quickly, among those less versed in politics as well. On top of that, some people, themselves closely related to the ruling party, were at times trying to channel all social antipathy for Communism toward a group of Jewish people. Reportedly, also Jewish children fell prey to verbal or even physical aggression at the time. Jewish employees did not always know whether they lost their job as a corollary of realignment or due to discrimination. Those who were leaving the country got the impression that almost all Poles were pleased with this state of affairs. The ideals of complete equality eventually fell apart, replaced by discriminatory policies.⁵³

Then, the mutual relations once again reached the breaking point in the years of 1965-1968. This period substantially differed from the previous ones, because it was no longer individual hotheads, but the system as such that failed and directed its eyes against the Jewish minority. The scale of anti-Jewish attitudes encouraged people from some circles to turn the harsh feelings into the political struggle for power. In this way, the purges in the army laid the foundations for further events. During the years 1962-1967, all Jewish officers in Polish People's Army and counterintelligence went into retirement. Instead, in the aftermath of the breakthrough events of March 1968 and subsequent

⁵² Ibidem, 270-276.

⁵³ Ibidem, 277-280.

forced emigration, the Jewish soldiers were downgraded to the lowest rank. Similar purges afflicted Jewish journalists at the time.⁵⁴

Going further into detail, the ban of a Polish theatrical play “*Dziady*” of the best-known Polish poet, Adam Mickiewicz, due to its anti-Russian undertone, sparked anti-government students’ protests that broke out in many universities across the country. Ironically, the government, trying to quench the social upheaval, accused the Jews of organizing these protests. In other words, it was convenient for the government to make a scapegoat of the Jewish minority, and the tide of persecution was about to increase. In this uproar, the blue-collar workers were intended to play a role of government’s deterrent to hold back the protesting students. Given that the rising students’ movement was not yet growing fast enough to billow into an organized opposition, the antisemitic sentiments went public without restraint. Thus, Jewish and Polish intellectuals, as well as their families, fell prey to the repressions and hate campaign in the mass media. According to various accounts, between 15,000 and 30,000 Jews left the country starting from 1968 up to 1971, most of them deeply rooted in Polish culture, and barely connected to their Jewishness. Although many of the Communist activists, who evinced a negative bias toward Jews, were frequently career-oriented in doing so, they also mirrored a mindset of a substantial part of society. In the first survey of this type in Poland, 75 percent of society declared dislike toward Jews.⁵⁵ Because of a still developing and weak opposition and the fact that the villagers were rather preoccupied

⁵⁴ Ibidem, 280-282.

⁵⁵ Jerzy Szacki, *Polacy o sobie i innych narodach* [*Poles about themselves and other nations-TRANS*] (Warsaw: Institute of Sociology UW, 1969) [*unpublished typescript].

with the war between the state and the Church, launched in 1966, the government actions aimed at Jews went unpunished.⁵⁶

A very interesting sociological phenomenon, which may be not so obvious from a cursory glance at the problem, was that the atmosphere of those days awakened the same mechanisms that had been observed during the War: feeling of insecurity in the company of a Jew, impulses to either help or blackmail Jewish people, and so on.⁵⁷ Further, one scholar aptly mentioned another prevalent psychological mechanism: “Ironically, coexisting with compassion and friendship for particular families or individuals, there was hostility against the Jewish community as a whole.”⁵⁸

The occurrences of 1968 brought about such a great trauma upon the Jewish people that their number decreased to 6,000-10,000 and it seemed to be the end of their almost millennial existence in this country. The very last schools teaching Yiddish and Jewish history were closed at this point in time. The Jewish Historical Institute along with State Jewish Theater remained the only functional Jewish institutions at that time. Jewish life in Poland was in tremendous decline.⁵⁹

Out of the blue, however, in the mid-1980s, some instrumental tendencies toward dissimilation occurred among young people from completely Polonized families. Hence, the young intellectuals began examining the heritage of their formerly multiethnic country.⁶⁰

⁵⁶ Alina Cała, *Mniejszość żydowska [Jewish Minority]*, 282-286.

⁵⁷ Alina Cała, *Mniejszość żydowska [Jewish Minority]*, 287.

⁵⁸ Stanisław Meducki, *The Pogrom in Kielce on 4 July 1946* [in:] Antony Polonsky (ed.), *Poles, Jews, Socialists. The Failure of an Ideal* (London: The Littman Library of Jewish Civilization), 162.

⁵⁹ Alina Cała, *Mniejszość żydowska [Jewish Minority]*, 287-288.

⁶⁰ *Ibidem*, 288.

As of 1979, a small group of Jewish intellectuals from Warsaw set out on meeting privately and organizing informal courses and seminars. Quite perversely, the conception of these partly therapeutic meetings became known as The Jewish People's University [*Żydowski Uniwersytet Ludowy*], or under an evocative acronym ŻUL [that literally means loud]. They purposely kept themselves isolated from two Jewish organizations having Communist connections. Additionally, this newly emerged group built its identity on religion rather than on Jewish secular traditions. Then, in the eighties, it was the turn of Jews from working-class, dwelling in small cities, to "come out" as those formerly cultivating their Jewish identity in private. In a changed international situation, the Communist authorities abandoned their biased policy of March 1968. The first unofficial relations with the State of Israel, although not crowned with much success, were established in 1979. From 1982, Polish Radio has launched broadcasts during major Jewish holidays and received permission to print Jewish brochures and calendars. The only synagogue that remained in Warsaw after the War was renovated and opened within the next year.

Slowly but surely, the multiple cracks in the Communist model brought the system to the dead end: "A number of tendencies (...) came together in the second half of 1989. The Polish situation had produced a series of political and economic problems which proved to be virtually insoluble within the structures of the Communist system."⁶¹ In turn, for Jewish spiritual life the year 1989 was highly symbolic, not only because Communism collapsed at last, but also because The Union of Jewish Religious Communities in Poland hired its first rabbi who arrived from Israel. In the wake of these

⁶¹ Paul G. Lewis, *Central Europe since 1945* (New York: Longman Publishing, 1994), 16.

early optimistic signs, the restoration of Jewish institutions gained momentum after 1989.⁶²

In 1991, during his pilgrimage to the homeland, Pope John Paul II gave a beautiful example of sensitivity to the Polish Jews who occupied a special place in his heart. The Pope said to the representatives of the Jewish community in Warsaw:

Today it seems to be a thing of great importance that, on both sides, we try to perceive, salvage, and renew the good things that occurred in our mutual relations (and, after all, a lot of good things happened over the centuries). We should also try to find unity and friendship despite the evil, because there was also much evil in our mutual history.”⁶³

This evil, pondered by Stanisław Krajewski in 1995, an activist of the Jewish minority in Poland, stemmed from an anti-Jewish physical threat that took place in postwar Poland. In his opinion, this topic has not yet been addressed enough by Polish thinkers.⁶⁴

In summary, the purpose of this chapter was to highlight the extremely complex Polish-Jewish history in post-war Communist Poland in order to enhance the understanding of the past and modern relationships between the two groups, as well as to identify opportunities for dialogue. Analysis of the relationship at that time was barely possible due to the obvious political constraints. The previous system, because of its restrictive character, was characterized by limited trust between people, not only between Jews and Poles, but even between the closest neighbors and family members. In the

⁶² Alina Cała, *Mniejszość żydowska [Jewish Minority]*, 288-289.

⁶³ Eugene J. Fisher, Leon Klenicki (ed.), *The Saint for Shalom: How Pope John Paul II Transformed Catholic-Jewish Relations. The Complete Texts 1979-2005* (New York: Crossroad 2011), 216.

⁶⁴ Romuald Jakub-Weksler Waszkinel, “Antysemityzm wobec Żydów,” [*Antisemitism toward Jews-TRANS*] *Miesięcznik.znak.com.pl*, December 2008, <http://www miesiecznik.znak.com.pl/10297/calosc/antysemityzm-wobec-zydow> (accessed December 15, 2014).

atmosphere of mutual distrust and accusations, it was in fact impossible to lay the foundation for better understanding of each other.

Another limitation of the dialogue stemmed from the unwieldy civil society. Neither did diversity and pluralism exist anymore, which for centuries have been characteristic for Poland. John Paul II used to tirelessly remind the Polish people about this heritage: “Polishness is, in fact, variety and pluralism, and not narrowness and enclosure.” (John Paul II, *Memory and Identity*)⁶⁵ One cannot forget, though it may seem marginal, that material shortcomings and travel restrictions of the period did not encourage contacts between Poles and Jews either. The burden of trauma and historical experiences, different for each one, at times built a barrier that was impassable for the both. In addition, the lack of perspectives in many areas of life was a deterrent for building a fulfilled society. Too bold initiatives and efforts to leave entrenched positions would have been quickly repressed. Above all, that which was missing in the encounter between Poles and Jews was probably the lack of sensitivity to the suffering of another human being. Then, a problem that remained vital in the period in question was the enmity and persecution inflicted at times on the Jews by their Polish, Christian compatriots. Still a lot of time and sustained education is needed to overcome harmful stereotypes of a bygone era. Optimistically, however, nowadays, the discussion of Jewish issues is no longer forbidden in Poland, so the Jews and Poles face much broader perspectives on reconciliation.

⁶⁵ Pope John Paul II, *Memory and Identity* (New York: Rizzoli International Publications, 2005); Working Group on Christian-Jewish Relations, <http://www.wgcjr.unitingchurch.org.au/styled/index.html> (accessed March 3, 2015).

Getting Through Hard Times—Embarking on New Directions

The History of the Catholic Church in Communist Poland

1. The overall situation of the Catholic Church in Poland: 1945-1989

The position of the Polish Catholic Church, which emerged from the War much weakened, was determined by a number of factors. The first of them was the substantial loss sustained by the clergy during the war years—more than two thousand priests, including six bishops, were killed. In consequence, some dioceses lost up to 40 percent or even more of their clergy. Going further, during the first ten postwar years, 20 percent of the Polish Catholic clergy became subject to state repression, which totaled roughly 2,000 arrested priests.⁶⁶ The second important factor that influenced the situation of the Church was a considerable national and religious dimension of the unification of Poland—as a corollary of the Holocaust, redrawn boundaries, and resettlements. Michael Fleming, analyzed these processes of ethno-religious and ethno-nationalist unification in order to put them in a broader context of cultural homogenization. He claimed that an increased religious homogeneity brought the equation that to be Pole means to be Catholic, and thereby Catholicism became a clear marker of Polishness for both the Church and the

⁶⁶ Antoni Dudek, Zdzisław Zblewski, *Utopia nad Wisłą. Historia Peerelu [Utopia on the Vistula. A History of The Polish People's Republic-TRANS]* (Warsaw: PWN, 2008), 48-56.

Communists.⁶⁷ To illustrate this point, compared with the prewar period, the number of people declaring the Catholic religion increased from about 65 percent to over 90 percent. Thus, the Church in Poland felt no need to focus on her relationship with other religions, but felt a representative of the interests of the whole people. The Church's authority among the components of society had significantly strengthened in the aftermath of the German occupation and political situation generated after the takeover of power by the Communists.⁶⁸

Meanwhile, one of the main objectives that all Communist countries shared in common was the battle against any religion. The fight against religious organizations engaged the whole state apparatus in Poland—first the Polish Worker's Party, and then the Polish United Worker's Party. Interestingly, Poland constituted the only country among the “people's democracies,” in which the Church kept independence from the state authorities. Needless to say, the Communists started attacking her at every opportunity. However, the struggle with the Church had not been led on a systematic basis prior to 1948, because the Polish communists had had other priorities beforehand—to settle down their power by the liquidation of partisans and the Polish Peasant Party.⁶⁹ After solving these problems, the Catholic Church became the Communists' public enemy number one for a couple of decades.⁷⁰ Additionally, the authorities decided to tighten their grip on the Church, considering the weakness of the opposition.

⁶⁷ Michael Fleming, *The ethno-religious ambitions of the Roman Catholic Church and the ascendancy of communism in post-war Poland (1945-1950)* [in:] *Nations and Nationalism* 16 (4), 2010, 637-638.

⁶⁸ Antoni Dudek, *Państwo i Kościół w Polsce 1945-1970* [*The State and the Church in Poland, 1945-1970-TRANS*] (Cracow: Wyd. PiT, 1995), 5-7.

⁶⁹ Antoni Dudek, Ryszard Gryz, *Komuniści i Kościół w Polsce (1945-1989)* [*The Communists and the Church in Poland (1945-1989)-TRANS*] (Cracow: Znak 2006), 373-426.

⁷⁰ Michael Fleming, *The ethno-religious ambitions of the Roman Catholic Church*, 653.

Out of the ten countries that after World War II came into the orbit of the Soviet Union, Poland in particular stood out in terms of religious awareness. To give an example, during 1946 some 4 million people embarked on pilgrimage across the country, 2.1 million of whom journeyed to Jasna Góra, which houses the icon “Our Lady of Częstochowa.”⁷¹ Some people might derive this state of affairs from the inveterate stereotype of “Pole=Catholic,” but aside from that, belonging to the Church gave people the sense of security in those dark days. The feeling of stability mattered in a ravaged country, and therefore the priests were often seen as authority figures who upheld order and justice.⁷²

The growing position of the Church could not be accepted by the regime, which had made the elimination of all individual and institutional freedoms in Poland its salient point. Under Communism, which conceptualized religion as “the opium of the people,” any independent system of beliefs could not exist in principle. A Christian worldview was considered adverse to the political authority, which from then on focused on gradual marginalization of the Church, pushing the believers to the position of second-class citizens. Nonetheless, the social order could not be transformed too violently. Thus, the strategy assumed the necessity of maintaining good relations with the Church in the first period of fusing the new system into Polish political landscape.⁷³ A period of relative stability and coexistence included the first three post-war years, i.e. 1945-1948. At the time the safeguard of correct relationships had to be the Manifesto of the Polish

⁷¹ Hanna Diskin, *The Seeds of Triumph: Church and State in Gomułka's Poland* (Budapest: CEU, 2001), 23.

⁷² Solidarity—Polish Catholic Church in the Communist period, <http://teatrnn.pl/leksykon/node/2964/%E2%80%9Esolidarno%C5%9B%C4%87%E2%80%9D%E2%80%93%20polski%20ko%C5%9Bci%C3%B3%C5%82%20katolicki%20w%20okresie%20prl> (accessed February 9, 2015).

⁷³ *Ibidem*.

Committee of National Liberation [*Manifest PKWN*] of July 22, 1944, providing “equality of all citizens without distinction of race, religion, nationality, and assuring freedom of political organizations, unions, press, and conscience.”⁷⁴

During the first period of Church-State coexistence, the government was masking its true intentions to convince the public to accept the new order. This plan was realized, inter alia, through the participation of officials in religious services, the initial freedom of the Catholic press, the existence of Catholic organizations, and functioning of the religious schools. During the first three years of the liberal policy toward the Church, trouble spots occurred sporadically. On the other hand, however, the Concordat with the Holy See was dismantled immediately after the War, whereas another decree introduced mandatory civil marriages, and so on. Slowly, but steadily the Polish clergy were accused of backwardness and attempts to clericalize society. The propaganda tried to create the image of the Church opposing the reforms. Representing the habitat of evil that threatened the newly acquired freedoms, she was suspected of working for the enemies of the PRL (The Polish People's Republic)—mainly Americans and Germans.⁷⁵

The year 1950 marked a temporary normalization of relations between the Communist government and the Episcopate; however, this was a mere facade. In May of that year, Bolesław Bierut, President of the Republic of Poland, wrote to Stalin: “On the basis of this useful for us compromise, we will develop further advance in order to curb

⁷⁴ *Manifest Polskiego Komitetu Wyzwolenia Narodowego*, [w:] *Rok pierwszy. Powstanie i działalność aparatu bezpieczeństwa publicznego na Lubelszczyźnie (lipiec 1944–czerwiec 1945)*, [*Manifesto of the Polish Committee of National Liberation, [in:] the first year. Establishment and operation of the public security apparatus in the Lublin region (July 1944-June 1945)-TRANS*] (Warszawa 2004), 40-41; <http://www.law.uj.edu.pl/~khpp/fontesu/1944.htm> (accessed January 22, 2015).

⁷⁵ Jan Żaryn, *Kościół a władza w Polsce (1945-1950)*, [*The Church and the Authority in Poland (1945-1950)-TRANS*] (Warsaw: Tow. im. Stanisława ze Skarbimierza, 1997), 45.

the impact of the Catholic Church in our country.”⁷⁶ Among other resolutions, it was agreed upon that the Church would “not guide religious feeling against the State,” but “teach people to respect State authority and law.”⁷⁷ Also, in the same year 1950 Premier Cyrankiewicz “suddenly announced to the Polish parliament that all church estates exceeding 100 hectares (247 acres) in size are to be nationalized.”⁷⁸

At this point it is worth to evoke the three exemplary methods employed against the Church in order to reduce her activity and increase her dependence on the Party. First, back in 1949, a commission was appointed to institute the group of “patriotic priests”, named after priests supporting the Communist Party, to break the unity of the Church. The priests had been being recruited in various ways, but the economic factor played a key role: granting financial assistance, materials for the renovation of their churches, or tax reduction. The group was also known for blackmailing the priests with uncomfortable facts or searching for those who were at odds with their superiors. Second, another counterweight for the Church was the group called “the progressive priests”, who established the association of lay Catholics—PAX. This entity was given the autonomy and funding to weaken the influence of the Polish Church from within. Last but not least, the Catholic organization “Caritas,” which task was to provide the needy with the material and spiritual help, also became targeted by the authorities. In May 1950, its organizational independence came to an end. As a result of the financial accusations, and

⁷⁶ Bartłomiej Noszczak, *Polityka państwa wobec Kościoła rzymskokatolickiego w Polsce w okresie internowania prymasa Stefana Wyszyńskiego 1953–1956* [State policy towards the Roman Catholic Church in Poland during the internment of Primate Stefan Wyszyński 1953-1956-TRANS] (Warsaw: Instytut Pamięci Narodowej – Komisja Ścigania Zbrodni Przeciwko Narodowi Polskiemu, 2008), 52.

⁷⁷ Michael Fleming, *The ethno-religious ambitions of the Roman Catholic Church*, 651.

⁷⁸ *Next Church-State Crisis Approaching in Poland?* [in:] *The Christian Century*, March 22, 1950.

a decree on the confiscation of church property, “Caritas” had been taken over by the two aforementioned groups, that is, “the priests patriots” and the activists of PAX.⁷⁹ It should be noted that these insidious repressions were inflicted on the Church in the same years when all Jewish political parties and organizations had been dissolved.

Without a doubt, one of the most powerful tools used by the authorities to undermine the Catholic Church was propaganda, employed, for instance, during the so-called “Stalinist show trial of the Cracow Curia” in 1953. In this case, as in many others, the clergy were portrayed as the Vatican spies and completely demoralized persons. All in all, the propaganda attack, having been directed not only at the convicted priests, but also at the Cracow Curia, made big waves on the Church at large. The clergymen were called epithets such as: the SS, “spivs”, and speculators. Several artists were also involved by the state to besmirch the reputation of priests. A vivid example of this practice was a “warning” produced by a Polish poet Sławomir Mrożek⁸⁰:

(...) there is no crime, which we could not anticipate from them [clergy–P.D.]. Ferocity of the remnants will be greater; the more they will become similar to the SS, the “Knights of the Burning Cross”—the Ku-Klux-Klan, the brown and black shirts—acting in the same, as the SS, the Crusaders, shirts and other phalanges, interest.”⁸¹

An array of measures to discredit the clergy was very wide, and one of the main was the dissemination of odd rumors with the help of the press.

⁷⁹ Zbigniew Stachowski, *Stosunki Państwo-Kościół w latach 1944-1987 [Church-State Relations in the years 1944-1987-TRANS]* (Warszawa: 2008).

⁸⁰ Rafał Łatka, “Propaganda antykościelna Polski Ludowej,” [*Anti-Church propaganda in the Polish People’s Republic-TRANS*] <http://histmag.org/Propaganda-antykoscielna-Polski-Ludowej-wybrana-problematyka-8186#fn4> (accessed March 8, 2015).

⁸¹ *Kościół zraniony (4) Propaganda w procesie kurii krakowskiej*, [w:] F. Musiał, J. Szarek (ed.), *Partia z narodem, naród z Kościołem [Church hurt (4) Propaganda in the curia of Cracow, [in:] F. Musiał, J. Szarek (ed.), The Party with the people, the nation and the Church-TRANS]* (Cracow: 2008), 78.

As a matter of fact, propaganda became a first-rate method of capturing and consolidating power in totalitarian states. After the Communists took power in a given country, they sought to unify its social consciousness. Censorship was introduced along with the elimination of the independent press titles and publishing companies. Jamming radio stations broadcasting from abroad became routine. With regard to the Catholic Church the only remainders of rationed freedom was the newspaper “The Universal Weekly” [*Tygodnik Powszechny*] and the pulpit. Accordingly, the history of Communist propaganda should be analyzed along with the history of the State-Church relations. Propaganda was an essential factor in forming this relationship, especially in times when the Church was virtually the only opposition.⁸²

In the early period, however, until 1947, the Church, through her press and publishing companies, had only limited access to society. In the following period, from 1947 until 1956, even this small number of newspapers had been liquidated. Those existing, “The Universal Weekly” and “The Sunday Visitor” [*Gość Niedzielny*], had been captured by the authorities with the help of the aforementioned “progressive Catholics.” Instead, in 1966, the Communist government tried to impose a secular vision of the Millennium of the Baptism of Poland, persistently emphasizing the existence of the statehood as the main cause of the jubilee.⁸³

First steps toward honoring the victims of the Holocaust, albeit thwarted by another intense propaganda attack on the Church, could be observed in 1965, following the publication of the Letter of Reconciliation of the Polish Bishops to the German

⁸² Jerzy Myszor, *Pozostała tylko ambona* [in:] *Propaganda antykościelna* [*There was only the pulpit* [in:] *Anti-Church Propaganda-TRANS*], pamiec.pl/download/49/27683/GNdodatekIPN08a.pdf (accessed April 3, 2015).

⁸³ *Ibidem*.

Bishops (“We forgive and ask for forgiveness”). Throughout a press campaign, the authorities managed to perpetuate the belief that the bishops acted against the interest of the state, and entered into the sphere reserved for the government. A noted Polish historian, Antoni Dudek claimed that the Letter of the Polish bishops assessed from today’s perspective, was an important step in weakening the antagonism between the Polish and German nations. But it was a very costly step for the Polish Church, especially as a consequence of a lack of understanding of its weight on the German side. In that difficult Cold War time situation when the occupation was still remembered, asking the Germans for forgiveness was a clearly “upstream” move. The Catholics did not understand this move either, recognizing the Letter to be incompatible with the Polish national interest. The authorities had used it mindfully to minimize support for the Church hierarchy and to create divisions among the clergy.⁸⁴

In 1973, the so-called group “D,” which main purpose was the “disintegration,” that is constant internal arguing of clergy, launched its activity. Under this framework, many anti-clerical publications were issued to discredit the clergy, who supported the political opposition. These activities were aimed at higher dignitaries as well. Before the second visit of John Paul II to Poland in 1983, an unsuccessful attempt had been made to discredit him.⁸⁵ Pursuing a so-called ‘salami-strategy’ to cut into the Church’s position, the PPR [The Polish Workers’ Party—*Polska Partia Robotnicza*] attacked her in a

⁸⁴ Antoni Dudek, *Państwo i Kościół w Polsce 1945-1970* [*The State and the Church in Poland, 1945-1970-TRANS*], 184.

⁸⁵ Rafał Łatka, “Propaganda antykościelna Polski Ludowej,” [*Anti-Church propaganda in the Polish People’s Republic-TRANS*] <http://histmag.org/Propaganda-antykoscielna-Polski-Ludowej-wybrana-problematyka-8186#fn4> (accessed March 8, 2015).

methodical and sustained manner that ultimately resulted in the Church being seriously weakened.⁸⁶

Throughout the entire Communist period churchmen were denied access to radio and television, so the Catholics allegedly guilty of crimes or unpleasant activities were not able to rectify unfounded accusations. The situation began to change as soon as the government began to weaken, and needed backing from the Church. In such cases, the additional allotment of paper for Catholic publications usually was correlated to the implicit demand of concessions. After all, in this manner the additional allocations of paper on the Church press during the growing social unrest of 1980-1981 should be explained.⁸⁷ But even in the 1980s, the censorship remained alert, cutting from the articles the critical opinions toward the system. Even quotes from Scripture were subject to corrections! The communist authorities did not hesitate to manipulate the text of the homilies of Cardinal Stefan Wyszyński. Even though they did not have influence on the homilies preached by John Paul II, they could manipulate TV cameras showing only selected fragments of papal pilgrimages to his homeland.⁸⁸

One of the scholars reported a psychological and spiritual cutting-edge event, achieved by the election of Pope John Paul II: “Then, while rumors were circulated that a large-scale offensive was being prepared (...), an event took place which entirely altered the balance of power between Church and State. On 16 October 1978 Cardinal Karol Wojtyła of Cracow was elected Pope.”⁸⁹ This event completely changed the political

⁸⁶ Michael Fleming, *The ethno-religious ambitions of the Roman Catholic Church*, 643.

⁸⁷ Jerzy Myszor, *Pozostała tylko ambona* [in:] *Propaganda antykościelna [There was only the pulpit [in:] Anti-Church Propaganda-TRANS]*, pamiec.pl/download/49/27683/GNdodatekIPN08a.pdf (accessed April 3, 2015).

⁸⁸ *Ibidem*.

⁸⁹ Leopold Tyrmand, *Church and State in Postwar Poland* [in:] *Center Journal*, Spring 1984, 38.

situation in Poland: “the psychological barrier dividing believers and non-believers was broken down. The Church, once excluded from public life, was now in everyone’s thoughts and many people [including Party members-P.D.] began to talk freely about their faith and their Pope.”⁹⁰

Loosening the state policy toward the Church could be observed in the 1970’s, but anti-religious activities were still perpetrated by rejecting permission to build sacral edifices, surveillance, beating priests, and more. For each clerical student entering the first year of seminary a file was opened in SB [*Służba Bezpieczeństwa*]. Some of the candidates for the priesthood were forced to take a two-year military service in special units for the seminarians. It used to happen that prostitutes were sent to them; they were indoctrinated in the spirit of the Marxist-Leninist ideology, or persecuted for carrying out religious practices.⁹¹

Aside from these persecutions, there were examples of secret cooperation with the state authorities among priests: “The Polish security forces made vigorous efforts to penetrate the Polish Catholic Church, eventually enlisting as informants some 15 percent of the 25,000 priests in Poland, but this was a much lower rate of penetration than in other professions, notably journalists and professors.”⁹² After 1945, part of the clergy collaborated with the Security Service (SB); for instance, in 1976, the secret collaborators in SB included 2309 clergy.⁹³ The assessment of Father Isakowicz-Zaleski, a Solidarity

⁹⁰ Ibidem.

⁹¹ Jan Żaryn, *Kościół a władza w Polsce (1945-1950)*, [*The Church and the Authority in Poland (1945-1950)-TRANS*] (Warsaw: 1997), 201-206.

⁹² Michael Szporer, *Managing Religion in Communist-Era Poland. Catholic Priests versus the Secret Police* [in:] *Journal of Cold War Studies*, Vol. 12, No. 3, Summer 2010, 116.

⁹³ T. Radzikowski, *Tajni współpracownicy pionów operacyjnych aparatu bezpieczeństwa 1950-1984* [in:] *Pamięć i Sprawiedliwość*, nr 3, 2003, 109-131 [*Special agents in the security apparatus 1950-1984* [in:] *Memory and Justice-TRANS*].

chaplain and activist is sobering but also makes clear that the Church was not in a position of complete subservience: “Most clerics refused to cooperate, and many of those who did collaborate were eventually able to break ties [with Communists-P.D.].”⁹⁴ He emphasizes that moral cleansing is a serious problem in every former Communist country:

If the Church aspires to be some kind of moral guide, it has to lead by example and reflect on its past. Isakowicz-Zaleski observes: ‘If as priests we are true to our calling by speaking to the faithful from the pulpit and teaching them certain moral principles, then we are obliged to clean up our own act.’ The moral authority of a church, a government, or any other institution depends on its honesty in facing up to a traumatic past.⁹⁵

Nevertheless, despite the pressure, the Church withstood adverse State policies due to her concomitant social support and flexible leadership.⁹⁶ In fact, the essential structure of the Church in Poland had remained intact. Compared with her counterparts in Czechoslovakia and Hungary, the Polish Episcopate was fully independent from the state authorities, and was running the country’s largest social organization.⁹⁷ Clearly, in order to survive the Church in Poland decided to oppose Communism spiritually and intellectually.

In contemporary Poland, the Church regained autonomy of activities and pastoral work. After almost 50 years, a new concordat between the Polish Republic and the Holy See was established in 1993, along with a new division of the metropolises and dioceses.

⁹⁴ Michael Szporer, *Managing Religion in Communist-Era Poland. Catholic Priests versus the Secret Police* [in:] *Journal of Cold War Studies*, Vol. 12, No. 3, Summer 2010, 117-118.

⁹⁵ *Ibidem*, 120.

⁹⁶ Michael Fleming, *The ethno-religious ambitions of the Roman Catholic Church*, 651.

⁹⁷ Antoni Dudek, *Państwo i Kościół w Polsce 1945-1970 [The State and the Church in Poland, 1945-1970-TRANS]* (Cracow: Wyd. PiT), 148.

A large number of Catholic schools were opened.⁹⁸ Some historians go further to conclude that the Church became the main beneficiary of the final collapse of Communism.⁹⁹ Taking everything into account, it became clear that the Church before 1989 was largely restrained due to political reasons. Simultaneously, she was strengthened by the total number of faithful in Poland who were determined to fight for freedom of confession, human rights, and to overthrow the system. Therefore, only with time, when the Church endured the external threat, she began establishing more meaningful relations with other religious groups.

2. Around the Second Vatican Council

In the context of this work, the importance of the Second Vatican Council (1962-1965) cannot be overestimated. It was the Council that created a solid framework for bettering Jewish-Christian relations in the world. It is important that the developments of the Council, although well established today, would not be taken for granted by those who do not remember the pre-conciliar world. The benchmark for the achievements of the Council is its impact on creating a better world, free of religious prejudice. Also, for the purpose of this work, one should go back to those memorable days to grasp the atmosphere around the conciliar proceedings.

Needless to say, Communist propaganda presented the Primate and the Polish bishops participating in the Second Vatican Council as the most backward ones.

⁹⁸ Z. Zieliński, *Kościół w Polsce 1944-2002 [The Church in Poland, 1944-2002-TRANS]* (Radom: POLWEN, 2003), 494.

⁹⁹ Antoni Dudek, *Państwo i Kościół w Polsce 1945-1970 [The State and the Church in Poland, 1945-1970-TRANS]*, 235.

Consequently, this deliberate hype spread into two directions. First, its aim was to ridicule, in the eyes of the faithful, the commitment of the Polish hierarchs during the Council. And the second aim was to discredit them before the conciliar Fathers of other nations. For this reason, the Party apparatus used press articles, and other publications to create a distorted picture of the Council. In November 1963, a specially designed brochure pointed out the alleged excesses in the cult of the Virgin Mary by Cardinal Stefan Wyszyński. This fake booklet was disseminated in Rome, Berlin, Paris, Munich, and London.¹⁰⁰ The hostile attitude of the authorities and some Catholics against the Polish clergy, who took part in the proceedings of the Council, put into question the implementation of the post-conciliar arrangements, including issues of dialogue with the Jewish people.¹⁰¹

Father Alfred Mąka, who stayed in the Archdiocese of Poznań (Poland) when the Council had begun, harked back on the implementation of its decisions in his letter.¹⁰² He remembered that all information about the conciliar proceedings had reached him quickly. The newly appearing conciliar constitutions and decrees had been published in the newspaper *Miesięcznik Kościelny* [The Church Monthly]: first, the Constitution of the Sacred Liturgy, then the other documents. Subsequently, a new system of Mass readings was implemented. In the beginning, the Curia indicated only sigla of the readings (letters

¹⁰⁰ Ł. Marek, *Antysoborowa propaganda [The Council's anti-propaganda-TRANS]* [in:] *Gość Niedzielny*, August 16, 2009, 7.

¹⁰¹ Piotr M. A. Cywiński, Marcin Przeworski, *L'Eglise En Pologne Apres 1989 Face Aux Nouveaux Defis De La Democratie*, <http://www.cwi.pl/tekst15.htm> (accessed February 25, 2015).

¹⁰² *A Letter of Father Alfred Mąka*, March 10, 2015, Ostrów Wielkopolski, Poland can be found in the appendix section of this thesis.

used to indicate manuscript or other source of an edited text)¹⁰³, so the priests searched for the texts in the entire Bible. Initially, the liturgical texts were not printed on a duplicating machine. Interestingly, among other important conciliar documents, Father Alfred Mąka did not bring up the declaration *Nostra Aetate*, which is considered by some scholars the core and the most remarkable achievement of the Council.

Reading his letter, it seems that in those days, for the reasons laid out in this chapter, the relationship of the Polish Church with Judaism, let alone other religions, was not approached as the most crucial subject of concern. Interfaith dialogue basically did not exist, and among other burning issues, which the Church faced at the time, her relationship with Judaism took a back seat. Other breakthrough accomplishments of the Council, such as a turning of the altar toward the congregation¹⁰⁴, were more discernible by the faithful on a daily basis. Simply put, the declaration *Nostra Aetate* did not go unnoticed, neither was it rated as the most important one. At first blush, among other conciliar changes, the breakthrough development in perceiving Judaism did not constitute the most measurable one. Nevertheless, in the decades to come, the significance of *Nostra Aetate* within the Polish Church would increase. Overall, the early accounts of this declaration were affected by a number of problems inside and outside the Church, and thereby its first fruits would be yielded in the future.

In any case, Father Alfred Mąka commented that the believers had accepted understandingly the conciliar changes, because the clergymen had prepared them properly for them in the period before a new post-conciliar Missal was adopted. After a short time, the renowned Polish publishing house Pallotinum issued the complete yearly

¹⁰³ Merriam-Webster. <http://www.merriam-webster.com/dictionary/siglum> (accessed March 10, 2015).

¹⁰⁴ *A Letter of Father Alfred Mąka*, March 10, 2015, Ostrów Wielkopolski, Poland

lectionaries. In 1968, all conciliar documents were issued by them, and ever since an access to them has been facilitated. In the closing of his letter, Father Alfred Mąka recalled that, by 1981, when he took over the parish in Ostrów Wielkopolski, almost all of the fundamental statements of the Council had already been introduced by the Curia.¹⁰⁵

In a sense, the declaration *Nostra Aetate* was not drafted to fight hostility toward Jews in the first place, but rather to make an attempt to pay a due respect, to underscore the Jewish roots of Christianity, and to build a dialogue on positive values. However, through a sustainable implementation, antisemitism could possibly be eradicated some day. The declaration itself, although a watershed document, was only the first step in the Church in Poland and elsewhere. Even though it was a quantum leap in the Jewish-Christian relationship, its effects would not appear right away. Therefore, erroneous is the assumption that the declaration going public in Poland triggered an immediate change in the mindset toward Judaism throughout the respective period. Although it marked a spiritual turning point, a scale of decades and centuries should be used to fully assess its effect, not the first few months or years following its introduction.

On the other hand, people should not assume that the Polish Church in the pre-conciliar period was filled with solely negative attitudes to Judaism and other religions. Father Waldemar Chrostowski, who has been involved in Christian-Jewish dialogue, is convinced that another conclusion needs to be taken:

No one—neither family, nor in the church, nor at school—taught me wrong attitude toward the Jews and their religion. These were the 1950s and early 1960s, the period before the Second Vatican Council that is pre-dialogical. From what I heard in the context of the teaching of religion, the Jews were always present but

¹⁰⁵ Ibidem.

never presented so that I would have thought about them with reluctance or contempt.¹⁰⁶

His reflections seem to emphasize that the changes within the Church did not occur overnight neither was the period before the Council totally biased. To sum up, irrespective of his memories, antisemitic statements amid Polish priests in the postwar years are also known in the scholarship.¹⁰⁷ Thus, the problem of antisemitism in the bosom the Church cannot be disregarded. Nonetheless, since available survey data is fragmentary and by far inconsistent, the precise assessment of the phenomenon has met obstacles.¹⁰⁸

Father Waldemar Chrostowski, whose youth passed in the conciliar period, set forth a frequent problem of a dual perception of the Jews in postwar Poland: in the context of religion, and in the context of real-life relations; “The references in the church and religion classes treated the Jews as a relic of the distant past, a nation from the time of Jesus Christ. I had the impression that Jews to whom people referred in the church, and those about whom parents and neighbors were silent, were people who did not have anything to do with each other.”¹⁰⁹ It shows how a better grasp of complex Jewish history has been difficult as to fully realize their historical fate.

Father Waldemar Chrostowski began studies at the seminary in 1968. He claimed that he had not been taught antisemitic attitudes as a seminarian, but at the same time, he

¹⁰⁶ Grzegorz Górny (ed.), *Kościół, Żydzi, Polska [Church, Jews, Poland-TRANS]* (Warsaw: Fronda, 2009), 14.

¹⁰⁷ Michael Fleming, *The ethno-religious ambitions of the Roman Catholic Church*, 647.

¹⁰⁸ Anna Sommer Schneider, *The Catholic Church, Radio Maryja, and the Question of Antisemitism in Poland* [in:] Alvin H. Rosenfeld, *Resurgent Antisemitism* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 2013), 236, 252-262.

¹⁰⁹ Grzegorz Górny (ed.), *Kościół, Żydzi, Polska [Church, Jews, Poland-TRANS]* (Warsaw: Fronda, 2009), 15.

added: “they also did not talk about the necessity of overcoming it (...).”¹¹⁰ Naturally, for all seminarians, the knowledge of the conciliar documents, including *Nostra Aetate*, was obligatory. But initially Father Chrostowski did not pay much attention to the landmark character of *Nostra Aetate*: “At this stage of my life I treated (...) *Nostra Aetate* as one of many documents and, in my opinion, not the most important, because the most important I considered the Dogmatic Constitution on Divine Revelation (*Dei Verbum*) and the Pastoral Constitution on the Church in the Modern World (*Gaudium et Spes*). Both documents have been essential for the Christian identity and the nature of the Church.” Eventually, he added that the tensions between faith and atheistic Communism attracted much of his attention back then.¹¹¹

Also, Father Lawrence E. Frizzell explained the logic behind the conciliar teaching:

Perhaps many outside the Catholic community would focus attention on *Nostra Aetate* as a high point in the Council’s teaching. However, the impact of this Declaration would have been less profound without the important developments that are found in other documents, especially the Constitutions relating to the very heart of the Church’s life.¹¹²

Additionally, aside from the two Constitutions mentioned by Father Chrostowski, Father Frizzell pointed to The Constitution on the Sacred Liturgy (*Sacrosanctum Concilium*) that puts an emphasis on the “salvation history” that for the Church is centered on the person and work of Jesus. Then, Frizzell drew attention to a vital aspect of this Constitution—the liturgy: “The liturgy is the summit toward which the activity of the

¹¹⁰ Ibidem, 22.

¹¹¹ Grzegorz Górny (ed.), *Kościół, Żydzi, Polska [Church, Jews, Poland-TRANS]* (Warsaw: Fronda, 2009), 23-24.

¹¹² Lawrence E. Frizzell, *The Teaching of the Second Vatican Council on Jews and Judaism* [in:] Anthony J. Cernera (ed.), *Examining Nostra Aetate After 40 years*, (Fairfield, Connecticut: Sacred Heart University Press, 2007), 35.

Church is directed” (*Liturgy* #10).¹¹³ Another important conciliar development was the Constitution on the Church (*Lumen Gentium*), which focused on a deeper understanding of the Church’s very nature and on the Church’s relationship to ancient Israel. At this moment, the words of Father Frizzell seem to be summative:

Filling a vacuum of ignorance with a positive appreciation of what the Jewish community was in the past ages should be a foundation for a Christian sense of solidarity with the Jewish people now and for cooperating with them to overcome anti-Jewish bigotry in the contemporary world.¹¹⁴

Finally, Father Frizzell also laid stress on the Declaration on Religious Liberty (*Dignitatis Humanae*) as a significant document to comprehend the conciliar teaching.¹¹⁵

3. The controversy around the Carmelite convent at Auschwitz

Conventional wisdom would suggest that in the 1980s there was no other religion the Church in Poland could dialogue with. Suddenly, however, it turned out that the Jewish-Christian dialogue was a necessity and urgent need of that time. According to Archbishop Henryk Muszyński, there were two reasons that made this assumption true. First, John Paul II, through his epoch-making gestures and words animated the Jewish-Christian encounter. Second, the Polish Episcopate had to launch relations with the Jews due to the escalating conflict around the presence of the Carmelite nuns in the concentration camp at Auschwitz. The clash took such a dramatic turn that in its apex the

¹¹³ Ibidem, 38.

¹¹⁴ Ibidem.

¹¹⁵ Ibidem, 40-49.

lack of compromise would have led to the break of the dialogue between the Jews and the Catholic Church all over the world.¹¹⁶

Prior to the description of the controversy following the foundation of the Carmelite convent at Auschwitz, a few words should be given on its symbolic dimension. Importantly, some scholars would probably agree with a bold statement of Magdalena Kuleta who concluded this conflict by saying: “The Poles believe that the Jews stole their Oświęcim, the Jews believe that the Poles stole their Auschwitz.” In short, the symbolism of this place is at times different for Jews, different for Poles, and still different for other nations. For Polish Catholics, this is the place of “national crucifixion”¹¹⁷ (since Polish Catholics, intelligentsia, and other groups were also prisoners in the camp), and for the Jews—a metaphysical emptiness. At worst, this distinct spirituality could result in not recognizing the suffering of the other party. Thus, the conflict reminded people how important is good will on both sides, the acceptance of both symbols and willingness to make certain compromises.¹¹⁸

For Poles, Auschwitz is a symbol of martyrdom of many nations under German occupation, the symbol of universal suffering, moral failure and collapse of European civilization. However, at the same time it is extremely important that the Polish consciousness would not erase a special place of Jews among the victims of Auschwitz. In the Jewish consciousness the whole tragedy of the Holocaust is epitomized in

¹¹⁶ Henryk J. Muszyński, *Początek wspólnej drogi: Dialog katolicko-żydowski w Polsce w latach 1986-1994 [The beginning of a common path: Catholic-Jewish dialogue in Poland in the years 1986-1994-TRANS]* (Pelplin: Bernardinum, 2015), 14.

¹¹⁷ Carol Rittner and John K. Roth (ed.), *Introduction [in:] Memory Offended* (New York: Praeger, 1991), 5.

¹¹⁸ Magdalena Kuleta, *Pamięć podzielona, pamięć urażona [in:] Dzieje i istota konfliktu wokół Auschwitz. [Divided Memory, Offended Memory [in:] The history and nature of the conflict around Auschwitz-TRANS]* Rubikon, nr 3 (10)/2000, 1-2.

Auschwitz, as the “factory” of mass murder of Jews from all over Europe. Thus, the name Auschwitz functions interchangeably with the terms Holocaust or *Shoah*. With this in mind, their fear of the appropriation of the place by the Christian Poles could be better understood. Distressingly, for the Polish community this concern is often completely incomprehensible, which is not necessarily caused by malevolence, but ignorance or the lack of understanding. Moreover, some people in Poland treat the “Jewishness” of this world’s largest cemetery as interference in the sovereignty of their country.¹¹⁹

Accordingly, dejudaization¹²⁰ of Auschwitz, a charge brought up by some Jews, could easily lead to falsification of or forgetting about the origin of the vast majority of victims of the German Nazi concentration camps. People cannot be allowed to blur the fact that more than 90 percent of the victims of Auschwitz were Jewish. Nor can they refuse the Jewish right to have influence on the future of the camp. Another intertwined phenomenon is named Christianization of the memory of Auschwitz. Hence, some Jews feared that the nuns would pray for the Christian heaven for victims of the *Shoah*.¹²¹ In addition, the presence of the cross in Auschwitz, awakening positive spiritual feeling among Christians, bore a negative connotation for some Jewish people, especially those who themselves witnessed persecution at the hands of Christian neighbors. Keeping this in mind, the problem of the convent at Auschwitz lay not necessarily in malice of

¹¹⁹ Ibidem.

¹²⁰ Carol Rittner and John K. Roth (ed.), *Introduction* [in:] *Memory Offended* (New York: Praeger, 1991), 4.

¹²¹ Ibidem, 5.

representatives of the Church, though this happens, but in the different Christian way of commemorating the tragedy that was objectionable to the Jewish people.¹²²

However, when in 1984, the decision was made to locate the Carmelite convent in the building of the so-called Old Theater, adjacent to the walls of the Auschwitz concentration camp, probably no one in the Church in Poland might assume that this initiative would become a subject of controversy. The intentions of the Carmelites and the Church were explained by the Archbishop of Cracow on September 30 1984, when he announced that the nuns would pray “for the propitiation of God's mercy, and in particular, for peace and unity in the world.”¹²³

At that time, no one on the Polish Catholic side consulted with the Jews on this project, let alone Jews from abroad, simply because such a practice had not existed before. The Christian-Jewish dialogue was still in its infancy. The originators of the convent had good intentions when they prayed for the victims of the Holocaust and their persecutors. Reportedly, the reaction of Polish Jews was positive. It seemed that the convent would reflect the goodwill and Christian solidarity with the suffering and martyrdom of the Jewish people. As the building of the prospective convent required repair, some international organizations, among them “*Kirche in Not*” [Church in Need], came with help. They encouraged people to make donations toward the “gift for the Pope—the convent at Auschwitz.” On the other hand, however, they did not mention Auschwitz in the context of annihilation of the Jews. Thus, founding the convent was perceived as a deliberate offence and challenge thrown down against Jewish identity. The

¹²² Magdalena Kuleta, *Pamięć podzielona, pamięć urażona* [in:] *Dzieje i istota konfliktu wokół Auschwitz. [Divided Memory, Offended Memory [in:] The history and nature of the conflict around Auschwitz-TRANS]* Rubikon, nr 3 (10)/2000, 1-2.

¹²³ Waldemar Chrostowski, *Spór wokół klasztoru w Oświęcimiu [The Dispute over the Convent at Auschwitz-TRANS]* [in:] *Znak*, Kraków, (4-5)/1990, 123.

sovereign rights of Jews to Auschwitz seemed to be trampled, and the uniqueness of the Jewish sacrifice of life seemed ignored.¹²⁴

Quite interestingly, those members of the Jewish community engaged in the dialogue with Christians tried not to escalate these allegations. For example, Dr. Joseph Lichten of the Anti-Defamation League, who came from Poland and resided in Rome, claimed the decision to start a convent “must deserve respect,” and he was not isolated in saying so. Key for understanding the controversy was the fact that the dispute around the convent first sparked off outside the country, whereas in Poland it was hardly known and numerous Catholics approached the subject matter indifferently.¹²⁵

One may venture to say that the conflict opened a Pandora’s box—the old grudges and resentments revived. The incident threatened the future of Catholic-Jewish dialogue and Polish-Jewish relations. Both, Polish Catholics and Jews, strived to get Pope John Paul II involved and each of them anticipated a favorable solution as if only one of them could “win” this dispute.

Michael Berenbaum, trying to explain the scope of conflict, said: “The controversy surrounding the convent was not only religious but also political, and the politics was not only global but also significantly local”.¹²⁶ At some point, the rift between the Polish Catholic Church and the Jews could have a serious worldwide impact on the Catholic-Jewish relations at large.¹²⁷ Nonetheless, within a few years after the conflict started, the deadlock had been broken. With a mediatory role of the Vatican, a

¹²⁴ Ibidem, 124-125.

¹²⁵ Ibidem, 127.

¹²⁶ Carol Rittner and John K. Roth (ed.), *Introduction* [in:] *Memory Offended* (New York: Praeger, 1991), 87.

¹²⁷ Henryk J. Muszyński, *Początek wspólnej drogi: Dialog katolicko-żydowski w Polsce w latach 1986-1994 [The Beginning of a Common Path: Catholic-Jewish dialogue in Poland in the years 1986-1994-TRANS]* (Pelplin: Bernardinum, 2015), 14.

long-awaited agreement was reached, and the Carmelite nuns left the convent at Auschwitz. Some of them moved to a new building, whereas the others, like their superior, returned to their home convents.

Also, the controversy surrounding the Carmelite convent revealed how some underlying resentments and latent prejudices, might be symptomatic of the way in which both communities—Polish Catholics and Jews—consider their past. According to Magdalena Kuleta, at times the thesis of Ireneusz Krzemiński concerning “competition in suffering” between those two peoples is well grounded. For the Catholic-Jewish dialogue in Poland to be continued and developed, the involvement of both partners is necessary to find the solutions that do not hurt feelings nor impose one’s own particular views at any price.¹²⁸

4. The Church’s position regarding the Jews under Communism and the first steps toward the dialogue

Bringing up the topic of the Polish Church’s attitude toward the Jews before, during and after World War II is always somewhat complex. Perhaps some scholars would begin this story by discussing Jewish children, saved in monasteries. Also, the Polish Church’s defiance of Hitler deserves to be mentioned.¹²⁹ All this is true, but those scholars at times forget that this is only one side of the coin, and not presenting the other side is misleading. However, it seems to be a natural reaction of every believer, who does

¹²⁸ Magdalena Kuleta, *Pamięć podzielona, pamięć urażona* [in:] *Dzieje i istota konfliktu wokół Auschwitz. [Divided Memory, Offended Memory [in:] The history and nature of the conflict around Auschwitz-TRANS]* Rubikon, nr 3 (10)/2000, 1-2.

¹²⁹ Leopold Tyrmand, *Church and State in Postwar Poland* [in:] *Center Journal*, Spring 1984, 36.

not want to cut one's own throat. Or, as people in Poland used to say, "no one should cut the branch on which they are sitting." On balance, this mindset should not prevent people from getting involved into an open and honest dialogue.

From one side, there was a Catholic organization called "Żegota" that brought help to the Jews persecuted during the years 1942-1945. This was in spite of the fact that Poland was the only country occupied by Nazis where for helping a Jew one could be killed along with his or her entire family. Nevertheless, those who decided to help were not just few isolated individuals. As a matter of fact, Polish people, with over 6,500 rescuers, constitute the largest national group of the Righteous Among the Nations in Yad Vashem.¹³⁰ And, they were often motivated by their faith. However, it is also well known that more could have been done to save the Jews during the War. Accordingly, there were people in the Church, before, during, and after the War, who preserved anti-Jewish religious bias, with canards such as "blood libel". Handed down from generation to generation, the stereotypes became so ingrained that they unknowingly prepared background for Nazi atrocities to occur. A Jewish Statement on Christians and Christianity published on September 2000, *Dabru Emet*, set forth the Christian role in the Shoah:

Without the long history of Christian anti-Judaism and Christian violence against Jews, Nazi ideology could not have taken hold nor could it have been carried out. Too many Christians participated in, or were sympathetic to, Nazi atrocities against Jews. Other Christians did not protest sufficiently against these atrocities. But Nazism itself was not an inevitable outcome of Christianity.¹³¹

¹³⁰ The Righteous Among The Nations, <http://www.yadvashem.org/yv/en/righteous/statistics.asp> (accessed April 2, 2015).

¹³¹ Dabru Emet, http://www.jcrelations.net/Dabru_Emet_-_A_Jewish_Statement_on_Christians_and_Christianity.2395.0.html (accessed March 18, 2015).

All in all, the signers of the document acknowledged long-standing Christian prejudice and violence against the Jewish people, but they also recognized that Nazism was not a Christian phenomenon.

However, aside from some pejorative aspects of Church's teaching, the main topic of this subsection is Church's relations with the Jews under Communism. To begin with, there is no clear assessment of the historical attitude of the Church towards the tragic Jewish pogrom in Kielce in 1946. Representatives of the Jewish people reported that the Church acted passively and grudgingly. However, the further investigation shed new light on these events, and it also succeeds to determine certain facts:

Hearing about the ongoing events in Kielce (...) priests from the nearby cathedral immediately went there. They tried to go through the cordon of police and army, but were not allowed to enter the place and get back to the church. The next morning the aforementioned priests along with the prosecutor and the provincial governor of Kielce edited a special appeal to the inhabitants of Kielce. They called them to stay calm, and were regretful over the past incidents, and also postulated 'impartial investigation' to punish the guilty, 'regardless of racial and religious background' (...). The UB did not allow for releasing the document.¹³²

Going further, the position of prominent Polish historians, such as A. Dudek and J. Eisler, regarding Church's attitude to the anti-Jewish events of March 1968 (see Chapter 1) are basically consistent and come down to the fact that the clergy acted less decisively than during the previous crises. The Episcopate took a balanced, or as others said, too cautious position until the end of the upheaval.¹³³

Perhaps the Church did not want to be drawn into a political game, and perhaps was also disappointed that the opposition did not put forward pro-ecclesiastical slogans during the protests of 1968. Nevertheless, for the first time in many years the Church was

¹³² Ł. Kamiński, J. Żaryn, *Wokół pogromu kieleckiego [Around the Kielce Pogrom-TRANS]* (Warszawa: IPN, 2006).

¹³³ B. Fijałkowska, *Przegląd Powszechny*, nr 3/2002.

not assessed as a political opponent, but as an independent social force, which had maintained silence on the anti-Zionist campaign. It is maintained that the Church evinced at most benevolent neutrality toward the protesting youth.¹³⁴ On the other hand, Alina Cała paid attention to the fact that: “Following the events of March 1968 and anti-Jewish hate campaign, the students who protested against the government and were repressed afterwards, were permitted to continue their studies in Catholic schools, regardless of their background and attitude to religion.”¹³⁵ All in all, the assessment of the Catholic Church’s approach to the Jewish issues throughout the period in question is still very difficult because most publications on the history of the Church, officially released in the PRL, were, to a large extent, soaked in bias.

Although some Catholic circles, from the sixties, have practiced some form of the dialogue and cooperation with Polish Jews, it is true that other groups within the Church have not followed their example. Some extremists with antisemitic attitudes have existed as well. But the awareness of that does not alter the fact that one of the most open dialogues with the Jews takes shape within Polish Catholic circles. Seeing the ecumenical projects going on in Poland, the words of John Paul II aimed at Judaism can be better understood.¹³⁶

A new attitude to Judaism and other religions, sparked by the Second Vatican Council, was carried out by the Polish Church after some delay. It is widely maintained that the dialogical movement in Poland was given an impetus in the 1980s. In those days,

¹³⁴ Antoni Dudek, *Państwo i Kościół [The State and the Church-TRANS]*, 225-226.

¹³⁵ Alina Cała, *Mniejszość żydowska [Jewish Minority]* [in:] Piotr Madajczyk (ed.), *Mniejszości narodowe w Polsce [National Minorities in Poland-TRANS]* (Warszawa: Instytut Studiów Politycznych PAN, 1998), 287.

¹³⁶ See: Eugene J. Fisher, Leon Klenicki, *The Saint For Shalom. How Pope John Paul II Transformed Catholic-Jewish Relations. The Complete Texts 1979-2005* (New York: Crossroad, 2011).

the Catholic Intelligentsia Clubs started organizing in several cities the “Week of Jewish Culture,” during which young people worked on restoration of Jewish cemeteries and became acquainted with Jewish culture. A solid foundation for reconciliation was laid in 1986, when The Sub-Commission (in 1988 transformed into Commission) of the Polish Episcopate for Dialogue with Judaism was established. Until 1994, the Commission was led by the Archbishop Henryk Muszyński, a Biblical scholar and a pioneer of Jewish-Christian dialogue in Poland. As a matter of fact, the initiative of revision of Polish Catholics’ approach toward Jews often was coming from single individuals—intelligentsia.

In 1990, on the occasion of the twenty-fifth anniversary of the proclamation of the declaration *Nostra Aetate*, Polish Conference of Catholic Bishops prepared a Pastoral Letter on Jewish-Catholic Relations, which was commented on widely. This pastoral message was read out in every church and chapel across the country on Sunday Mass on January 20, 1991. The bishops reflected in the letter on the heritage of *Nostra Aetate* and pondered over the multiplicity and diversity of ties linking the Church with the Jewish religion and the Jewish people.

Archbishop Henryk Muszyński, who revealed the formation of the letter from the inside, said that its preparation was a top priority, but at the same time extremely difficult. As a favorable circumstance should be counted the speeches and symbolic gestures of John Paul II, by which he affirmed the importance of the Second Vatican Council documents. The task was complicated, because the letter had to be approved by

all members of the plenary meeting of the Polish Episcopal Conference, among whose members expectations varied, and sometimes were contradictory with one another.¹³⁷

The first version of the document was very vivid and presented views that clashed with each other, but the vast majority of the bishops were willing to accept it. One should not overlook the fact that the letter was an unprecedented move. For the first time in a 1000-year history of the Church in Poland the faithful heard that “there is no other religion with which the Church has such close relations nor is there any other people with which she is so closely linked.”¹³⁸

The pastoral letter, like the whole Catholic-Jewish dialogue in Poland, is divided into the two parts: a theological and historical. The theological part reminded listeners of the unique bonds of the Church with the Mosaic faith and the Jewish people, of the durability of their election and the First Covenant with God. Importantly, the letter contained an appropriate interpretation regarding responsibility for the death of Jesus: “The fathers of the Council, in the declaration, deny in a clear and decisive manner the main accusation that all Jews bear responsibility for the death of Christ”¹³⁹ [this thought is subsequently developed in the letter-P.D.] Then, the historical part of the letter referred to the special ties that connect Poles and Jews. In the historical part, the Poles who rescued Jews during the Holocaust were acknowledged. Moreover, the document expressed sincere regret for any incidents of antisemitism on the part of the Poles. At the

¹³⁷ Abp Henryk J. Muszyński, *Początek wspólnej drogi, [The Beginning of a Common Path]*, 77.

¹³⁸ Ibidem; Franklin Sherman (ed.), *Bridges: Documents of the Christian-Jewish Dialogue. Volume Two. Building a New Relationship (1986-2013)* (Mahwah: Paulist Press, 2014), 349.

¹³⁹ Ibidem, 350.

same time, the use of the term “Polish antisemitism” in reference to the annihilation of the Jews perpetrated in German-occupied Poland was considered far unjust and unfair.¹⁴⁰

According to Archbishop Muszyński, the core message of the letter, which has remained the subject of discussion and even criticism from some Jews, was encapsulated in the following words:

We are especially disheartened by those among Catholics who in some way were the cause of the death of Jews. They will forever gnaw at our conscience on the social plane. If only one Christian could have helped and did not stretch out a helping hand to a Jew during the time of danger or caused his death, we must ask for forgiveness of our Jewish brothers and sisters.¹⁴¹

Often, this fragment was considered too general and vague by the Jewish people, and in the vein of “Polish insensitivity.” However, Archbishop Muszyński rectified: “I wish to assure that this was really all that at this point in history could be written, and received an approval from the bishops.” Then, Muszyński noted that one analyzing the letter must remember that it was a fruit of compromise, adopted by all bishops without exception. For the same token, the letter was not able to fully satisfy any party—as Muszyński summed up.¹⁴² Therefore, the letter should be interpreted, keeping in mind historical specificity of the country. In any case, the letter seems to be drafted in a sincere and open tone.

Now, it is worthwhile to say a few words about the reception of this document. In fact, the content of the letter was generally welcomed in Poland, with few exceptions from the extreme national and fundamentalist movements. A representative of the Polish Jews, Stanisław Krajewski, pointed to the affirmative overtone of this reorientation, but

¹⁴⁰ Abp Henryk J. Muszyński, *Początek wspólnej drogi, [The Beginning of a Common Path]*, 78.

¹⁴¹ Franklin Sherman (ed.), *Bridges: Documents of the Christian-Jewish Dialogue. Volume Two. Building a New Relationship (1986-2013)* (Mahwah: Paulist Press, 2014), 352.

¹⁴² Abp Henryk J. Muszyński, *Początek wspólnej drogi, [The Beginning of a Common Path]*, 78.

also stated that the confession of the Church was too general. However, one should remember that the letter was a beacon that showed the right way gently, but in the right direction. Since it was the first letter of this kind, the people's reactions could have been diverse. However, in all likelihood, today, after almost 25 years from the publication of the letter, its message could be reinforced.¹⁴³

Gradually, the letter led to further declarations of Polish Church leaders. In answer, the representatives of the Jewish community in Poland announced explicitly: "Today, it cannot be claimed in good faith that the official teaching of the Catholic Church contains antisemitic content." They added that the spiritual and moral dimensions of *Shoah* should become a constant element of pastoral work. Also, they were willing to undertake far-reaching cooperation in this field. Finally, the letter was called an "unprecedented and unique breakthrough" and "the new beginning of the Jewish-Christian relationship" by the worldwide Jewish leaders.¹⁴⁴

In 1996, following the transformation of the internal structure of the Polish Episcopal Conference, the Commission became the Committee for Dialogue with Judaism within the Council for Religious Dialogue. Both assemblies were successfully chaired by Archbishop Stanisław Gądecki, the Vice-President [currently President] of the Polish Episcopate.¹⁴⁵ Theological symposia and colloquia, organized by the Committees, involving Christian and Jewish scholars, turned out to be successful. The first such initiative was held in 1988 in the abbey in Tyniec. Apart from that, since 1989, annual international symposia "The Church and the Jews and Judaism" have been held in

¹⁴³ Ibidem, 83.

¹⁴⁴ Ibidem, 86.

¹⁴⁵ Piotr M. A. Cywiński, Marcin Przeciszewski, *L'Eglise En Pologne Apres 1989 Face Aux Nouveaux Defis De La Democratie*, <http://www.cwi.pl/tekst15.htm> (accessed February 25, 2015).

Warsaw.¹⁴⁶ In the pages of his book, Archbishop Henryk Muszyński pondered over the importance of the early projects of Jewish-Christian studies in Poland and in the world, such as at the seminary at Spertus College of Judaica in Chicago in 1989.¹⁴⁷ A prominent role in emerging dialogue has been played by the Polish Council of Christians and Jews, established in 1991. Subsequently, the Council prepared a religious education curriculum that reflected elements of interfaith dialogue. Then, in the fullness of time, due to the decision of the Polish Episcopate, the Day of Judaism has been celebrated in the Catholic Church in Poland yearly since 1998. This annual celebration falls on January 17, a day before the Week of Prayer for Christian Unity. The central, nationwide celebration of the Day of Judaism is held every year in a different city. For Catholics it has been an opportunity to find out about and contemplate on the inner bond that connects Christianity with Judaism.¹⁴⁸

Since under Communism the fate of the Jews during the Second World War was basically covered in silence, shortly after its fall, on September 26 1990, Pope John Paul II reminded his compatriots of the irrevocable loss inflicted by the Holocaust. Thus, the Pope wanted to clearly recall that in a new reality Poland would have to revisit this issue.¹⁴⁹ As it was noted, the highest hierarchy of the Church, especially John Paul II, officially asked the Jews for forgiveness for the wrongdoings of the Church. A champion for dialogue, John Paul II realized indications of the declaration *Nostra Aetate* with

¹⁴⁶ Ibidem.

¹⁴⁷ Abp Henryk J. Muszyński, *Początek wspólnej drogi*, [*The Beginning of a Common Path*], 99-104.

¹⁴⁸ Piotr M. A. Cywiński, Marcin Przeworski, *L'Eglise En Pologne Apres 1989 Face Aux Nouveaux Defis De La Democratie*, <http://www.cwi.pl/tekst15.htm> (accessed February 25, 2015).

¹⁴⁹ Jan Paweł II a Żydzi i Judaizm–świadectwo [*Pope John Paul II and the Jews and Judaism – witness-TRANS*], <http://www.niedziela.pl/artykul/13506/Jan-Pawel-II-a-Zydzi-i-judaizm> (accessed March 27, 2015).

remarkable consistency, making a respectful return to *the elder brothers in the faith*, the Jews. Deservedly, some people compared his epochal work to the Copernican Revolution.¹⁵⁰ Due to his efforts and those of his successors, today people can say that the dialogue of the Catholic Church in Poland with the followers of Judaism, and especially its theological nature, is unique in the context of Europe.¹⁵¹

A frequent problem in furthering the Jewish-Christian dialogue in Poland is negative emotions accumulated in the past. In practice, it has happened that the theological dialogue, built around a common eschatological perspective, the Ten Commandments, or the Old Testament, was transferred to the field of Polish-Jewish relations. As long as the past experiences are still awakened in collective memory, this process is barely avoidable.

The dialogue includes not only an exchange of arguments, but also the exchange of mutual sensitivities, building trust and respect. In the relatively short time which passed since the Second Vatican Council, it has been impossible to eradicate the centuries-long accretions of ignorance and distrust. Thus, the work initiated by the Council must continue. In selected European countries, including Poland, an example of how to accomplish that is the Day of Judaism in the Catholic Church, which will be presented in the following chapter.

¹⁵⁰ Gilbert S. Rosenthal (ed.), *A Jubilee for All Time. The Copernican Revolution in Jewish-Christian Relations* (Eugene, Oregon: Pickwick Publications, 2014); Henryk Muszyński, *Wstęp* [in:] Jan Paweł II, *Dlaczego dialog z judaizmem?* (Warszawa: m-Znak), 1999.

¹⁵¹ Piotr M. A. Cywiński, Marcin Przeciszewski, *L'Eglise En Pologne Apres 1989 Face Aux Nouveaux Defis De La Democratie*, <http://www.cwi.pl/tekst15.htm> (accessed February 25, 2015).

The Day of Judaism in the Catholic Church in Poland

1. Genesis

On September 28, 1989 the Italian Episcopal Conference decided that each January 17 would become “the day of reflection and deepening the Hebrew-Christian religious dialogue.” By doing so, the Conference intended to draw attention to the bond connecting Judaism and Christianity, a bond that does not only pertain to particular church groups or movements, but to the awareness of the entire Church. Ever since, on this special day, the Christian community has had a chance to rediscover and reflect on the importance of this bond within the Church: “As the sacred synod searches into the mystery of the Church, it remembers the bond that spiritually ties the people of the New Covenant to Abraham’s stock. (*Nostra Aetate* 4)”¹⁵² Thus, in a transparent way, the reforms of the Second Vatican Council constituted a spiritual and intellectual groundwork for this enterprise.

Then, after eight years a similar concept emerged in the Committee for the Dialogue with Judaism of the Polish Episcopal Conference. In the course of a plenary meeting of the Conference on October 15, 1997 Archbishop Stanisław Gądecki, current

¹⁵² Abp Stanisław Gądecki, *Dni Judaizmu w Kościele Katolickim w Polsce [The Days of Judaism in the Catholic Church in Poland-TRANS]* [in:] Abp Henryk Muszyński, *Początek wspólnej drogi. Dialog katolicko-żydowski w Polsce w latach 1986-1994 [On the common path. The Catholic-Jewish Dialogue in Poland 1986-1994-TRANS]* (Pelplin: Bernardinum, 2015), 585.

President of the Polish Episcopal Conference,¹⁵³ presented his brainchild—the project of “The Day of Judaism in the Catholic Church in Poland.”¹⁵⁴ He acknowledged that the idea originated “at the crossroads of Italy and the city of Poznań in Poland,” and there were several people involved in the project along the way.¹⁵⁵ In fact, this initiative caused an “open split” during a session of the Polish Bishops’ Conference and in the public at large, because “there were fears (...) of the ‘Judaizing of Christianity.’” However, the idea was accepted, and the Day of Judaism in the Catholic Church in Poland has been officially observed since January 17, 1998.¹⁵⁶

Aside from some skeptics, there were also people for whom the Day of Judaism marked a joyous moment for the Church deepening her self-awareness. It was another step to understand the words Pope John Paul II said in the vein of *Nostra Aetate*: “The Church of Christ discovers her ‘bond’ with Judaism by ‘searching into her own mystery.’ The Jewish religion is not extrinsic to us, but in a certain way is ‘intrinsic’ to our own religion.”¹⁵⁷ (John Paul II, *The Synagogue of Rome*, April 13, 1986). And furthermore, the intention of the organizers was to present Jewish people and Judaism in a genuine manner, without any prejudice.

¹⁵³ Archidiecezja Poznańska, <http://www.archpoznan.pl/content/view/178/46/> (accessed April 4, 2015).

¹⁵⁴ Abp Stanisław Gądecki, *Dni Judaizmu w Kościele Katolickim w Polsce [The Days of Judaism in the Catholic Church in Poland-TRANS]*, 585.

¹⁵⁵ Interview with Archbishop Stanisław Gądecki, June 2014.

¹⁵⁶ Anna Pawlikowska, Zbigniew Nosowski, *The Day of Judaism in the Catholic Church: Discovering Roots* [in:] *The Bond of Memory. Polish Christians in Dialogue with Jews and Judaism* (Warszawa: Więż, 2008), 10; <http://laboratorium.wiez.pl/zasoby/The%20Bond%20of%20Memory.pdf> (accessed March 17, 2015).

¹⁵⁷ Eugene J. Fisher, Leon Klenicki, *The Saint For Shalom. How Pope John Paul II Transformed Catholic-Jewish Relations. The Complete Texts 1979-2005* (New York: Crossroad, 2011), 112.

Archbishop Stanisław Gądecki remembered that the sense of special kinship played an important role for the establishment of this day: “The Church and the Synagogue, Christians and Jews, although they do not identify with each other, they do not rule out each other, do not oppose to each other, but they are connected together on the grounds of their identity.”¹⁵⁸ Accordingly, Gądecki pointed out that the Committee had agreed to set apart a special all-Polish time for reflection and prayer on the mystery of this bond. That time would be devoted to discovering the spiritual brotherhood between the Church and the Israel—the People of God, to whom the Only Father of all creatures, turned with his special love, bearing in mind the redemption of all people.¹⁵⁹ In this manner, Poland, as opposed to Italy, became the first and so far the only country, where the Church observes the event not locally, but nationwide.

Archbishop Gądecki asserted that from the very beginning everything had been organized programmatically. Above all, the ice between the different people engaged in the project broke soon. In a human way, some Jewish participants were attracted to the Christian food, and the Christians were attracted to the kosher food likewise—admitted Gądecki. Alongside from the endeavors inside the Church, the Chief Rabbi of Poland, Michael Schudrich, Stanisław Krajewski, and other Jewish supporters turned out to be helpful in setting the stage for this Day. Step by step, also other circles, universities and departments of theology have been included in this work, and after a couple of years the first master’s theses on the Day were produced. As soon as the idea worked out well, the mutual accusations evaporated. The Day gave birth to various cooperating groups, which understand each other well. For example, the representatives of ecumenical groups

¹⁵⁸ Abp Stanisław Gądecki, *Dni Judaizmu w Kościele Katolickim w Polsce [The Days of Judaism in the Catholic Church in Poland-TRANS]*, 585.

¹⁵⁹ *Ibidem*, 585-586.

always attend the Day, and make it flourish. At present, Bishop Mieczysław Cisło, the Chairman of The Polish Bishops' Committee for Dialogue with Judaism, is very committed to the Day of Judaism. On balance, the initiative took on a more mature shape than in its very beginning—Gądecki added.¹⁶⁰

It should be noted that shortly after its successful launching the Day won approval of the Pontifical Commission for Religious Relations with the Jews, and reverberated throughout various European episcopal conferences. In 1999, it reached the Second Special Assembly of the Bishops of Europe, which, among other things, took into consideration the inclusion of “The Day of Judeo-Christian Dialogue” in the Church calendar. Soon after that, also the Church in Austria followed in the footsteps of the Italian and Polish Churches. Archbishop Gądecki stated that, encouragingly, this decision gave the organizers hope that their initiative “slowly will pave its way to consciousness and hearts of not only Catholics and Jews, but also the members of other Christian denominations in Poland.”¹⁶¹ By this occasion, Gądecki, as many others, emphasized the impact of John Paul II on their work, especially his call to multiply the efforts to tighten the spiritual connection between Jews and Christians.¹⁶²

Needless to say, the practice of celebrating the Day of Judaism in Poland was preceded by manifold thoughts, doubts, and ardent hopes. This Day, according to the intentions of its authors, has been wrapped in intellectual reflection, to shake hearts of the faithful who would find out independently what the kinship between Jews and Christians means for them in theory and in practice. The day was therefore designed to take a closer

¹⁶⁰ Interview with Archbishop Stanisław Gądecki, June 2014.

¹⁶¹ Abp Stanisław Gądecki, *Dni Judaizmu w Kościele Katolickim w Polsce [The Days of Judaism in the Catholic Church in Poland-TRANS]*, 586.

¹⁶² *Ibidem*.

look into the content of Scripture, and its contemporary interpretation in the teaching of the Church. It was also an attempt to discover the ties between the people who had lived in the same country for centuries. In the end, it has been a time to enlighten the spirituality of believers, and to face the modern challenges of the Christian faith.

Archbishop Gądecki contended that every special day in the calendar draws its genesis from deficiencies or urgent social problems, not to mention the day to combat drug addiction, grandparents' day, and so on. The need for the Day of Judaism in Poland emerged similarly. What is clear from even a cursory glance is that the demand for such a day was imposed by itself—by tensions that exist between the followers of both religions.¹⁶³

Analyzing the problem from a historical point of view, this need manifested itself from inside and outside the Church. The external need stemmed from the fact that Christianity was born from Judaism and took over some fundamental elements of faith and liturgy—Gądecki explained. Despite this, the gulf between the two religions had deepened constantly, until it almost reached the level of complete mutual ignorance. In turn, the inner necessity for change was dictated by the contemporary state of affairs. Given the already existing differences and ignorance of each other, one should not forget that the followers of both religions descended from One Father, the Creator, who loves all people and wants to be loved by everyone¹⁶⁴:

You love everything that exists; you do not despise anything that you have made. If you had not liked it, you would not have made it in the first place. How could anything last, if you did not want it to? How could it endure, if you had not

¹⁶³ Interview with Archbishop Stanisław Gądecki, June 2014.

¹⁶⁴ Bible Gateway.

<https://www.biblegateway.com/passage/?search=Wisdom%2011&version=GNT> (accessed April 14, 2015).

created it? You have allowed it all to exist, O Lord, because it is yours, and you love every living thing. (Wisdom 11: 24-26)

Consequently, from the profound perspective of the mystery of salvation, the disparities between faiths should not bring about hostility, but they should make space for reconciliation, “so that God may be all in all” (1 Cor. 15: 28).¹⁶⁵

2. Objectives of the Day of Judaism

In spite of appearances, the Day’s aim was not to blur the differences or for people to lose their own identity. On the contrary, the aim was to realize the distinctions on the one hand, and to acknowledge common values on the other. The shared values that were outlined by the organizers are as follows¹⁶⁶:

- Belief in the One God who chose His People in irrevocable love
- Trusting to the Word of God, which urges people to seek forgiveness and mutual concern for one another
- Universal call to holiness
- The tradition of daily prayer, both individual and communal

Thus, the faithful learn how to accept the tangible differences, but most of all, how to care for other people and their upright aspirations. Another underlying objective, as laid out by Gądecki, is instilling this spirit in all environments: economic, political, cultural, and religious, to make people coexist peacefully in a shared homeland. Restoring the

¹⁶⁵ Bible Gateway.

<https://www.biblegateway.com/passage/?search=1+Corinthians+15&version=NASB> (accessed April 15, 2015).

¹⁶⁶ Abp Stanisław Gądecki, *Dni Judaizmu w Kościele Katolickim w Polsce [The Days of Judaism in the Catholic Church in Poland-TRANS]*, 587.

spiritual brotherhood requires a glance at common history, full of misunderstandings, envy, and enmity. Nowadays, more often the aspects that united and enriched the both groups of worshipers are brought up to light as well.¹⁶⁷

Also, from the first edition of the Day of Judaism, the organizers encapsulated its main principles in the following eight points¹⁶⁸:

1. To explain and popularize the essence of the Day of Judaism
2. To present teaching of the Church on the Jews and their religion after the Second Vatican Council
3. To make prayer an integral part of the celebration of the Day of Judaism
4. To promote the post-conciliar explanations of the texts of the Holy Scripture, which in the past may have been interpreted in an anti-Jewish and antisemitic way.
5. To explain the tragedy of the annihilation of the Jews to the faithful
6. To present antisemitism as a sin (John Paul II)
7. To invite representatives of other Churches and Christian Communities to pray together on this day
8. To invite Jews to participate in the celebration of the Day of Judaism

All in all, these ABCs of the Day of Judaism put in a nutshell all the most important objectives that will be described in this chapter.

Before going further into details, a brief terminological remark seems to be of importance. Namely, one should keep in mind that the organizers and supporters of the Day of Judaism tend to be precise in referring to it, e.g. in their publications. Although

¹⁶⁷ Ibidem.

¹⁶⁸ Booklets for the Day of Judaism (2011-2015), see the appendix to this thesis.

the terms such as “holiday” or “celebration” come to mind intuitively, they barely appear in this context. Some people suggest not calling the observances “holiday,” but simply “day.”¹⁶⁹

3. The first Day of Judaism in the Catholic Church in Poland

Now, moving on, it should be noticed that the first Day of Judaism celebrated in 1998 was crucial, because it paved the road for the future observances. Hence, what was the key message the organizers intended to share with the faithful? As a matter of fact, each year the Committee for Dialogue with Judaism selects a motto—an invitation to reflection—derived from the Bible or Church teaching. And meaningfully, the motto chosen for the inaugural year was: “Whoever meets Jesus Christ, meets Judaism.” In fact, this catchword drew upon the words of the German bishops quoted by John Paul II in his address to the Jewish community at Mainz in West Germany in 1980.¹⁷⁰ In this way, the motto suggested that Jesus is the bridge for the faithful of the Catholic Church to come to know Judaism. Thus, also the keynote read out during the Mass for the First Day of Judaism in Poland touched upon the historical bond between the two faiths:

Among Christians, consisting in their very beginnings of ‘the Church of the circumcision’ (*Ecclesia ex circumcisione*) and ‘the Church of the nations’ (*Ecclesia ex gentibus*), the awareness of these ties faded slowly, the ties which—through Jesus Christ—united forever the Church with Israel of God. The motto of the first Day of Judaism draws attention precisely to this.¹⁷¹

¹⁶⁹ Interview with Father Manfred Desealers, June 2014.

¹⁷⁰ Eugene J. Fisher, Leon Klenicki, *The Saint For Shalom. How Pope John Paul II Transformed Catholic-Jewish Relations. The Complete Texts 1979-2005* (New York: Crossroad, 2011), 58.

¹⁷¹ Bishop Stanisław Gądecki, *Kto spotyka Jezusa, spotyka Judaizm. Dialog chrześcijańsko-żydowski w Polsce [Whoever meets Jesus, meets Judaism. The Christian-Jewish Dialogue in Poland-TRANS]* (Gniezno: Gaudentium, 2002), 138.

At the same time, the main means to internalize the bond, as suggested by the organizers, is prayer and reflection. They also sketched a historical span of their initiative:

“Rediscovering the mutual spiritual brotherhood also presupposes a look at the two-thousand-year history, (...) more and more separating the two communities.”¹⁷² In closing, the word for the first Day of Judaism, brought up a shared goal: “[This time] prepares us to put into practice that what is our common vocation—to be a blessing for the world, people, and nations.”¹⁷³ From the outset, it became clear that the organizers’ thoughts leaned towards strengthening cooperation for the future.¹⁷⁴ To illustrate this point, Pope John Paul’s address to the Jewish community at Mainz in 1980 should be once again recalled¹⁷⁵:

I would also like to refer briefly to a third dimension of our dialogue. (...) Jews and Christians, as children of Abraham, are called to be a blessing for the world [cf. Gen. 12:2 ff.], by committing themselves together for peace and justice among all men and peoples, with the fullness and depth that God himself intended us to have, and with the readiness for sacrifices that this goal may demand. The more our meeting is imprinted with this sacred duty, the more it becomes a blessing also for ourselves.

After all, it seems that the vision and spirit of Pope John Paul II radiated throughout the words quoted above.

¹⁷² Ibidem.

¹⁷³ Ibidem.

¹⁷⁴ Ibidem, 138-139.

¹⁷⁵ Eugene J. Fisher, Leon Klenicki, *The Saint For Shalom. How Pope John Paul II Transformed Catholic-Jewish Relations. The Complete Texts 1979-2005* (New York: Crossroad, 2011), 60-61.

4. Why is the Day of Judaism observed on January 17?

Arguably, some people wonder why the Day of Judaism is celebrated on January 17. Does this date convey any deeper meaning? Indeed, the choice was anything but coincidental, because the observances fall on the eve of the International Week of Prayer for Christian Unity. As such, this date is to indicate the chronology, continuity of salvation history, and the proximity between the two religions derived from the Abrahamic roots. In addition, the organizers wanted to point out the close sbetween interreligious dialogue and ecumenism. To be more precise, the interreligious dialogue is an introduction to ecumenism.¹⁷⁶ But in the end, whenever January 17 falls on the Sabbath, the Day of Judaism kicks off earlier, on January 16, to give every interested Jew an opportunity to attend it.¹⁷⁷

5. Form of observances

The Day of Judaism deserves closer scrutiny to answer what it has to offer in practice. What does the program include and how do the believers participate in it? To begin with, the organizers constantly stress that the Day serves as an occasion to common prayer in the first place.

On this day, as long as there is willingness on both sides, the shared prayer takes place in every feasible venue. To give an idea, the prayer meetings are held in

¹⁷⁶ Bishop Stanisław Gądecki, *Kto spotyka Jezusa, spotyka Judaizm [Whoever meets Jesus, meets Judaism-TRANS]*, 134.

¹⁷⁷ Interview with Archbishop Stanisław Gądecki, June 2014.

synagogues and churches, including the services of the Word of God. The organizers are convinced that sincere prayer always brings humility, and opening of the heart—an essential approach for mutual understanding. Through this openness, the faithful realize the continuity between the Hebrew and Christian understandings of monotheism—worshiping the same God. Regardless of the apparent differences in worship, Catholics believe that both communities are under the same covenant, and together they constitute the same people of God. The common prayer leads to exploring the connection between people in God’s plan of salvation for all of humanity. At the same time, it serves as a form of expressing gratitude to God for his irrevocable gifts.¹⁷⁸

Jacques Dupuis, quoted by Archbishop Gądecki, draws attention to a few aspects that should be taken into consideration during this prayer. Namely, people should be reminded that Jesus was a Jew who regularly frequented the synagogue to pray. Similarly, the early apostolic community of the Church continued this practice in the first decades of its activities, until the time of detachment from Judaism. However, even after this separation, the Jewish prayer has still nourished the Christian prayer. In particular, the Psalms have constituted an important element of the Christian prayer book until the present. The truth of the matter is that most of the Psalms can be used for common prayer of Christians and Jews.¹⁷⁹

Keeping in mind the words of Jacques Dupuis, Archbishop Gądecki noted that such a prayer could lead every Christian to personal and communal repentance and to confession of faults and sins. For instance, a prayer that Jews prayed with after returning from the Exile seems to fit into the Day of Judaism in Poland:

¹⁷⁸ Abp Stanisław Gądecki, *Dni Judaizmu w Kościele Katolickim w Polsce*, [The Days of Judaism in the Catholic Church in Poland-TRANS], 587.

¹⁷⁹ Ibidem, 588.

Blessed are you, and praiseworthy, O Lord, the God of our ancestors (...) For we have sinned and transgressed by departing from you, and we have done every kind of evil. Your commandments we have not heeded or observed. (Daniel 3: 26, 29-30)¹⁸⁰

Significantly, Jews prayed this way not in order to bear the collective punishment, but to recall the heritage of sins committed by their ancestors prior to the Exile. An obvious association is that the Church, following in their footsteps, asks for forgiveness of historic sins committed against Jews. On this day, the faithful beg pardon to God for their sins, faults, and negligence, in particular for those misdeeds that were in any way directed against “the elder brothers in faith.”

Moreover, the organizers drew the spiritual incentive for prayer from the Apostolic Letter on the occasion of the Jubilee Year 2000 by John Paul II¹⁸¹:

Hence it is appropriate that (...) the Church should become more fully conscious of the sinfulness of her children, recalling all those times in history when they departed from the spirit of Christ and his Gospel and, instead of offering to the world the witness of a life inspired by the values of faith, indulged in ways of thinking and acting which were truly *forms of counter-witness and scandal*.

The Pope’s words appear to be well-chosen and they do not need much explanation. On the other hand, one should not go to extremes during prayer in order to provoke hostile gestures against the Church. Yet, for some extreme individuals even this public confession of sins could appear insufficient. However, people should not blame one for the sheer fact of belonging to the Catholic Church, nor are the Catholics prompted to apologize that they are Catholics. Rather, the intention of the organizers, as put by Archbishop Gądecki, is to strike a balance in assessing guilt: “Also, it is not about the

¹⁸⁰ United States Conference of Catholic Bishops, <http://www.usccb.org/bible/daniel/3> (accessed April 2, 2015).

¹⁸¹ The Holy See. http://w2.vatican.va/content/john-paul-ii/en/apost_letters/1994/documents/hf_jp-ii_apl_10111994_tertio-millennio-adveniente.html (accessed February 19, 2015).

collective blame, to accuse the Church as such, similarly as if to accuse all Germans of causing the Holocaust, or all Jews of killing Jesus.”¹⁸² In the same vein, John Paul II used to teach that the recognition of historical sins presupposes an insightful attitude to the past, an attitude that is possible only through a comprehensive historical reconstruction. Thereby, only after a general historical context is analyzed, can the individuals be held responsible. All in all, the penitential acts of the Church should not be regarded solely as an occasional historical revisionism, but as an opportunity to shape a brighter future.¹⁸³

Aside from prayer, a focal element of the Day of Judaism is the encounter of Jews and Christians themselves. In Poland, such a meeting is not easy, even taking into consideration that approximately 35 million baptized Christians are juxtaposed with only some 1,600 adherents of Judaism.¹⁸⁴ Regardless of this disproportion, the meetings with Jewish religious communities, initiated during the Day, are enriching. In particular, this claim applies to the meetings held in places where the Jewish people used to live, in synagogues, and cemeteries.

But the Day of Judaism is more than a meeting. There are conferences, lectures, and a plethora of accompanying events, including artistic ones. Meetings at the concentration camps are frequent, too. Furthermore, Christians are guests during special services in synagogues, whereas Jews are guests in churches. However, the believers from an average parish are not necessarily drawn to Judaism. Even though this religion does not preoccupy their minds on a daily basis, the elderly people still bear memories of

¹⁸² Abp Stanisław Gądecki, *Dni Judaizmu w Kościele Katolickim w Polsce [The Days of Judaism in the Catholic Church in Poland-TRANS]*, 589.

¹⁸³ *Ibidem*, 590.

¹⁸⁴ Central Statistical Office of Poland, http://stat.gov.pl/cps/rde/xbcr/gus/oz_wyznania_religijne_stow_nar_i_etn_w_pol_2009-2011.pdf, 15 (accessed March 13, 2015).

the Jewish people with whom they used to rub elbows.¹⁸⁵ In addition, there are simple biblical meditations, when a rabbi and a priest explicate given biblical passages in public.¹⁸⁶ At times the Day provides an opportunity for the Ambassador of Israel to hand medals for the Righteous Gentiles.¹⁸⁷

It should be reiterated that even though the Day of Judaism refers to the Polish Church as a whole and is celebrated in every parish across the country, each year one central observance is held in a selected diocese, for example in Poznań or Cracow. The central events are conducted in places that have had a connection to the history of the Jewish community.¹⁸⁸ Thus, every Day of Judaism is different, because it reflects the current city. It is clear that the central observances influence a given diocese in the first place, but they also leave a lasting fruit, contributing to improved planning in the future.¹⁸⁹

Another important aspect is to get in touch with bodies and individuals that promote Christian-Jewish dialogue. Not so long ago Pope Francis, in his first Apostolic Exhortation *Evangelii Gaudium*, encouraged everyone to a respectful and open dialogue in day-to-day life.¹⁹⁰ Such a dialogue, to be more effective, can and should be conducted by the clergy and by simple laypeople on different levels of society. Hopefully, with time, the dialogic attitude can become people's second nature, allowing them to develop peaceful coexistence with the followers of other religions. For example, during the Day of Judaism in 1999, in Wrocław's "Neighborhood of Reconciliation," Jews and

¹⁸⁵ Interview with Father Manfred Desealers, June 2014.

¹⁸⁶ Interview with Archbishop Stanisław Gądecki, June 2014.

¹⁸⁷ Interview with Bishop Mieczysław Ciso, June 2014.

¹⁸⁸ Interview with Archbishop Stanisław Gądecki, June 2014.

¹⁸⁹ Interview with Bishop Mieczysław Ciso, June 2014.

¹⁹⁰ The Holy See. http://w2.vatican.va/content/francesco/en/apost_exhortations/documents/papa-francesco_esortazione-ap_20131124_evangelii-gaudium.html (accessed April 25, 2015).

Christians of various denominations gave a mutual testimony to values that help in building a more human society.

For each believer engaged in the Day of Judaism, it is a time of deepening the religious experience. People from different religious traditions can share their own angle on metaphysical issues, and conceptualize their way of searching for God and salvation. Through a plethora of events, they have an opportunity to stimulate their spiritual growth, involving such fields as anthropology, philosophy, theology, and many others.

Furthermore, some people would also realize that for many generations of Christians, the indisputable Jewishness of Jesus has not been so obvious, nor contemplated. Archbishop Gądecki points out that the usual understanding of the Jewishness of Jesus is reduced to ethnic characteristics, such as Semitic race, Aramaic language, and Hebrew cultural heritage. But being a Jew presents a more complicated reality, and, what many people forget about or cannot imagine, is not comparable to being a Pole, German, or Frenchman. This is why, careful reading *Nostra Aetate*, in particular its section 4, might be a stepping stone to further reflections during the Day of Judaism. Subsequently, other documents and guidelines of the Vatican concerning the Church's relation to the Jewish people should be studied closely. Thus, this Day benefits the Christians provided they want to assimilate the Church's teaching on Jews and Judaism. Then their reflections could be turned on a path of exploring selected biblical texts, using Jewish and Christian comments. Finally, this is reason enough why the Day of Judaism is so needed in the Catholic Church in Poland.¹⁹¹

¹⁹¹ Abp Stanisław Gądecki, *Dni Judaizmu w Kościele Katolickim w Polsce [The Days of Judaism in the Catholic Church in Poland]*, 590.

Speaking about the current shape of the Day of Judaism, Gądecki looks to the future in a broader perspective: “In turn, that common fruits can yield a cooperation in social, economic, and political areas in order to defend human rights, justice, freedom, and the dignity of the human person.”¹⁹² Common support for strengthening solidarity between people is extremely important. At the same time, the community gathered around common values carries a testimony of responsibility toward God and toward all creation. One should not only ponder what unites Jews and Christians, but what they can do jointly for justice and peace.

Interestingly, the artistic and cultural side of the Day of Judaism has shaped the spirit and restored local color in the large cities such as Poznań, becoming a major event in the city’s calendar: “We felt that the prayerful meditation and theological reflections should be preceded by an encounter with words, images, and music reflecting the colorful and exquisite world of Jewish culture. This culture helped to make up the ambiance of our city, and there is no excuse for the sin of forgetting and indifference to it”¹⁹³—says Father Jerzy Stranz, one of the organizers.

The organizers claim that the observances in Poznań instantly won approval of local community and the level of interest exceeded their expectations: “Encouraged by their success, they broadened the schedule each year, until, by 2008, it lasted for almost two weeks. Government and local bodies joined in, along with municipal cultural and educational institutions. The Poznań Days of Judaism became the largest and richest observances in the country.”¹⁹⁴ Needless to say, there is commitment of numerous

¹⁹² Ibidem.

¹⁹³ Ewa Karabin, *Imagining Dialogue* [in:] *The Bond of Memory. Polish Christians in Dialogue with Jews and Judaism* (Warszawa: Więź, 2008), 44.

¹⁹⁴ Ibidem, 44-45.

volunteers, enthusiasts, activists, and people of good will behind this success. Truly, those people who take an active part in preparing the Day of Judaism and similar events throughout the year deserve credit!

Furthermore, the proceedings of the Tenth Day of Judaism in Gdańsk in 2007 set an example for the further days. To begin with, a unique exhibit “The Holy Verses” showcased some old editions of the Hebrew Bible reaching back to 1512, the Talmud, rabbinical commentaries, and so on. Moreover, a youth debate “Whether loyalty to the ideals is the gateway to heaven?” gathered the high school students who produced “The Declaration of Youth. Our ideals derive from Heaven.” Another passionate debate that engaged more adult participants was called “Whether modern science is doomed to conflict with religion?” During the debate the followers of both faiths could speak up freely about the contemporary challenges at the crossroads of religion and science. Looking from different angles, but rooted in the same values, the participants often spoke in unison. Later on, the attendees of the Day of Judaism could listen to the biblical debate between a theologian, Father Andrzej Luter, and Rabbi Michael Schudrich: “What does it mean that we go to Heaven?” This part of the program culminated in common prayer.¹⁹⁵

In turn, the further proceedings included a discussion between the Ambassador of the State of Israel to Poland, Schewach Weiss, and Polish Minister of Foreign Affairs, Radosław Sikorski. The discussion was entitled “When do politics become a tool of peace?” The topic of another debate was “Whether religious convictions can be an obstacle in public service?” The proceedings and prayers continued in the Gdańsk’s cemetery and church. At the end, the celebrations moved to the concert stage to listen to:

¹⁹⁵ Witold Bock (ed.), *The Chronicle of The Tenth Day of Judaism* (Gdańsk: Forum Dialogu Gdański Areopag), 2008.

“Jazzmen on a Klezmer note.” All these activities, along with a variety of photographs, were documented in the Chronicle of the Tenth Day of Judaism.¹⁹⁶

6. The Day of Judaism from the Jewish point of view

Bishop Mieczysław Ciso affirms that the Day of Judaism is well-attended by the Jewish guests. Going further, some Israeli media pointed out that in no other country do the Catholic observances of this day have such a massive character. Naturally, the representatives of Polish Jewry also spoke about the Day of Judaism: “The fact that the celebration of the Day of Judaism was initiated by the Polish Bishops testifies that Polish society treat us [the Jewish people-P.D.] as normal citizens. It makes us very happy.

Common praying in the Catholic temple enhances trust, and changes mentality.”

(Tadeusz Jakubowicz, Cracow) Also, Stanisław Krajewski, another representative of Jewish community, recognized some initiatives going on in Poland, with an emphasis on the Day of Judaism¹⁹⁷:

It is a joyous thing that there are so many of them [initiatives], that they are happening in different parts of the country, that they are being organized by enthusiasts who sometimes enjoy the support of local government and parishes, that there are such officially sanctioned Church events as the Day of Judaism, and that they are becoming increasingly widespread. This is an expression of respect for Judaism, and proof of the colossal changes in official Church teaching.

The Chief Rabbi of Poland, Michael Schudrich, reminds the public that this is not the day of reconciliation [or at least this is not the main purpose of the Day-P.D.], but

¹⁹⁶ Ibidem.

¹⁹⁷ Stanisław Krajewski, *Oblivion or Remembrance* [in:] *The Bond of Memory: Polish Christians in Dialogue with Jews and Judaism* (Warszawa: The WIEŻ Laboratory, 2008), 9; <http://laboratorium.wiez.pl/zasoby/The%20Bond%20of%20Memory.pdf> (accessed March 18, 2015).

according to the will of John Paul II, it is an occasion for Catholics to deepen their Jewish roots, to reflect on why Jesus was Jewish, and look at Judaism as the root of Christianity. It is not a national or ethical event—reminds Schudrich, but it is clearly the faith that prompts people to observe the Day. Reportedly, Rabbi Schudrich attaches great importance to the event: “He is happy to travel from one end of Poland to the other to be present at each year’s event. He feels that the official introduction of the Day of Judaism was encouraging to those Catholics who wanted to organize similar events, but felt the lack of blessing ‘from above.’”¹⁹⁸ In his opinion, a Jewish answer to this initiative maintains symmetry in mutual relations, so the event is not one-sided. He argues that it is easier to be Jew without Christianity than to be Christian without Judaism. Rabbi Schudrich admits that he approaches the Day of Judaism seriously, because the fact that one faith has its roots in another entails responsibility: to be open, helpful and participate in such enterprises.¹⁹⁹

Being involved in the Day of Judaism from its very beginning, he leads others by example. However, he points out that the overall impact of the Day is difficult to assess, because there is no a litmus paper to measure precisely its influence. The real challenge is to keep up its effect on the other 364 days a year to sensitize people to the issue in question! It is an ongoing challenge, not for only one day. However much has been accomplished so far—Rabbi Schudrich summarizes. Also, he says that this is an occasion to become acquainted with Catholic wisdom, particularly with the teaching of John Paul II. The Pope fostered the Catholics’ awareness of their identity and openness to other

¹⁹⁸ Anna Pawlikowska, Zbigniew Nosowski, *The Day of Judaism in the Catholic Church. Discovering Roots* [in:] *The Bond of Memory. Polish Christians in Dialogue with Jews and Judaism* (Warszawa: Więż, 2008), 12.

¹⁹⁹ Interview with Rabbi Michael Schudrich, June 2014.

religions so they do not attack other believers, but can be enriched by the Jewish faith—Rabbi Schudrich elucidates. “As long as the Church keeps organizing the Day of Judaism, the Jewish people are ready to cooperate”—Rabbi Schudrich confirms at the end of the interview.²⁰⁰

7. The Day of Judaism from the Catholic point of view

The representatives of the Catholic Church eagerly and proudly spoke about the Day of Judaism. For example, Cardinal Franciszek Macharski said: “We would love if this special day of the year could set the tone for every month, week, and day, in which meeting will resemble the great family of peoples and nations, and particularly of those who believed in One God, God Almighty, and God Merciful.” Another knowledgeable person, Archbishop Józef Życiński, drew attention to the need of improving the general quality of culture: “When ‘happening’ and ‘playfulness’ are becoming a chief philosophy of life, the community of Judeo-Christian tradition can be a form of deepening our responsibility for culture.” In his opinion, the Day of Judaism has had some merits in this field as well.

Father Manfred Desealers from the Center of Prayer and Dialogue in Oświęcim (Auschwitz) highlights in an interview, just as Rabbi Schudrich did, that the Day of Judaism is not primarily a dialogic event: “This day is for the Church to realize her roots that trace back to Judaism and the brotherhood with the People of the Covenant. As John Paul II declared, the Jewish people are the elder brothers in faith.” Father Desealers believes that the factor uniting both believers is the everlasting Covenant. On the other

²⁰⁰ Ibidem.

hand, it is the belief in Christ as the Messiah that divides them. However, the mutual relations should be viewed in a broader perspective of the salvation history, in which the Jewish people, until the present, have played its role in a mysterious way—Desealers remarks with conviction.²⁰¹

Father Desealers pointed not only to a theological dimension, but also to a human one—since a goal of the Day is to understand each other better. In his opinion, this goal has been achieved through the people who have experienced openness and genuine interest in one another. Their mindset has helped to change the overall atmosphere between the two communities.

In a comparison, Father Desealers noted that Germany does not organize the Day of Judaism, but the country takes other actions, and therefore does not want to multiply similar initiatives. Instead, the German Church observes the Week of Brotherhood in March so that Jews and Christians may come together to find ways of co-existence and dialogue.²⁰² Interestingly enough, this event is organized by the German offshoot of the ICCJ—*Deutscher Koordinierungsrat der Gesellschaften für Christlich-Jüdische Zusammenarbeit* (DKR).^{203 204}

Bishop Ciszło perceives the Day of Judaism as offering a direct implication of the teaching of the Second Vatican Council and the subsequent Vatican documents. He refers to the consistency of Christianity and the sense it finds in Judaism. Regardless of all

²⁰¹ Interview with Father Manfred Desealers, June 2014.

²⁰² Jewish-Christian Relations, http://www.jcrelations.net/60th_Week_of_Brotherhood_in_Germany.3782.0.html?L=4+alt%3Dmais&page=3 (accessed April 5, 2015).

²⁰³ International Council of Christians and Jews, http://www.iccj.org/60th_Week_of_Brotherhood_in_Germany.3735.0.html (accessed April 12, 2015).

²⁰⁴ Deutscher Koordinierungsrat, <http://www.deutscher-koordinierungsrat.de/> (accessed April 12, 2015).

concurrent events—Bishop Cisoło recalls—the main point of this Day is prayer. Therefore, prayers for the living and the dead, especially for the victims of *Shoah* with the rabbis in cemeteries, are an inseparable element of the Day. It remains clear that the celebrations are organized by the Church and directed to her own faithful, but the participation of rabbis and representatives of Jewish communities is always welcome.²⁰⁵

8. Putting the Day of Judaism on the map

Another important question is: How is the word spread throughout the parishes? As a matter of fact, all information regarding the Day of Judaism is popularized by the materials released yearly for the Week of Prayer for Christian Unity (7,000 copies), by the bulletin of the KAI (*Katolicka Agencja Informacyjna*—the Catholic News Organization), and by KAI's electronic mail.²⁰⁶ These special materials for the Day of Judaism, prepared by the Polish Episcopate, are sent out to every parish throughout the country. In addition, there is the entire panel of priests, scholars, and people who prepare the liturgical texts and homilies before they are read on this one extraordinary Mass during the year. The materials from the five recent editions of the Day of Judaism (2011-2015) are included in the appendix to this thesis, to give some insight in the work of their originators. For instance, special intentions during the Universal Prayer (Prayer of the Faithful) in churches are developed. Moreover, the Day of Judaism is always promoted through interviews and articles in Catholic newspapers.²⁰⁷

²⁰⁵ Interview with Bishop Mieczysław Cisoło, June 2014.

²⁰⁶ Ibidem.

²⁰⁷ Ibidem.

Although rare, there have been priests who, irrespective of the shared materials, behaved passively during that Day, ascribing their own indifference to a lack of Jews in their diocese. As a rule, the level of involvement is directly proportional to the understanding of the importance of that Day in the Church's life. And so far, 15 out of 40 dioceses hosted the central observances, which undoubtedly formed the consciousness of the faithful—Bishop Ciso admits. By the way, there are places like Płock, which have never hosted the main observances, but organize local events to mark the Day of Judaism.²⁰⁸

It seems that the initiative is gaining importance. Among distinguished guests from all over the world there were Rabbi David Rosen and the Ambassador of the State of Israel to Poland, Schewach Weiss. The events have been touted by and shown on television and in the mass media at large, winning patronage of public administration, organizations, foundations, theological departments, libraries, and more. Knowledge of this Day has been growing constantly to the extent that certain circles sympathizing with this cause arose. Similarly to the Week of Prayers for Christian Unity, this is an elite, not a mass event. It turns out that people approached the Day from different perspectives. Some of them, religiously inclined, perceive it as an encounter between the Church and the Synagogue. For them, focusing on other than religious aspects dims the primary religious character of the Day. Others are attracted by the rich Jewish cultural heritage, which the Day offers. For some people a wider view on Orthodox and Reformed Judaism is appealing. For now, a number of documents concerning the Day of Judaism have been

²⁰⁸ Anna Pawlikowska, Zbigniew Nosowski, *The Day of Judaism in the Catholic Church. Discovering Roots* [in:] *The Bond of Memory. Polish Christians in Dialogue with Jews and Judaism* (Warszawa: Więź, 2008), 12.

published in Poland. Importantly, the Polish Bishops' Commission for the Dialogue with Judaism published the entire teaching of Pope John Paul II on Judaism.²⁰⁹

Other Christian denominations are invited to join these celebrations. Although the Protestants constitute a minority in Poland, they maintain contacts with the Jewish people. With time, the Lutherans have become involved in proceedings of the Day of Judaism. Then, part of the main celebrations in Przemyśl in 2011 took place in the Greek Orthodox cathedral, whereas the other part took place in the Latin Catholic cathedral. Besides, the city municipalities of Rzeszów joined the observances of the Day in 2012 and the municipalities of Przemyśl in 2011 organized the screening of a movie and exhibit of Judaica.²¹⁰

After all, one would wonder whether the project has encountered any lapses in practice. In other words, is there a fly in the ointment of all that? Anna Pawlikowska and Zbigniew Nosowski seem to address this question²¹¹:

Paradoxically, it is Catholic exponents of the Christian-Jewish dialogue who voice misgivings more frequently. They feel that the commitment to the Day of Judaism in Poland is less than total. On the one hand, the fact that the focus city is different each year means that more dioceses get involved; on the other hand, some observers note that certain dioceses seem to feel exempt from joining in. The organizers of the Day of Judaism complain that rank-and-file parish priests often hide behind a wall of indifference. The organizers prepare pastoral material every year and distribute it to all the parishes, but few priests make use of it.

They also notice that the observances of the Day of Judaism, at times, receive a greater interest due to the secular media. To give an example, striking photographs of bishops and rabbis standing side by side attract people and go viral, especially when they are

²⁰⁹ Interview with Archbishop Stanisław Gądecki, June 2014.

²¹⁰ Interview with Bishop Mieczysław Ciso, June 2014.

²¹¹ Anna Pawlikowska, Zbigniew Nosowski, *The Day of Judaism in the Catholic Church: Discovering Roots* [in:] *The Bond of Memory. Polish Christians in Dialogue with Jews and Judaism* (Warszawa: Więź, 2008), 12.

plainly on friendly terms: “Even a picture like that can make a difference in the minds of Catholics.”²¹² However, pondering over those laymen who evince a shallow interest in the Day or those clergymen who keep away from the observances, it should be added that all the parishes contacted by the author of this work have regularly participated in this initiative.

On the whole, evaluating the precise number of parishes actively engaged and the level of their involvement in the project poses a challenge. Thus, the participation of the grass roots members of the Church in the Day of Judaism should be systematically surveyed and encouraged. Without a doubt, this crucial issue, just marked briefly here, requires further analysis, perhaps in another master’s thesis or a doctoral dissertation. Indeed, it would reflect how the conciliar spirit penetrates the Church’s most fundamental units and people’s minds.

For informational purposes, the foregoing Eighteen Days of Judaism with the places of central celebrations and mottos are presented as follows:

- 1998 – Warsaw: “Whoever meets Jesus Christ, meets Judaism”
- 1999 – Wrocław: “On the road to normalcy”
- 2000 – Cracow: “It will be a Jubilee for you”
- 2001 – Łódź: “Therefore, you shall welcome each another”
- 2002 – Lublin: “You shall bear each other’s burdens”
- 2003 – Białystok: “God entered into a covenant of mercy with Israel”
- 2004 – Poznań: “You will become a blessing”
- 2005 – Katowice: “Exploring the mystery of the Church”

²¹² Ibidem, 13.

- 2006 – Kielce: “On the way toward Him who comes”
- 2007 – Gdańsk: “Only God can save us”
- 2008 – Cracow: “God created man in His image: He created man and woman”
- 2009 – Warsaw: “My arc I set on the clouds, to be a sign of the Covenant between Me and the earth”
- 2010 - Tarnów: “Leave your homeland and your father’s house and go to the land that I will show you”
- 2011 - Przemyśl: “Take your only son and offer him as a sacrifice...”
- 2012 - Rzeszów: Your name shall no longer be Jacob, but Israel...
- 2013 - Opole: “I am Joseph, your brother...”
- 2014 - Wrocław: “The Lord is my strength (...) He has become my salvation”
- 2015 - Bielsko-Biała and Oświęcim: “I sought the Lord, and He answered me, and delivered me from all my fears.”

9. The pastoral materials for the Day of Judaism at a glance

Now, it seems appropriate to reflect on the content and meaning of the brochures. In reality, they always follow the same pattern: The keynote of the Chairman of The Polish Bishops’ Committee for Dialogue with Judaism is followed by the liturgical texts and homily. These include Introduction, the Universal Prayer, prayers of the recent popes concerning the Jewish people, and finally the ABCS of the Day of Judaism. In short, the Chairman of The Polish Bishops’ Committee for Dialogue with Judaism, currently Bishop Mieczysław Cisło, prepares a keynote that is read out during the Sunday Mass. At

present, Father Waldemar Chrostowski, is in charge of preparing the liturgical part of these folders.²¹³

It is no wonder that the brochures for the Day of Judaism, being spread to every parish throughout the country, deserve special attention. Their influence cannot be overestimated. The fact that the faithful in every corner of Poland listen to the same message during the Sunday Mass makes these texts a powerful tool to make a change. Thus, the content of the brochures, so carefully prepared by the organizers, should be reflected upon.

To begin with, because the last few years marked the 50th anniversary of the Second Vatican Council, its teaching received a great deal of attention in the Polish Church. To illustrate this point, the keynote of Bishop Cisló for the Seventeenth Day of Judaism in 2014 prepared the Catholics for the celebration of the Golden Jubilee of the promulgation of the declaration *Nostra Aetate*. The keynote aimed to summarize mileposts of the work of Pope John Paul II and his successors. Most of all, it noted the evidence of increased understanding in mutual relations and even examples of the Jewish authorities defending Christian beliefs²¹⁴:

The signs of kindness and commitment on the Jewish-Catholic line should be noted with satisfaction: J. Weiler, a Jew, defends the presence of the crucifix in classrooms in Italian schools; in Strasbourg, Rabbi David Rosen defends Archbishop G. L. Muller against accusations by German politicians.

In other words, the climate of openness in mutual relations is palpable. Aside from that, the keynote stressed that the Jewish-Catholic dialogue does not run away from complex topics and the intellectual reflection on Jesus could be inspirational²¹⁵:

²¹³ Interview with Archbishop Stanisław Gądecki, June 2014.

²¹⁴ Booklet for the Seventeenth Day of Judaism, 2014 (in the appendix to this thesis).

²¹⁵ Ibidem.

How important are the words of Shalom Ben Chorin, who said: ‘faith in Jesus divides us, the faith of Jesus brings us together?’ (...) There is a renewed interest in the Jewish community concerning the thought of Martin Buber, who described Jesus as ‘brother,’ thinking of the time when ‘the resurgent Jewish community will recognize Jesus not only as a great figure in its religious history, but also in the organic context of development of messianism over the centuries, whose ultimate goal is the redemption of Israel and the world.’ However, the Jewish thinker added: ‘I equally firmly believe that Jesus will never be deemed by us to be Messiah who came, because it would collide with the deepest meaning of our messianic passion’ (after B. L. Sherwin).

In light of this evidence, some Jewish scholars are drawn to the interfaith debate on messianism. Neither does the Church refrain from bringing up unconventional topics to the debate. On the contrary, she tries to understand certain tensions in Jewish communities as well as defense mechanisms that have arisen over the years in order to preserve their identity. To summarize the keynote, Bishop Ciszto said: “Christians, to understand themselves, need Judaism much more than Judaism needs Christians.”²¹⁶

The homily prepared for the Day of Judaism 2014 by Father Wiesław Dawidowski drew upon the reading from Exodus describing Moses wandering with his people through the desert. At the same time, the teaching of Pope Francis was intertwined in the motive of the wandering of the Jewish people²¹⁷:

Pope Francis explains how by a twist of God’s Plan, and despite human logic, this nation has preserved to be a sign; a sign for the world, and, paradoxically, a sign for the Church. (...) The persistence of the Jewish people in history, reminds people that man is an eternal nomad, whose daily existence is always threatened. Each human being must also be prepared for the fact that the ultimate architect of his or her vision of the world, law and justice, is none other than God.

Father Wiesław Dawidowski ended his homily with an appeal to his coreligionists in Poland: “Following the footsteps of Pope Francis’ intuition, let us, Polish Catholics, take

²¹⁶ Ibidem.

²¹⁷ Ibidem.

a not stereotypical look at the Jewish people today. Let us look at the Jews and Judaism as a living sign telling us that salvation from misfortunes is always the Lord's creation. If anything is going to save the civilization of technocrats, which seems to claim to be God, it will always be God. In Him is our salvation.”²¹⁸ The exhortation called the Catholics to join Jews in the common work of preserving the world of shared values and to put trust in the One God.

Significantly, the Eighteenth Day of Judaism in 2015 coincided with the 70th anniversary of the liberation of the Auschwitz concentration camp. For the Chairman of the Polish Bishops' Committee for Dialogue with Judaism, Bishop Mieczysław Ciszó, this major anniversary set the stage for some thought-provoking questions and statements, included in his keynote²¹⁹:

The Council came in the time following a deep trauma that was the Second World War and the annihilation of the Jewish people in the countries involved in the warfare. The tragedy of the Holocaust awakened consciences and raised the question: Why were the mass atrocities committed in the heart of Christian Europe by citizens of the nation that had developed a high culture? Christians have asked themselves this question of joint responsibility until today. The Council took up this issue, confessing the complicity of the church leaders who stated that the Church ‘decries—not for political reasons, but under the influence of Gospel's spiritual love—hatred, persecutions, displays of antisemitism, directed against Jews at any time and by anyone.’ (*Nostra Aetate 4*)

Subsequently, Bishop Ciszó seized an opportunity to reiterate the teaching of Vatican II and to present its harvest in the modern world: “Today, more and more often on both sides, the following phrases are accepted: the Jews are our elder brothers, and even fathers in the faith; whoever meets Jesus, meets Judaism, antisemitism is a sin; we are all

²¹⁸ Ibidem.

²¹⁹ Booklet for the Eighteenth Day of Judaism (in the appendix to this thesis).

children of one God, or we have the common father of faith in Abraham.”²²⁰ Later on in his keynote, Bishop Ciszło recalled the essential documents of the Pontifical Commission on Religious Relations with the Jews, such as “The Jews and Judaism in Preaching and Catechesis in the Catholic Church” (1985) that changed the Catholic perception of the Jewish people forever. Also, “the breakthrough chapter” in Catholic-Jewish relations written by John Paul II is underscored here along with the endeavors of his successors. To show reciprocity, Bishop Ciszło indicates the Jewish answer to this dialogue, presented in the document *Dabru Emet*, signed by several Jewish scholars in September 2000. Subsequently, he reaches out to all people who may wonder whether the current dialogic tendency within the Church stems from a momentary fashion or a marginal movement of a not influential minority²²¹:

It should be now emphasized that the Catholic-Jewish dialogue is a fundamental option of the Church, the option proven by science and orthopraxis of the post-conciliar popes. This dialogue, which has engaged the particular Churches throughout the world, still needs charismatic leaders to be able to penetrate all of the church environments in order to build peaceful and friendly interpersonal relationships with the Jews.

On balance, the path the post-conciliar Church follows has remained unchanged. In the same vein, Bishop Ciszło keeps reminding the faithful about the specific situation of the Jewish people in Poland²²²:

Although in Poland, we do not have a large Jewish community of believers or Jewish centers of theological studies, because the Jewish community is only recovering, we have open dialogue with representatives of Judaism, led by Rabbi Michael Schudrich—friendly in mutual relations. The dialogue is an essential issue within the Church.

²²⁰ Ibidem.

²²¹ Ibidem.

²²² Ibidem.

By the way, touching upon a small Jewish community in Poland, other supporters of the Day of Judaism explain why that the Jewish presence and participation in the Church life is valued²²³:

While the goal of the event is the internal transformation of the Church, meetings with Jews are also important. Many contemporary Polish Catholics, indeed, have never had the chance to get to know a Jew. Interestingly, the Jewish participants in the Day of Judaism events include not only those who regard dialogue with Christians as an essential matter, but also adherents of traditional views who do not regard the need for dialogue as essential. Even they, however, regard the Day of Judaism as a good opportunity to present the Jewish faith and viewpoint.

However, coming back to Bishop Cisło's keynote, he assures that the work of dialogue is in progress, and one of its greatest tasks is shaping a community around values common to both Jews and Christians.

Accordingly, each year's keynote is followed by carefully selected liturgical texts and the homily, which comprise the spiritual experience of that day. It is worthwhile to learn about their form and content. The liturgical part always contains the Introduction—a short mission statement of the Day of Judaism. Moreover, every reading on that day, especially those from the Old Testament, is related to Judaism in order to show its meaning for Christianity. On top of that, in that day's liturgy, the Psalms play an important role too.

In 2015, both the keynote and homily addressed the motto chosen from Psalm 34:4—"I sought the Lord, and He answered me, and delivered me from all my fears." In particular, the homily explored the motto in light of the ongoing changes bringing together the Church and Judaism²²⁴:

²²³ Anna Pawlikowska, Zbigniew Nosowski, *The Day of Judaism in the Catholic Church: Discovering Roots* [in:] *The Bond of Memory. Polish Christians in Dialogue with Jews and Judaism* (Warszawa: Więż, 2008), 11.

²²⁴ Booklet for the Eighteenth Day of Judaism, 9 (in the appendix to this thesis).

On the one hand—encouraged also by the current Pope Francis—we want to be more and more aware of this fact: ‘Dialogue and friendship with the children of Israel are part of the life of Jesus’ disciples.’ On the other hand, if the mutual knowledge and friendship deepen, more and more clearly it ‘makes us bitterly and sincerely regret,’ because of persecution or unfounded manifestations of hostility, hatred or contempt, of which the Jews have been the subject—especially because those persecutions having been shared by the followers of Christ.

Then, the homily urged the believers to get involved in restoring the Jewish past in their everyday lives²²⁵:

Maybe we have not realized until now the case that in our neighborhood, our city, the Jewish community has lived for centuries. Perhaps its story might be interesting, to find its footprints, and help to preserve them... Maybe the old synagogue, and the Jewish cemetery have not disappeared completely into oblivion, and something could be done to make them become a good witness to our attitude to all places of prayer, to our respect to the ashes of the dead or murdered.

Needless to say, each year’s Prayer of the Faithful, which follows the homily, contains finely wrought intentions, oriented toward the present Jewish and Christian problems and toward their future. Some of them, cited below, exemplify how the faithful pray on this day²²⁶:

- Pray for the Christians that they will be open to religious dialogue with the followers of Judaism in a spirit of mutual acceptance and respect
- Let us pray for the Jews that in a world marked by atheism and sin they will be courageous witnesses to the One and True God as the source of life, immortality and eternal salvation
- Let us pray to God, the Lord of life and death, that the tragedy of the Holocaust will transform the minds and hearts of those who do not see the meaning of religious dialogue in building Christian-Jewish brotherhood

²²⁵ Ibidem.

²²⁶ Ibidem.

- Let us pray for ourselves that we will always be guided by the spirit of love, respect, and mutual understanding in our reflection and efforts to promote dialogue.

These exemplary petitions do not appear solely during the Day of Judaism. Throughout the whole year, the faithful pray for peace in the Middle East or with the intentions related to Judaism.

Besides, the pastoral materials always contain the Prayer of Pope John Paul II for the intention of the Jewish people, arranged in 1998, or the Prayer that the Holy Father Benedict XVI put into the Western Wall in Jerusalem on May 12, 2009, or the Prayer of Pope Francis in the Yad Vashem Memorial on May 26, 2014 (see appendix). In fact, the most recent brochure of 2015 contains all the three papal prayers. Last but not least, every brochure ends with “The ABCs of the Day of Judaism” (see appendix).

All in all, insightful theological scrutiny of the content of brochures for the Day of Judaism exceeds the rather informative scope of the current thesis. Nonetheless, they are worthy of a closer look. Not only do they disclose the recent attitudes of the Polish Catholics toward Judaism, but also the biblical inspiration and intellectual verve of their authors. The materials reveal a diversity of topics, and completely unique findings, such as a letter from 1967 by a prior from the Bernardine monastery in Leżajsk, addressed to a Jew in Israel who sought information about his compatriots during the World War II.²²⁷ The authors include distinguished Jewish rabbis, scholars, and activists, ranging from Rabbi Irving Greenberg, Rabbi Ricardo di Segni, Rabbi David Rosen, Martin Buber, or Abraham Joshua Heschel to the local Tzadikim (righteous ones) of the past. Also, due to

²²⁷ Booklet for the Fourteenth Day of Judaism in 2011 (in the appendix to this thesis).

the Old Testament readings and Psalms, the timespan of the texts stretches from biblical days until the up-to-date documents.

10. The need for education

Talking about the Day of Judaism in Poland, Father Manfred Desealers touched on the crucial issue of priests' knowledge of Judaism. Namely, in these days every priest ought to know the Vatican guidelines on how to teach about the Jewish people and how not to teach about them. While in the seminary, each seminarian has to pass an exam in this field. They have to explore at least the foundations of Judaism. Nowadays, these are the basic requirements that future priests have to meet. Bishop Cisło notes that school students, to the extent possible, according to age level, are taught about the Church's relation toward Judaism.²²⁸ However, Father Desealers emphasizes that the process of orienting education is always slow. The Church does not turn herself around, yet she cannot forget about her own quality and condition—Desealers adds. Thus, the dialogue with Judaism entails a dialogue with her own faithfulness. Especially, if the Church preaches that God is love, she must love, and start loving from her own flock.²²⁹

²²⁸ Interview with Bishop Mieczysław Cisło, June 2014.

²²⁹ Interview with Father Manfred Desealers, June 2014.

11. Taking action—the controversy around painting in the Sandomierz’s cathedral

Who would imagine that a painting could inspire dialogue between Catholics and Jews?²³⁰ Some tall orders and neuralgic issues that have separated Christians and Jews are dealt with now—Bishop Cisló says, providing a recent example from the Seventeenth Day of Judaism in 2014. The most crucial debate of that time occurred in the midsize city of Sandomierz, where the problem of an antisemitic painting of the so-called “blood libel” by Karol de Prevot, was finally resolved. After spreading through other European countries, the legend of blood libel came to Poland at the transition from the 16th to the 17th century. For a long time one of such depictions seemed to be a fixture in the cathedral in Sandomierz. Only recently, in the course of a lively debate, a group of people, among them some Catholics, postulated to remove the painting from the wall. However, this painting belonged to a larger collection, and removing it would leave an empty space. On the other hand, others, including some Jewish participants of the debate, insisted on providing the painting with an explanation to inform the visitors to the cathedral that this picture contradicts the historical and religious truth. Ultimately, the latter postulate prevailed, and plaques in English, Hebrew, and Polish have been attached underneath the painting to make sure that nobody would believe this presentation to be real. Magda Teter, a professor of history and Jewish Studies at Wesleyan University, who actively participated in the Day of Judaism, explains the core issue²³¹:

²³⁰ Magda Teter, “Painting Inspires Dialogue Between Jews and Catholics in Poland,” *Forward*, March 7, 2014, <http://forward.com/culture/193793/painting-inspires-dialogue-between-jews-and-cathol/> (accessed April 6, 2015).

²³¹ *Ibidem*.

The long-festering controversy over the painting did not make anyone feel good — not Jews, who felt the painting’s presence in a cathedral church without any explanation legitimized historical blood libels and was evidence of continuing Polish anti-Semitism, and not the Catholic Church, nor the local population, which became associated with and tainted by the broad notion of Polish and Catholic anti-Semitism.

All in all, the accepted solution seems to be a right way out to remind visitors of antisemitic approaches within the Church and the tragic past Jewish-Christian relations for the generations to come.

Although, the final outcome may appear straightforward, one must remember that it is a major step ahead, preceded by long and fervent discussions. In particular, the exact wording of the plaque was subject of meticulous analyses. Importantly, also the false impression that the “blood libel” was of daily occurrence in Poland should be avoided. For this reason, the Day of Judaism in Sandomierz in 2014 was preceded by a special symposium, during which Magda Teter and other scholars shared their knowledge on the history of the antisemitic iconography in Europe, trying to “untangle the past from the present and find language to discuss the painting openly, as a work of its time and place.”²³²

12. The Day of Islam in the Catholic Church in Poland

As it was mentioned, the Day of Judaism the Ecumenical precedes the Week of Prayer for Christian Unity. However, for the last fourteen years the observances have been followed by the Day of Islam²³³: “An interesting and specifically Polish offshoot of

²³² Ibidem; Interview with Bishop Mieczysław Cisło, June 2014.

²³³ Dzień Islamu [*The Day of Islam-TRANS*], <http://www.brewiarz.katolik.pl/czytelnia/islam.php3> (accessed February 28, 2015); Science and Scholarship in Poland,

the Day of Judaism is the special Day of Islam first held in 2001. The date chosen in this case is January 26, the day after the conclusion of the week devoted to Christian ecumenism.”²³⁴ Even though the believers of Islam constitute a very small group in today’s Poland, their presence and brotherhood is valued. Having its own central celebration, motto, and program, the model of this Day resembles the blueprint of Day of Judaism.

Although the Day of Islam is a less developed and popularized initiative compared to the Day of Judaism, it is also important. It must be noted that Poland has been the only country in the world that holds the nationwide observances of these three major monotheistic religions at a time. All things considered, the Polish model, celebrated countrywide, appears to be a pioneering effort well worth emulation.²³⁵

13. Positive fruits of the Day of Judaism

The positive fruits that the Day has brought so far are reflected in friendly Jewish-Catholic relationships at the level of the Conference of the Polish Episcopate, bishops, and priests. Among other fruits, the increased awareness of the need for building bonds with Jews should be counted. Rarely, though, it may be seen that the closer relations with Jews are established at the level of regular believers. One of the reasons is that there are few Jews in Poland today, but also the mutual trust needs time to be restored.

<http://scienceinpoland.pap.pl/en/news/news,70179,26th-january-marked-the-day-of-islam-in-the-catholic-church-in-poland.html> (accessed February 28, 2015).

²³⁴ Anna Pawlikowska, Zbigniew Nosowski, *The Day of Judaism in the Catholic Church. Discovering Roots* [in:] *The Bond of Memory. Polish Christians in Dialogue with Jews and Judaism* (Warszawa: Więż, 2008), 11.

²³⁵ Interview with Bishop Mieczysław Cisz, June 2014.

The Ambassador of the Republic of Poland to the State of Israel, Agnieszka Magdziak-Miszewska summed up the increased interest in this field: “Thousands of people participate each year when the Church observes the Day of Judaism. Ordinary Poles, most of them Catholics—lay and religious—do all of this. Why? For whom? As one of the characters appearing in this book puts it, they do it for themselves.”²³⁶ It is definitely true, and it was Rabbi Michael Schudrich who said that among the Catholics involved in the initiative there are many people who should be considered “John Paul II Catholics.”

Recently, Pope Francis also urged to deepen the social dialogue with “the elder brothers in faith” and with the faithful of other religions. Following his appeal more and more people in Poland, not only Catholics, express the willingness to participate in an interfaith dialogue and cultural exchange with the Jews. Perhaps, such an increased interest should be at least partly ascribed to the systematic work that the Day of Judaism has accomplished.

²³⁶ Agnieszka Magdziak-Miszewska, *An Aching Emptiness* [in:] *The Bond of Memory. Polish Christians in Dialogue with Jews and Judaism* (Warszawa: Więź, 2008), 7.

Conclusion

In the end, the analysis of the Day of Judaism in the Catholic Church in Poland confirmed that the reforms of the Second Vatican Council have been applied in Poland. They are well-established and have continued. This question has been in the spotlight of many people drawn to interfaith dialogue throughout the world. At the same time, the broad historical and political implications were among the reasons why the post-conciliar changes have been carried out in Poland after some delay.

Another question that has been answered to a large extent in this master's thesis was how the post-conciliar changes, in particular development of the Day of Judaism, are adopted in practice—in the parishes and in the public opinion. Hence, it has been determined that the spirit of reconciliation was received by the faithful in Poland with acceptance and became the mainstream of the Church's efforts to foster understanding of her bond with the Jewish people in this country. Irrespective of this, it also came to light that deviations from this practice have occurred in some parishes, which have prevented the faithful from being involved in the Day of Judaism. However, it seems that these people constitutes a minority and do not enjoy support of state politics nor of the media, so they are not able to harm this project. Finally, the precise evaluation of implementing the conciliar thought into the basic units of the Church in Poland is an extremely important issue, and as such, it might be subject of further analysis, for example in another master's thesis or doctoral dissertation.

In particular, the fruits of the Day of Judaism are visible in common works performed by the followers of both religions in Poland, for example, in the case of an antisemitic painting of “blood libel” resolved in the cathedral church in Sandomierz—as described in Chapter Three. In addition, the positive fruits are mirrored in warm relations and peaceful cooperation—as was pointed out by Bishop Mieczysław Cisoł.²³⁷ On the other hand, some challenges for the future will be to reproduce these relations at the level of ordinary people.

In the course of writing the thesis, I learned of an increasing “grassroots” trend among Polish people, not only Catholics, to meet with the Jews. The Chief Rabbi of Poland, Michael Schudrich drew a similar conclusion. It seems that a kind of bridge, which will connect the high representatives of the Church and her flock in common work, is needed. This gap is largely, but not fully, bridged by the Day of Judaism. The patterns of relations with Jews and the believers of other religions in Poland should be transposed to every day of the year and to all areas of life. Finally, Pope Francis pointed to this challenge as well.

During the interviews conducted in the summer 2014 with the leaders of the Church and representatives of Judaism in Poland, their great kindness, helpfulness, and openness toward people interested in this initiative was noticeable. The inviting attitude of the organizers and supporters of the Day of Judaism is an auspicious sign for its future development.

People interested in the subject of Jewish-Christian dialogue in Poland would find four publications for further studies to be of importance. First, there is a book, *The Bond of Memory. Polish Christians in Dialogue with Jews and Judaism*, published in 2008 in

²³⁷ Interview with Bishop Cisoł, June 2014.

English. This unparalleled summary, often cited here, is a useful compendium, because it presents the viewpoints of prominent representatives of Judaism, the Church, other faiths, and lay people on the subject matter. The book is also available online.²³⁸ Another important and extensive book is *Początek wspólnej drogi. Dialog katolicko-żydowski w Polsce w latach 1986-1994 [On the Common Path. The Catholic-Jewish Dialogue in Poland 1986-1994]* published in 2015 in Polish by Archbishop Henryk Muszyński. Then, the teaching of Pope John Paul II could be studied in the book *The Saint for Shalom: How Pope John Paul II Transformed Catholic-Jewish Relations. The Complete Texts 1979-2005*, edited and with commentary by Dr. Eugene J. Fisher and Rabbi Leon Klenicki. Last but not least, the brochures disseminated yearly by the Conference of the Polish Episcopate for the Day of Judaism are an inspiring series of materials for further study. The texts of these pastoral materials from the years 2011-2015, translated from Polish into English, are attached to this work.

Looking into the future, the historical Polish-Jewish dialogue in Poland would be even more complete and fruitful if it were to evolve into the Polish-German-Jewish “trialogue.” This comprehensive approach has the potential to be fully objective—as mentioned by Archbishop Henryk Muszyński.

Step by step, the other Christian denominations should be invited to share in the Day of Judaism. Also, fostering the cooperation with the Muslims during the Day of Islam in Poland is another objective for the future.

Another direction in which the Day of Judaism should be evolving is the Catholic Church in Europe at large. The idea that originated in Italy in 1989/1990, apart from

²³⁸ Więż. <http://laboratorium.wiez.pl/zasoby/The%20Bond%20of%20Memory.pdf> (accessed April 11, 2015).

Poland, has been adopted in Austria, Switzerland, and the Netherlands. In particular, the Day of Judaism in Italy deserves to be emphasized. This country adopted the model that each one of the Ten Commandments would be the main theme of observances of the Day of Judaism for several years. Therefore, this unique Italian framework may be the subject of further research. In spite of the fact that Italy, Austria, Switzerland, and the Netherlands are the other European countries that perform the Day of Judaism, the Polish observances are the only ones celebrated countrywide.²³⁹ Perhaps in the future the Day of Judaism will be extended to other countries of the European Church. Someday the Day of Judaism may be introduced in the Church of the United States. There is a certain premise for that, since the United States observes the Religious Freedom Day on January 16.²⁴⁰ The time proximity with the Day of Judaism on January 17 seems to be very encouraging for people to undertake joint reflection.

In closing, it should be stressed that the Day of Judaism allows people to discern the sphere of Jewish-Christian values, and encourages people to uphold them, taking on new challenges²⁴¹:

Thus, at what stage is the Jewish-Christian dialogue today? Where are we and what further challenges lie ahead? We live in a totally different world than forty years ago. Due to the teaching of the Second Vatican Council and Pope John Paul II, old beliefs that led to hatred were rejected and replaced with the commitment for mutual respect and understanding. On the theological ground, we already walked through the desert, and now we are entering the Promised Land. The fact that it took only forty years is a miracle and a testimony that the improvements are possible if we work together.

²³⁹ Interview with Bishop Cisło, June 2014.

²⁴⁰ Religious Freedom Day, <http://religiousfreedomday.com/> (accessed April 15, 2015).

²⁴¹ Jerzy Stranz, *Czerpiąc z korzenia szlachetnej oliwki. Dzień Judaizmu w Poznaniu 2004-2007 [Drawing from the root of the noble olive. The Day of Judaism in Poznań 2004-2007-TRANS]* (Poznań, Poland: UAM, 2007), 333.

Undoubtedly, this is a good sign for the future. At the same time, the Day of Judaism in the Catholic Church in Poland can cause legitimate interest and astonishment of the observers from abroad, especially the Jewish ones. Therefore, a representative of Jews in Poland, Stanisław Krajewski, explains these doubts²⁴²:

I can understand the misgivings of foreign visitors who are puzzled by the presence of Jewish themes in the absence of Jews. Nevertheless, the challenge we face is very simple: we have a choice between oblivion and remembrance. Can anyone have any doubts about which is preferable?

After all, the Day of Judaism in Poland confirms that people of different religious backgrounds need continuous impulses to rediscover their identity and strive for a better future, free of bigotry, antisemitism, and religious prejudice.

²⁴² Stanisław Krajewski, *Oblivion or Remembrance* [in:] *The Bond of Memory. Polish Christians in Dialogue with Jews and Judaism* (Warsaw: Więż 2008), 9.

Appendix

The Fourteenth Day of Judaism
in the Catholic Church of Poland
January 16-17, 2011

Take your only son (...) and offer him as a sacrifice...
(Gen 22:2)

Keynote of the Chairman
of The Polish Bishops' Committee
for Dialogue with Judaism

Exactly a year ago, when the nationwide celebration of the Day of Judaism was held in Tarnów, Benedict XVI visited the Synagogue of Rome, following in the footsteps of his predecessor. Referring to the visit from 24 years earlier, he said: “My visit forms a part of the journey already begun, to confirm and deepen it. With sentiments of heartfelt appreciation, I come among you to express to you the esteem and the affection which the Bishop and the Church of Rome, as well as the entire Catholic Church, have towards this Community and all Jewish communities around the world.”²⁴³

The recent Council gave a critical impetus to “our irrevocable commitment—continued the Pope—to pursue the path of dialogue, fraternity and friendship, a journey which has been deepened and developed in the last forty years, through important steps and significant gestures. Among them, I should mention once again the historic visit by my Venerable Predecessor to this

²⁴³ http://w2.vatican.va/content/benedict-xvi/en/speeches/2010/january/documents/hf_ben-xvi_spe_20100117_sinagoga.html

Synagogue on 13 April 1986, the numerous meetings he had with Jewish representatives, both here in Rome and during his Apostolic Visits throughout the world, the Jubilee Pilgrimage which he made to the Holy Land in the year 2000, the various documents of the Holy See which, following the Second Vatican Council's Declaration *Nostra Aetate*, have made helpful contributions to the increasingly close relations between Catholics and Jews. I too—added the Pope—in the course of my Pontificate, have wanted to demonstrate my closeness to and my affection for the people of the Covenant.”²⁴⁴

The Synagogue of Rome was already the third of those visited by Pope Benedict XVI, after the synagogues in Cologne and New York. Everywhere he was leaving a message of faith that: “Our closeness and spiritual fraternity find in the Holy Bible (...) their most stable and lasting foundation, which constantly reminds us of our common roots, our history and the rich spiritual patrimony that we share. It is in pondering her own mystery that the Church, the People of God of the New Covenant, discovers her own profound bond with the Jews, who were chosen by the Lord before all others to receive his word.”²⁴⁵ The Jewish faith is already a response to God's revelation in the Old Testament. It is the Jewish people to whom belongs “the sonship, the glory, the covenants, the giving of the law, the worship, and the promises; to them belong the patriarchs and of their race, according to the flesh is the Christ”²⁴⁶ (Rom 9:4-5)—the Pope added. And in the recent exhortation *Verbum Domini* he would add with the words of Saint Paul concerning the Jews that: “as regards election they are beloved for the sake of their forefathers, for the gifts and the call of God are irrevocable!”²⁴⁷ (Rom 11:29).

The Church's dialogues with Jews, fraternal meetings and reflections, prayer and pondering on the shared Holy Book of divine revelation, are not associated with the charismatic personality of one pope or another, but these are the fundamental option of the Church, emerging

²⁴⁴ Ibidem.

²⁴⁵ Ibidem.

²⁴⁶ Ibidem.

²⁴⁷ http://w2.vatican.va/content/benedict-xvi/en/apost_exhortations/documents/hf_ben-xvi_exh_20100930_verbum-domini.html

from the message of the Gospel of Christ. Therefore, Benedict XVI in the Apostolic Exhortation *Verbum Domini* would refer to his earlier statements, saying that: “We, Christians, draw our nourishment from the same spiritual roots. We encounter one another as brothers and sisters who at certain moments in their history have had a tense relationship, but are now firmly committed to building bridges of lasting friendship”²⁴⁸ (*Verbum Domini* 43). Since we have so much in common, together we can do much for peace and justice in order to build a more humane and more fraternal world. Today, from the perspective of the last few decades, we see “how much the Church values her dialogue with the Jews,”²⁴⁹ when we discover not only the Old Testament roots, but also the community of the highest values. Therefore, the duty of faith is, wherever it seems appropriate, to create opportunities for public meetings and exchanges “to promote growth in reciprocal knowledge, in mutual esteem and cooperation, also in the study of the sacred Scriptures”²⁵⁰ (*Verbum Domini* 43). In the Synagogue of Rome, Benedict XVI encouraged to take new initiatives to better mutual understanding and build community. And, in spite of differences between us and painful events from the past, especially the Holocaust, which still do not allow the bleeding wounds to heal, we should “succeed in uniting our hearts and our hands in response to the Lord's call, his light comes closer and shines on all the peoples of the world. (...) [In fact] Christians and Jews share to a great extent a common spiritual patrimony, they pray to the same Lord, they have the same roots, and yet they often remain unknown to each other. It is our duty, in response to God's call, to strive to keep open the space for dialogue, for reciprocal respect, for growth in friendship, for a common witness in the face of the challenges of our time, which invite us to cooperate for the good of humanity in this world created by God, the Omnipotent and Merciful.”²⁵¹

²⁴⁸ Ibidem.

²⁴⁹ Ibidem.

²⁵⁰ Ibidem.

²⁵¹ http://w2.vatican.va/content/benedict-xvi/en/speeches/2010/january/documents/hf_ben-xvi_spe_20100117_sinagoga.html

Different fields of cooperation emerge in the perspective of the Decalogue, which is “the great code” of ethics for all humanity. These tasks include: awakening in societies a sensitivity of the transcendent dimension, witnessing to the one God, and then witnessing to the highest value of life, opposing all forms of egoism—to build a world in which “justice and peace reign, a world marked by that *shalom* which the lawgivers, the prophets and the sages of Israel longed to see.”²⁵² Also, the goal is to bear witness that the family continues to be the basic unit of society, and the first environment in which man learns the virtues and commitment to building a world with a more humane face.

During the September visit to the Great Britain, in the interfaith meeting, in response to the words of the chief rabbi of the country, Benedict XVI said: “As followers of different religious traditions working together for the good of the community at large, we attach great importance to this ‘side by side’ dimension of our cooperation, which complements the ‘face to face’ aspect of our continuing dialogue.”²⁵³

Celebrated in Poland for 14 years The Day of Judaism is the answer to the heritage of the recent Council, to the pontificate of John Paul II, and to multiplying this heritage through the ministry of Benedict XVI, who may surprise some people with his intellectual, moral, pastoral and very personal commitment in building a religious brotherhood with the Jewish brothers [and sisters-PD]. A great deal has already been accomplished in mutual Catholic-Jewish relations in Poland. Jews no longer discern any hidden intentions of new “crusades” in the Church initiatives, whereas Catholics do not perceive the asymmetry in their involvement. A lot of patience, tact and delicacy, trust and selflessness, commitment and good will, are still needed to restore on the Polish soil the most beautiful traditions of the past: common citizenship, cooperation, compassion, brotherhood of arms in the fight against the occupation of the shared Homeland, and mutual trust, which were violated by the tragedy of the Holocaust. The awareness of the truth,

²⁵² Ibidem.

²⁵³ http://w2.vatican.va/content/benedict-xvi/en/speeches/2010/september/documents/hf_ben-xvi_spe_20100917_altre-religioni.html

that whoever meets Jesus, meets Judaism, must be deepened among Christians. It pertains to the truths that antisemitism is a sin, and that the believing Jews are our brothers “in the faith of Abraham, our Patriarch.”²⁵⁴

This year's nationwide celebration of the Day of Judaism takes place in Przemyśl, for centuries a multicultural city, in which, before the war, the life of the Jewish community had been vibrant. This land still remains a place of Jewish cemeteries and physical vestiges of the Jewish faith and culture from the past. Here, thousands of Hasidic pilgrims come every year to the tomb of the Seer in the city of Leżajsk. In collected Jewish Memorial Books we find moving testimonies from the past. Below is an excerpt of a letter by a prior from the Bernardine monastery in Leżajsk, addressed to a Jew in Israel, seeking information about the fate of his compatriots during the war:

Thank you for the confidence with which you turn to our monastery with your issue. The monks of the Leżajsk monastery has always regarded the Jews with kindness, who, in point of fact, have believed in the one true God, and professed the religion that was the prototype of the Christian religion. A prayer approved by the Catholic Church for priests is the Psalms of David, of the sacred books of the Old Testament. So, dear Gentlemen, we share a lot in common, and the latest Vatican Council highlights this inclusiveness. Indeed, we remember those days—let us call them the gold ones—when we used to rub shoulders with and get in touch with Jews, and we were edified by their devotion. Today, when you are missing in our lands—we are sincerely sad. These few individuals, miraculously saved from the Hitlerian conflagration, who, here and there, can be met, are, alas, not those pious Jews, and grief comes over us. Is this demeanor their appreciation for God for the fact that they have survived?
In Leżajsk, there is only one Jew, known to us, Safir—alone, without close family. (...) We are happy to admit that many families from our small town live in Israel nowadays. Is it not true Divine Providence that such a large number of families have not perished in raging Hitlerism? We are convinced that these families are able to appreciate it today, and in their own way remain faithful to their God and His commandments.
(Leżajsk, May 17, 1967).

The watchword of this year's Day of Judaism in Poland is: “Take your only son, whom you love (...), and offer him as a sacrifice...” (Genesis 22.2). It follows the presentations of the great figures from the Old Testament, who serve as the models of faith, and are the figures

²⁵⁴ http://w2.vatican.va/content/benedict-xvi/en/apost_exhortations/documents/hf_ben-xvi_exh_20100930_verbum-domini.html

foreshadowing the historio-salvific fulfillment of God's plan in Christ. Abraham faces two existential faith trials, first when God tells him to leave his homeland and go to the unknown, and second when he has to say "yes" to God, when He asks for sacrifice of Abraham's only son. The following questions are raised here: why did God tell Abraham to give back what he had received as a gift? How can the goodness of God be reconciled with demanding such a sacrifice? Was such a test of Abrahamic fidelity really necessary? Or perhaps, was a such form of cleansing his personal freedom needed?

Our reflection on the Word of God seeks answers to these questions from Jewish and Christian interpretations. Does the sacrifice of Isaac embody the fate of the Chosen People or is it a prelude to the sacrifice of Christ? The amazing thing is that the nineteenth century Jewish artists, whose paintings are in The State Tretyakov Gallery in Moscow, presented Christ in the *Ecce homo* scene as a figure of suffering and persecution of the Jewish people. Today, these images take on a particular claim from the perspective of the twentieth century Holocaust. The figure of Isaac incorporates numerous contemporary references of civilizational, existential, cultural, and religious nature.

Bishop Mieczysław Cisło

Liturgical texts and the homily
on The Fourteenth Day of Judaism
in the Catholic Church of Poland
January 16-17, 2011

Mass form: "The plea for love"

Readings: Genesis 22:1-19, Romans 8:31-39; Matthew 20:20-28

OPENING ANTIPHON (cf. Ez. 36:26-28)

The Lord says: I will remove the heart of stone from your flesh and give you a heart of flesh. I will put My Spirit within you, so you will be My people, and I will be your God.

INTRODUCTION

For 14 years the Catholic Church in Poland has celebrated the Day of Judaism. It has been time of reflection on the Word of God, a time of meetings and prayers. This day should educate believers in Christ about the Jewish roots of Christianity. In this perspective, Christians, deepening their own identity, should increasingly discern what they have in common with the believers of Judaism, namely: the belief in one God, the Bible, religious tradition, and finally the Decalogue as the foundation of moral principles, or the call to daily prayer. Let us pray to God that we may be able to build a world of universal values, where there is place for the living God in an increasingly secular society. And for all sins of prejudice and resentment toward other persons, both local and foreign, let us express regret before God, asking Him to bestow upon us mercy, grace and freedom.

COLLECT

Almighty God, send us the Holy Spirit and kindle our hearts with love so that you can be pleased with us through our thoughts and deeds as we love you in our brothers and sisters. Through our Lord Jesus Christ, your Son, who lives with you and reigns in the unity of the Holy Spirit, one God forever and ever. Amen.

FIRST READING (Genesis 22:1-19)

RESPONSORIAL PSALM (Ps 105)

Response: God remembers His covenant

SECOND READING (Rom 8:31b-39)

SONG BEFORE GOSPEL (Mt 20:28)

GOSPEL (Mt 20:20-28)

HOMILY

In matters of God — in God's way

1. In the next, already the fourteenth Day of Judaism in the Catholic Church in Poland, we listen to the word of God that may awaken in us the desire to deepen ties with the Jewish people, “the first acquired by God” as a particular property. We recall the roots of our faith and ask questions about our proper attitude, the faithful in Christ, toward those who are bonded with God by His never revoked covenant with their ancestors: Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob.

2. This year, the Holy Book puts before our eyes the trial, through which God tested the faith of Abraham, and his son—Isaac. The inspired author sets forth this trial in a highly dramatic manner, telling us to contemplate our responsibility before God and before other people for the mission entrusted to us by Him.

In the story about “the binding of Isaac”—under this term it is passed on by the Jewish tradition—Abraham three times says his “Here I am!”, showing his readiness to face the One who has called him and to give him an answer. The first one who asks such an answer from him is God, the One who gave him the promise that he would multiply his family “as the stars of heaven,” the One who only late in life gave him the only son of the previously barren wife Sarah, as a warrant of the fulfillment of this promise:

(...) God tested Abraham, and said to him, “Abraham!” And he said, “Here I am.” He said, “Take now your son, your only son, whom you love, Isaac, and go to the land of Moriah, and offer him there as a burnt offering on one of the mountains of which I will tell you.” (Genesis 22:1-2)

Abraham does not understand, but he listens, as once before, when he agreed to embark on the unknown from his homeland and from his father's house (which we discussed in the past year). In doing so he is consistent, having trusted once in God's word, he has continued to base his life on this dependence. He has already experienced that God does not want that He be replaced by worldly ways of thinking and acting. After all, Abraham offered to Him, when he could not wait for the child in his marriage, that he would make heir his slave or Ishmael—a son born of a slave Hagar. But God disagreed. And finally, He gave him this son Isaac, whom now He orders—according to the customs prevailing at the time among the neighboring peoples—to offer as a sacrifice. Is it to prevent, once again, the promise from coming true? Abraham, however, takes his son, wood, and fire, and sets out to the designated place of sacrifice. And then the trial of Abraham reaches the zenith. Not understanding God's design, once more he himself is called for an answer. This time, he is being asked by a man who is his son:

Isaac spoke to Abraham his father and said, “My father!” And he said, “Here I am, my son.” And he said, “Behold, the fire and the wood, but where is the lamb for the burnt offering?” Abraham said, “God will provide for Himself the lamb for the burnt offering, my son.” So the two of them walked on together. (Genesis 22:7-8)

Abraham's answer is not simple. However, he does not cheat nor prejudice. This is the prophetic answer—acting consistently after the voice of God, Abraham, puts the fate of his son into His hands, and therefore he may respond to the son. He also turns him towards the logic of the road, which both follow on. When Abraham is asked the third time, the answer comes from God:

The angel of the Lord called to him from heaven and said: “Abraham, Abraham!” And he said: “Here I am.” He said: “Do not stretch out your hand against the lad, and do nothing to him!” (Genesis 22:11-12)

This response is a way out of the trial; it is the deliverance. It also confirms the validity of the answer that Abraham gave to his son. It also indicates the way for us, who want to follow the path of understanding of God's designs with regard to us throughout our lives, and in particular relating to our relationships with the Jews.

3. It often happens that people, aware of being chosen, and of their relationship with God, want in their fervor, to serve God's cause, to which they have been called—in the best way according to their own discernment. One of the popular misconceptions is the belief, that in order to fulfill one's task, a person must first acquire the appropriate status, without which it is difficult to make a difference in this world, to carry something through, or to successfully defend anything. Arguably, Jesus' disciples, of whom we heard in the Gospel passage, thought so. The answer of Jesus, however, leaves them with no illusions. “You do not know what you ask for!”—Jesus said to the sons of Zebedee and their mother. It is not so that you would acquire an appropriate status in the kingdom of the Father, and then you would be able to serve God's cause. God does not act so in history. “The rulers of the nations oppress them,” indeed, but “it shall not

be so among you.” But who wants to be great—should serve another. Putting Himself as a model for the disciples, Jesus also reminds us that he “did not come to be served, but to serve, and to give His life a ransom for many.” (Matthew 20:28)

4. God wants man to undertake his or her mission in accordance with God's way of action, and to divest one's own commitment to human ideas, visions, and hopes. This was requested from Abraham in the time of trial, and also from Jesus. Why? Defiance arises in us, recorded, moreover, in the pages of the Scriptures. We think we know better, and without entering the path of force, it cannot be otherwise: “But for Your sake we are killed all day long; we are considered as sheep to be slaughtered”—Saint Paul cited a complaint from the Psalm (Ps 44:23). Do we need to be reminded how often in the history, these words come to believers' mouths? How current were they for the children of Israel in the terrible days of the Holocaust? How often also Christians, living in different places, have been experiencing such problems as their own insistent cry to God?

Should not the fact still be kept in mind, how many times in the history, the attempts to bring God's order to the world on the path of violence ended up tragically? It is so easy to ascribe to God the fruits of our own impatience in dealing with real human dramas. We do it in a way, He warns us against this—without respect for the dignity of each one of His children, especially the most vulnerable ones, the least important from our point of view.

5. Today, reflecting on all this, let us pray. Let us pray for one another—the children of one God—for such trust in God as displayed to Him in the time of the trial by our forefather Abraham. Let us pray that we may be convinced that our “complete victory” can be achieved “through Him who loved us.” Let us strengthen each other and in our times, subject to the trial of arbitrariness in deciding the fate of the human beings, may we be able to persevere in major and

minor temptations. And that we be confident that “neither death, nor life, nor angels, nor principalities, nor things present, nor things to come, nor powers, nor height, nor depth, nor any other created thing, will be able to separate us from the love of God...” (Romans 8:38-39)

We, Christians, chime in with the Apostle to the Gentiles: ...love, “which is in Christ Jesus, our Lord.” Amen.

Fr. Łukasz Kamykowski

PRAYER OF THE FAITHFUL

Trusting in intimacy with God and His redemptive presence in human history, let us cry to Him from the depth of our hearts:

- Let us pray for the Church that she will more fully develop the interfaith dialogue with the followers of Judaism in the spirit of the conciliar declaration *Nostra Aetate* and teaching of blessed John Paul II and Benedict XVI.
- Let us pray for all Christians so that, following Christ and due to His grace, they will treat with respect and love people walking on the way of the Covenant, which God made with Abraham and Moses.
- Let us pray for the Jews, that faithful to their calling, they will be witnesses to One and True God in the world marked by atheism, materialism, time-bound and utilitarian culture.
- Let us pray for all victims of the Holocaust and ask that the tragedy caused by this annihilation will arouse in the hearts of contemporaries a desire to encounter God, who alone can save.

- Let us pray for the peace in the Middle East, for persecuted Christians, and for a just resolution of the Palestinian-Israeli conflict in the spirit of respect for the rights of nations.
- Let us pray for pilgrims visiting the Holy Land so that the recognition of Jesus Christ's homeland will open them up to the beauty of Gospel's universality, having been spread at first in Galilee, and Jerusalem.

O God of Abraham, Isaac and Jacob, O God, whose apostles became witnesses through all the earth, strengthen the spiritual community of Christians and Jews. Through Christ, our Lord.

PRAYER OVER THE GIFTS

O Merciful God, sanctify and accept the gifts offered as a sign of spiritual sacrifice, and make us witnesses to your love for all. Through Christ, our Lord.

COMMUNION ANTIPHON (1 Cor 13:13)

And now these three remain: faith, hope and love. But the greatest of these is love.

PRAYER AFTER COMMUNION

O God, our Father, You have fed us with one Eucharistic Bread, fill us with the grace of the Holy Spirit and fortify us with sweetness of perfect love. Through Christ, our Lord.

PRAYER OF THE HOLY FATHER BENEDICT XVI

on the note put into the Western Wall

in Jerusalem, May 12, 2009

God of all the ages,

on my visit to Jerusalem, the “City of Peace,”

spiritual home to Jews, Christians and Muslims alike,

I bring before you the joys, the hopes and the aspirations,

the trials, the suffering and the pain of all your people throughout the world.

God of Abraham, Isaac and Jacob,

hear the cry of the afflicted, the fearful, the bereft;

send your peace upon this Holy Land, upon the Middle East,

upon the entire human family;

stir the hearts of all who call upon your name,

to walk humbly in the path of justice and compassion.

“The Lord is good to those who wait for him, to the soul that seeks him!” (Lam 3:25).

THE ABCS OF THE DAY OF JUDAISM

The Day of Judaism in the Catholic Church is a special time of communal reflection and prayer. This reflection, drawing upon biblical texts and pronouncements of the Magisterium on the Catholic-Jewish dialogue, should help Catholics in the discovery of the Jewish roots of Christianity, in deepening awareness that the Jewish religion in relation to Christian religion is not *an external reality, but something internal, and that our attitude toward it is different than toward any other religion* (John Paul II); it can be argued that there is a strict kinship between the two religions, and Jews can be called *the elder brothers in the faith* (John Paul II). Building mutual brotherhood and forming the right mentality of the faithful requires God's help, and therefore prayer is so much needed.

After fourteen years since the Day of Judaism (January 17) in the Church in Poland was first celebrated, current development, achievements, and the further implementation of the original objectives should be evaluated. Accordingly, the Polish Bishops' Committee for Dialogue with Judaism wishes to remind and outline the main principles to be taken into account by the organizers of the next celebrations on national, diocesan and parish levels:

1. To explain and popularize the essence of the Day of Judaism
2. To present teaching of the Church on the Jews and their religion after the Second Vatican Council
3. To make prayer an integral part of the celebration of the Day of Judaism

4. To promote the post-conciliar explanations of the texts of the Holy Scripture, which in the past may have been interpreted in an anti-Jewish and antisemitic way.
5. To explain the tragedy of the annihilation of the Jews to the faithful
6. To present antisemitism as a sin (John Paul II)
7. To invite representatives of other Christian Churches and Communities to pray together on this day
8. To invite Jews to participate in the celebration of the Day of Judaism

The Fifteenth Day of Judaism
in the Catholic Church of Poland
January 17, 2012

Your name shall no longer be Jacob, but Israel...

(Gen 32:29)

Keynote of the Chairman
of The Polish Bishops' Committee
for Dialogue with Judaism

Among the important events, which took place in life of the Catholic Church in the past year, a prominent place occupies the prayer meeting in Assisi held by Pope Benedict XVI with representatives of world religions and Churches, on October 27, 2011. That was the 25th anniversary of the first such interfaith meeting. It has confirmed the Pope's will to continue the work of dialogue, which, in the spirit of the Second Vatican Council, was led by the Blessed John Paul II. The Pastoral Constitution on the Church in the Modern World states: "For our part, the desire for such dialogue, which can lead to truth through love alone, excludes no one, though an appropriate measure of prudence must undoubtedly be exercised. We include those who cultivate outstanding qualities of the human spirit, but do not yet acknowledge the Source of these qualities. We include those who oppress the Church and harass her in manifold ways. Since God the Father is the origin and purpose of all men, we are all called to be brothers. Therefore, if we have been summoned to the same destiny, human and divine, we can and we should work

together without violence and deceit in order to build up the world in genuine peace”²⁵⁵ (No. 92). The answer to this evangelical message of the Council was, this time, also found in Assisi, as a day of reflection, dialogue, and prayer for peace and justice in the world. For among the fruits of the first meeting in Assisi, Benedict XVI counted the fall of the Berlin Wall and the unification of Europe, noting that: “the spiritual dimension is a key element in the building of peace,”²⁵⁶ new dividing walls can be built as in the hearts of men. “Through this unique pilgrimage — he summed up the meeting—we have been able to engage in fraternal dialogue, to deepen our friendship, and to come together in silence and prayer. After renewing our commitment to peace and exchanging with one another a sign of peace, we feel even more profoundly involved, together with all the men and women from the communities that we represent, in our common human journey. We are not being separated; we will continue to meet, we will continue to be united in this journey, in dialogue, in the daily building of peace and in our commitment to a better world, a world in which every man and woman and every people can live in accordance with their own legitimate aspirations.”²⁵⁷ The final speech the Pope concluded saying: “In the name of God, may every religion bring upon the earth justice and peace, forgiveness and life, love!”²⁵⁸ And in his keynote address Benedict XVI emphasized: “The God in whom we Christians believe is the Creator and Father of all, and from him all people are brothers and sisters and form one single family.”²⁵⁹

Similar words were uttered by representatives of other religions. All of them manifested their convictions regarding the extent of religion in creating a climate of reconciliation and brotherhood between people. Also, they warned against using religion for political and

²⁵⁵ http://www.vatican.va/archive/hist_councils/ii_vatican_council/documents/vat-ii_const_19651207_gaudium-et-spes_en.html

²⁵⁶ http://w2.vatican.va/content/benedict-xvi/en/speeches/2011/october/documents/hf_ben-xvi_spe_20111027_assisi-congedo.html

²⁵⁷ Ibidem.

²⁵⁸ <http://www.todaycatholicnews.org/2011/10/>

²⁵⁹ http://w2.vatican.va/content/benedict-xvi/en/speeches/2011/october/documents/hf_ben-xvi_spe_20111027_assisi.html

ideological purposes, which yield divisions, wars, terrorism, and injustice. The Pope called also the agnostics and nonbelievers invited to the meeting to carry responsibility for peace; their presence was a complete novelty of this meeting in Assisi.

If the believers and agnostics have a great deal in common so that a certain mutuality of values can be found, so what can we say about the relations between Christians and Jews, who remain in the organic bond of faith in the God of Abraham, Isaac and Jacob, in the bond of the Old Testament revelation, along with the Decalogue? This bond is the basis of a special brotherhood of faith, so strongly accented by the recent popes. However, some ungenerous people find it easier to call their brother an atheist rather than a believer Jew.

The community of supernatural values makes that Catholics and Jews must—says Benedict XVI—“stand together in meeting the immense challenges, (...) [and they have—P.D.] shared religious duty to combat poverty, injustice, discrimination and the denial of universal human rights. There are many ways in which Jews and Christians can cooperate for the betterment of the world in accordance with the will of the Almighty for the good of mankind. (...) One of the most important things that we can do together is bearing common witness to our deeply-held belief that every man and woman is created in the divine image (cf. Gen 1:26-27) and thus possessed of inviolable dignity.”²⁶⁰ Afterwards, Pope Benedict stressed that: “The life and work of all believers should bear constant witness to the transcendent, point to the invisible realities which lie beyond us, and embody the conviction that a loving, compassionate Providence guides the final outcome of history.”²⁶¹ Pope Benedict XVI said these words to the delegation of Jewish organization B'nai B'rith International in May last year. Readiness to build a community of religious values and continue the dialogue was also confirmed by the Jews from a twenty person delegation, who, together with Rabbi David Rosen participated in the meeting in Assisi.

²⁶⁰ http://w2.vatican.va/content/benedict-xvi/en/speeches/2011/may/documents/hf_ben-xvi_spe_20110512_bnai-brith-international.html

²⁶¹ Ibidem.

The catchword of the Day of Judaism, being celebrated the fifteenth time in Poland, is: “Your name shall no longer be Jacob, but Israel...” (Gen. 32:29). It refers to the story of Jacob, which does not only constitute new developments in the history of the Chosen People, but becomes a figure of the future fulfillment of salvific history in Jesus Christ. As Christians, we see in Jacob’s fight with God an earnest of the struggle Jesus has with the will of the Father in the face of Golgotha. Anointed with the Holy Spirit over the waters of the Jordan, he performs a redemptive Passover, becoming the Lord and Savior of the world, and the Shepherd of the people of the New Covenant. We too are called to deal with the adversities of faith, both those that are external and those that are in us. With the blessing of the Lord, we, like Jacob, can triumph.

This year's nationwide celebration of the Day of Judaism will be held on January 17, in Rzeszów. A detailed program will be available on the website of the Diocese of Rzeszów.

On behalf of the Polish Bishops’ Committee for Dialogue with Judaism, I encourage Brothers in faith to get involved in the organization of prayer in parishes of all Polish dioceses, using texts set forth below.

Bishop Mieczysław Cisko

Chairman of The Polish Bishops’ Committee for Dialogue with Judaism

Liturgical texts and the homily
on The Fifteenth Day of Judaism
in the Catholic Church of Poland
January 17, 2012

Mass form: "The plea for love"

Readings: Genesis 32:25-32, 7; Rom 9:6-16; John 4:5-24

OPENING ANTIPHON (cf. Ez. 36:26-28)

The Lord says: I will remove the heart of stone from your flesh and give you a heart of flesh. I will put My Spirit within you, so you will be My people, and I will be your God.

INTRODUCTION

The Catholic Church in Poland for the fifteenth time celebrates the Day of Judaism in her communities. It has been time of reflection on the Word of God, a time of meetings with Jewish Brothers [and Sisters], and a time of prayers. This day, in its assumptions, is to help believers in Christ in discovering the Jewish roots of Christianity, which is for us the fulfillment of the Old Testament promises in Jesus Christ. On this day, Christians, contemplating and deepening their evangelical identity, should see what they have in common with the believers of Judaism, namely: the belief in one God, the Bible as the Word of God, loyalty to religious tradition, the Decalogue as the foundation of moral principles, as well as the call to daily prayer. In our liturgical prayer, let us pray to God, that we, together with Jewish believers, contribute the values of God to increasingly secular societies, with the commandment of love of God and neighbor at the apex, in the service of interpersonal brotherhood. For all the sins of resentment, contempt and

indifference to others, both local and foreign, let us express regret before God so that He may show us His mercy, and bestow upon us grace and freedom of spirit.

COLLECT

Almighty God, send us the Holy Spirit and kindle our hearts with love so that you can be pleased with us through our thoughts and deeds as we love you in our brothers and sisters. Through our Lord Jesus Christ, your Son, who lives with you and reigns in the unity of the Holy Spirit, one God forever and ever. Amen.

LITURGY OF THE WORD OF GOD

FIRST READING (Genesis 32:25-32)

RESPONSORIAL PSALM (Ps 105:6-7,8-9,42-43)

Response: God remembers His covenant

SECOND READING (Rom 9:6-16)

SONG BEFORE GOSPEL (John 4:21)

GOSPEL (John 4:5-24)

HOMILY

In God the source of blessing

The story of Jacob, who is struggling with an angel, stands in the center of the Old Testament reflection on the Fifteenth Day of Judaism in the Polish Church, celebrated today. It is a story of a man, who, through his bold endeavors, may raise recognition and sympathy, when due to his cleverness he gets the blessing of his father Isaac, and during the night of persistent combat he almost forces the gift of God's blessing. But it is also a story of a man experiencing tragedies, like when he loses the beloved son Joseph, because the rest of his sons, out of hatred, secretly sold him into slavery. It is also the fortune of God's man, wandering throughout life, whereabouts, changing, along with an immediate family, obeying the indications and signs of God. Jacob, the patriarch of the great and wise people, Jacob, who becomes Israel, because he wrestled in his life with God; for us, Christians of today, but also Jews, he symbolizes the path of faith and faithfulness to God. We can see in him today (each of us individually, as well as the community of the Church) the pattern of the believer, who, fighting the darkness of his doubts, looks for hope of the next morning, directing his cry of faith toward God: "I will not let you go unless you bless me" (Genesis 32:27). This call is bred of man's internal struggle in the night of his life, and is a desire to know God, to know His name and will. It also arises from the history of humanity, which is so often torn by the dramas of human harm and injustice caused to man because of his convictions, faith, or origin. And then, in the midst of such nights in the history of the world, the cry of tormented people for the gift of God's blessings and peace carrying relief can always be heard. The history of Europe and the world in the twentieth century testifies to that.

Old Testament events, aside from the symbolic dimension of the spiritual journey of the believer, carry also a unique message to the communities of believers, to the community of the entire Church. The Church, constantly renewing herself with the power of the Holy Spirit, shows man the way to live in truth and authentic worship of God, in the spirit of the Gospel. The Days of Judaism—which by their nature are the fulfillment of the Second Vatican Council declaration *Nostra Aetate*—"give impetus to undertake new joint initiatives toward building the civilization of life and love, peace, social justice, as well as the education of the young generation to

brotherhood and interpersonal solidarity between cultures, nationalities, and religions.”²⁶² Those Days constitute a place, time, and space of meeting in a spirit of faith, to show anew, in the glow of the words of the Bible, the abundance of blessings for those who live according to the Law of God.

The gift of God's blessing, which is chased by the believers in God, Jews and Christians, is an act of grace offered to whomever tirelessly wants to explore the essence of God. It is an act of grace offered to whomever wants to know His name, and therefore, without fear, struggles, by faith, with all the difficulties standing on the path of life. We could list an entire catalogue of such difficulties (taking into account the obstacles, which are carried by the development of civilization, and rationalization of individual and social behaviors, etc.). But on this day we especially focus on these aspects of the life of faith, which let us—believers in God—discover together the source of His blessing and experience it in the spirit of brotherhood. These are: common prayer, respect for God's Law, and regard for tradition.

The story of Jacob and his struggle with God, after which he receives a blessing, is a story from the Old Testament, where God reveals Himself exclusively to His chosen nation and blesses it in the first place. In the center of today's liturgy, there is also another redemptive story, which, although it is not a description of man's inner struggle, but includes a profound dialogue between a person standing outside the community of the chosen people and the Son of God. This dialogue, recorded in the Gospel of John, touches on what is the deepest motive of religious practice and bearing witness of faith to the world. This is a story of meeting between a Samaritan woman and Jesus Christ, a traveler, at Jacob's well. During this strange conversation, the woman, searching for the true way of worship, yields up the deepest desires and secrets of her heart to the stranger Interlocutor. The fruit of this eerie dialogue in the hottest hour of the day, when it seems to be the least suitable time, is the joy of discovery of the living God, experiencing the gift of His

²⁶² Bishop Mieczysław Cisko, *Keynote for The Twelfth Day of Judaism in the Catholic Church in Poland* [trans.: Piotr Dudek], http://stara.episkopat.pl/?a=dokumentyKEP&doc=200919_1

blessing, and the conversion of heart for Him. Here, following the conversation with Jesus, the woman discovers that the sense of belief in God is to worship Him in spirit and to live in truth, and she witnesses it in the front of her relatives and loved ones, professing faith in Jesus as the Son of God. And her word contributes to the fact that “many believed in Him then,” as reported by the Evangelist.

Also, in this redemptive story of the New Testament we find that God, coming to the man with the gift of blessing, overcomes every obstacle on the way to reconciliation, even the most hidden one, which is sin. And from the deep meeting and sincere dialogue with Jesus Christ, the only Mediator, is formed in the person a new heart, grateful to God for His patient love and open to the neighbor. The new heart is not guided by prejudice and cannot see the walls of division nor boundaries that have been erected by human traditions, prejudices, and convictions. Here, as we read further in the Gospel of John, Jesus remains among the Samaritans, [pagans], for a few days, and proclaims the Gospel to them. From this encounter a new form of kinship is born, which is not built on blood ties, but on the ties of faith in the One God, who must be worshipped in “spirit and truth.”

If today we ponder over the two great religions professing the One God, and we listen carefully to the saving words of the Holy Book of Jews, the Torah, and the Holy Christian Gospel, and if today we want to listen to each other and pray, are we not discovering spiritual kinship? Is it not true that we reach for to the same source, asking the Lord of Life for His blessing? Let us recall here the words of the Holy Father Benedict XVI, who spoke during a meeting with the Jewish community in Germany, on September 22, 2011: “We, Christians, must also become increasingly aware of our own inner affinity with Judaism.”²⁶³ It is on the basis of this affinity that a reflection relating to our common salvation history is born. In a gesture of such

²⁶³ http://w2.vatican.va/content/benedict-xvi/en/speeches/2011/september/documents/hf_ben-xvi_spe_20110922_jewish-berlin.html

an affinity we also pray the psalms and reflect on the spiritual tradition of Judaism and Christianity.

In this work of opening for a dialogue with the other and unknown, we are like the patriarch Jacob, when we are struggling with our own limitations and stereotypes about others that we carry within ourselves. Perhaps we are biased by the unjust attitudes that the other is inferior and alien. However, this struggle is not the way to self-improvement or ritual cleansing, but it is finding among us the true face of God, as the Merciful Father of believers, who does not refuse to bless all of His children. Such a dialogical attitude, and thus the willingness for conversation and patient listening, is also the imitation of the Samaritan woman, who meets Jesus and offers Him a cup of water. This is the imitation of someone who is aware of his or her sinfulness and lack of full knowledge of God, but is constantly nourishing the desire to know Him and to serve Him.

Both Jacob, who struggles with God and becomes somewhat a new man after the fight, because he has been given a new name—Israel, and the Samaritan woman, drawing water in the scorching heat and conversing with Jesus about the truth of her life, were given the gift of God's blessing. They allowed to be touched by the grace of God and bore witness to the uniqueness of this moment of life to others, giving honor to God. Today, we can become the stakeholders of the same gift. We may wish this gift to one another and pray for it, letting it transform our lives and make us witnesses of the living God to the world.

Fr. Marek Szymański

PRAYER OF THE FAITHFUL

Trusting in intimacy with God and His redemptive presence in human history, let us cry to Him from the depth of our hearts:

- Let us pray for the Church that she will more fully develop the interfaith dialogue with the followers of Judaism in the spirit of the conciliar declaration *Nostra Aetate* and teaching of blessed John Paul II and Benedict XVI.
- Let us pray for all Christians so that, following Christ and due to His grace, they will treat with respect and love people walking on the way of the Covenant, which God made with Abraham and Moses.
- Let us pray for the Jews, that faithful to their calling, they will be witnesses to One and True God in the world marked by atheism, materialism, time-bound and utilitarian culture.
- Let us pray for all victims of the Holocaust. Let the tragedy of the annihilation arouse a desire to encounter the only saving God, in the hearts of contemporaries.
- Let us pray for the Holocaust survivors and for all those who carried help to the persecuted. Let them serve as an example for building justice among the nations of the world.
- Let us pray for peace in the Middle East, for persecuted Christians, and for a just resolution of the Palestinian-Israeli conflict in the spirit of respect for the rights of nations.
- Let us pray for pilgrims visiting the Holy Land. Let acknowledging Jesus Christ's homeland open their hearts the beauty of Gospel's universality, having been spread at first in Galilee, and Jerusalem.

O God of Abraham, Isaac and Jacob, O God, whose apostles became witnesses through all the earth, strengthen the spiritual community of Christians and Jews. Through Christ, our Lord.

PRAYER OVER THE GIFTS

O Merciful God, sanctify and accept the gifts offered as a sign of spiritual sacrifice, and make us witnesses to your love for all. Through Christ, our Lord.

COMMUNION ANTIPHON (1 Cor 13:13)

And now these three remain: faith, hope and love. But the greatest of these is love.

PRAYER AFTER COMMUNION

O God, our Father, You have fed us with one Eucharistic Bread, fill us with the grace of the Holy Spirit and fortify us with sweetness of perfect love. Through Christ, our Lord.

PRAYER OF THE HOLY FATHER BENEDICT XVI

on the note put into the Western Wall

in Jerusalem, May 12, 2009

God of all ages,

on my visit to Jerusalem, the “City of Peace,”

spiritual home to Jews, Christians and Muslims alike,

I bring before you the joys, the hopes and the aspirations,

the trials, the suffering and the pain of all your people throughout the world.

God of Abraham, Isaac and Jacob,

hear the cry of the afflicted, the fearful, the bereft;

send your peace upon this Holy Land, upon the Middle East,

upon the entire human family;

stir the hearts of all who call upon your name,

to walk humbly in the path of justice and compassion.

“The Lord is good to those who wait for him, to the soul that seeks him!” (Lam 3:25).

THE ABCS OF THE DAY OF JUDAISM

The Day of Judaism in the Catholic Church is a special time of communal reflection and prayer. This reflection, drawing upon biblical texts and pronouncements of the Magisterium on the Catholic-Jewish dialogue, should help Catholics in the discovery of the Jewish roots of Christianity, in deepening awareness that the Jewish religion in relation to Christian religion is not *an external reality, but something internal, and that our attitude toward it is different than toward any other religion* (John Paul II); it can be argued that there is a strict kinship between these two religions, and Jews can be called *the elder brothers in the faith* (John Paul II). Building mutual brotherhood and forming the right mentality of the faithful requires God's help, and therefore prayer is so much needed.

After fifteen years since the Day of Judaism (January 17) was first celebrated in the Church in Poland, its current development, achievements, but also a visible deviation from the original assumptions should be evaluated. Accordingly, the Polish Bishops' Committee for Dialogue with Judaism wishes to remind and outline to the organizers of the next celebrations on national, diocesan and parish levels the main principles to be taken into account:

1. To explain and popularize the essence of the Day of Judaism
2. To present teaching of the Church on the Jews and their religion after the Second Vatican Council
3. To make prayer an integral part of the celebration of the Day of Judaism

4. To promote the post-conciliar explanations of the texts of the Holy Scripture, which in the past may have been interpreted in an anti-Jewish and antisemitic way.
5. To explain the tragedy of the annihilation of the Jews to the faithful
6. To present antisemitism as a sin (John Paul II)
7. To invite representatives of other Churches and Christian Communities to pray together on this day
8. To invite Jews to participate in the celebration of the Day of Judaism

The Sixteenth Day of Judaism
in the Catholic Church of Poland
January 17, 2013

I am Joseph, your brother (...)
(Ex 45:4)

Keynote of the Chairman
of The Polish Bishops' Committee
for Dialogue with Judaism

The fiftieth anniversary of the inauguration of the Second Vatican Council along with “The Year of Faith,” proclaimed by the Holy Father Benedict XVI, prompt us to revisit the conciliar envoy. This envoy is still relevant in its content and form, which have been deepened and developed in theological reflection, in liturgical life, and in the Church's evangelizing mission. Undoubtedly, the Council - the most momentous event in the twentieth century Church's life, and even for all of Christianity - was a voice from the Holy Spirit himself addressed to believers in Christ, in the sense of the words of the Apocalypse: “*He who has an ear, let him hear what the Spirit says to the churches* (Rev 3:6).”

Indeed, gathered in a cenacle of prayer and spiritual space of theological reflection, Fathers of the Council listened carefully to what the Spirit of God was telling the Church and what the surrounding world was saying through its actions and hopes. First of all, the Holy Spirit helped to read again the timeless message of the Gospel; to formulate it in a communicative language and recognize urgent problems of humanity, to which the Church is still being sent.

Opening the Council, Pope John XXIII stated that the Church must be faithful to the tradition, but at the same time she must take into account *present, new conditions and forms of modern life in the world*, not in order to merge with the world, but to better understand human beings. *The Spouse of Christ prefers to make use of the medicine of mercy rather than that of severity. She considers that she meets the needs of the present day by demonstrating the validity of her teaching rather than by condemnations.* As a consequence of this approach, the Council, at that time not pronouncing anathemas, came out of her own closed world to reach the people who either live in different religious formations, previously unnoticed or ignored, or those who have left their spiritual homeland, often with injuries and prejudices.

It was noticed that Christians have so many things in common with the followers of other religions just as the Catholics have with dissenters, who can bring positive experiences of their faith into the life of the Catholic community. The Council studies the Church's relation to other religions in *Nostra Aetate*, outlining at the same time its perspective on religious dialogue. A significant place in this dialogue was set apart for Judaism, by emphasizing the theological premises of mutual relations, rooted in the history of salvation transmitted through the revealed Word. It is the Word of God that is the fountain of knowledge regarding the organic bond that connects the Chosen People to the People of the New Covenant.

A special contribution to the conciliar thought on Christian-Jewish relations was brought by Pope John XXIII. One can well call him the founding father of the conciliar declaration. For example, when he had been the Apostolic Delegate in Istanbul, his intervention saved many Jewish lives. Hosting one Jewish group on October 17, 1960, he addressed them with the words: *I am Joseph, your brother.* Subsequent popes have confirmed his intention of fostering the dialogue and building brotherly ties between the faithful and believers of Judaism. Pope Paul VI promulgated the conciliar declaration in 1965. Pope Benedict XVI in numerous statements and amicable gestures toward Jews, especially in a gesture of visiting synagogues, including the Synagogue of Rome, emphasized that Catholic-Jewish dialogue is irreversible. A substantial

contribution in building mutual relationships was made by John Paul II. Key to the Catholic reflection became the words spoken by him in the Synagogue of Rome in 1986 that the Jews *are our dearly beloved brothers and, in a certain way, it could be said that they are our elder brothers*. Then the Holy Father denounced *the acts of hatred, persecutions, and displays of anti-Semitism whenever and by whomever directed against the Jews*. And during his visit to the State of Israel in the course of the pilgrimage to the Holy Land in 2000, he proclaimed in Yad Vashem, in Jerusalem: *“Let us build a new future in which there will be no more anti-Jewish feelings among Christians or anti-Christian feelings among Jews, but rather the mutual respect required of those who adore the one Creator and Lord, and look to Abraham as our common father in faith.”*²⁶⁴ It is the faith of Abraham and his spiritual fatherhood toward the believers in *the God of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob* that lays the foundation for understanding of Christian-Jewish relations in the category of brotherhood.

In a similar vein, the Jewish signatories of the statement *Dabru Emet* i.e. *Speak the Truth*, issued September 10, 2000 stated their opinion: *Jews and Christians worship the same God, Jews and Christians seek authority from the same book - the Bible, Jews and Christians together accept the moral principles of the Torah. Nazism was not a Christian phenomenon. Jews and Christians must work together for justice and peace.*²⁶⁵ On the Jewish side, similar rabbis' statements in the spirit of *Dabru Emet* are becoming more and more widespread: *I pray - confides Rabbi Irving Greenberg, Chair of the United States Holocaust Memorial Council - that the Holy Spirit would be present in the actions of Christians and Jews. The prophetic vision of both religions points to the necessity of cooperation and transforming the earth into a paradise.* According to the rabbi, the dialogue, which is still carried out in the shadow of the Shoah, will acquire more and more theological nature in the near future, since *both religions stem from the*

²⁶⁴ http://www.yadvashem.org/yv/en/about/events/pope/john_paul/speech.asp#!prettyPhoto

²⁶⁵ http://www.jcrelations.net/Dabru_Emet_-

[A_Jewish_Statement_on_Christians_and_Christianity.2395.0.html](http://www.jcrelations.net/Dabru_Emet_-A_Jewish_Statement_on_Christians_and_Christianity.2395.0.html)

same root, both are the religions of life, and both Jews and Christians are the People of God, the People of Israel.

Determining the Christian-Jewish relationship in terms of brotherhood raises many questions, and consequently, postulates of theological deepening. Doubts arise on both the Catholic and Jewish sides. Mutual meetings, prayer and common theological reflection are designed to ensure that the truth has found its shape in *the fraternal reconciliation, fraternal coexistence, fraternal cooperation and fraternal harmony*. Even though our brotherhood is real, mutual relationships are not yet fully established. We aim to bring together in *a fraternal dialogue* and we are heading for *a renewed sense of brotherhood*. We are provided with numerous other utterances in this fashion due to the statements of John Paul II, in which he pointed to specific areas of cooperation. *The symbol of cooperation*—emphasized the Pope—*should become Jerusalem, as the source and inspiration for fraternal, continuous and permanent dialogue between the followers of Judaism, Christians and Muslims*. Considering the doubts being brought up by some Jews, as for example Rabbi Ricardo Di Segni, Benedict XVI said that in determining the relationship between Christians and Jewish people, one should not turn away from the term “elder brothers.” However, he proposed another, in his opinion better definition, namely: “fathers in the faith.”

Pope John Paul II in the Rome Synagogue recalled that the fundamental difference between Christians and the followers of Judaism flows from the belief in Jesus Christ. Nevertheless, from the perspective of the Christian, the Covenant with the Jewish people has never been revoked. Christianity, including its liturgy and spirituality, with the exception of the broad Christology, has its roots in Judaism. According to Saint Paul, Israel is chosen and beloved People of the Covenant, which has never been revoked (cf. Rom. 9:4, 11:29). Therefore - notes Cardinal Walter Kasper - one cannot say that the Covenant with Israel has been replaced by the New Covenant. For Christians it does not constitute a replacement, but a fulfillment. The both covenants stay in a mutual relationship of promise and anticipation from the one side, and

consummation from the other. The entire history of God's relationship with His people is situated within the following covenants: with Abraham, Moses, Joshua, Ezra, and finally with the prophet Jeremiah - the promise of a new one (cf. Jer. 31:32). Each of these covenants takes on the preceding one, and at the same time gives it a new interpretation. In this way, the New Covenant promised by the prophets, is our final reinterpretation of the Old Covenant. It is a "yes," the final "amen" for all God's promises (cf. 2 Cor. 1:20), but not a suspension or abolition of them. There still remains another problem, namely, the relation of the Church toward post-biblical, rabbinical, and Talmudic Judaism, which was formed after the destruction of the Second Temple. It should be noticed that both their canons and structures were formed in a parallel fashion. Neither can the New Testament give us a clear and homogenous answer to this concern. Judaism and Christianity do not differ simply by parallel coexistence or opposition. According to Saint Paul, they are in dialectical relationship, one against the other in their diversity. This is, ultimately, a mystery of reality, hidden behind the historio-salvific figures that may be discovered by faith (cf. Rom. 9-11).

With the help comes here an image used by Saint Paul speaking of Israel as a root and tree trunk, in which wild branches of the Gentiles were grafted; the image refers to the prophecy of Isaiah, which helps capture doubly the sense of distinction in unity. Cardinal Kasper comments on this comparison as follows: *If the grafted twigs are cut off the root, they will wither. In this way, the fact of cutting the Jewish roots over the ages weakened the Church. This weakening was clearly revealed by an overt inadequacy of resistance against the persecution of the Jews.* But concurrently, the root without branches implanted in it remains lifeless. The Church spread monotheism of Israel and the Decalogue among the nations and contributed thus to the realization of the promise made to Abraham that he would become a blessing to all the nations (cf. Gen. 12:3, 18:18). Therefore Israel without the Church is in danger of closing itself up, whereas the Church without Israel is at risk of losing her roots in the entire history of salvation and becoming

timeless and *gnostic*. Judaism and Christianity need each other and depend from each other indeed. True ecumenism without Israel - Cardinal concludes - is not possible.

Then, another controversial issue concerning the mission toward the Jews remains unaddressed. Namely, as Christians, we cannot deny the universal character of spreading the Gospel of Jesus Christ. It should be noted that this universality in a variety of ways applies to the Jews and pagans. Jews are not pagans, they believe in one God, and do not have to leave the false idols to turn to the living and true God (cf. 1 Thess. 1:9). The proclamation of Christ should take this distinction into account. People have not always adhered to this principle and as a result Jews have been experiencing forced conversions. Our witness of faith must be humble, avoiding any displays of triumphalism and showing respect and honor for others' beliefs. The salvation of all Israel at the end of time depends, according to Saint Paul, on God (Romans 11:26f); therefore the Pontifical Biblical Commission concludes that *the messianic expectation of Jews is not futile; at the end of time Jews and Christians would recognize the One who was to come, the eschatological Messiah*. The common heritage of Jews and Christians urges them to give mutual witness to the One God and His commandments. Pope Benedict XVI stressed this truth during his visit to the Synagogue of Rome.

This year's Day of Judaism's catchword refers to the history of "the Egyptian" Joseph, whose brothers sold him for twenty pieces of silver into slavery to the Midianite merchants. After many dramatic trials of his fate, Joseph was raised by the pharaoh to the dignity of the governor of the entire state. Due to his wisdom he secured the material well-being of the nation confronting hunger. His brothers, having been looking for help, found him eventually. Then the climactic meeting and recognition of the brothers took place along with this moving confession: *I am Joseph, your brother, the one you sold into Egypt (...) It was to save your lives that God sent me ahead of you. You once plotted evil against me, but God meant it for good, to make that what is today, that the great nation has survived*. In Christian tradition, Joseph from the earliest times has been credited with being a figure of Christ. Because of his dramatic story he became a part of

Christological Biblical typology. Reflection around the figure of Joseph in the Day of Judaism will provide us with multiple references: to the fulfillment of the Old Testament promises in the person of Jesus Christ, to the fate of Israel, to the joint relationships between Christians and Jews, and to interpersonal moral relations, especially to that of a family.

Bishop Mieczysław Cisło

Liturgical texts and the homily
on The Sixteenth Day of Judaism
in the Catholic Church of Poland

January 17, 2013

Mass from "The plea for love"

Readings: Genesis 45:1-5, 7; Phil 2:1-11; Mt 5:37-48

OPENING ANTIPHON (cf. Ez. 36:26-28)

The Lord says: I will remove the heart of stone from your flesh and give you a heart of flesh. I will put My Spirit within you, so you will be My people, and I will be your God.

INTRODUCTION

For 16 years the Catholic Church in Poland has celebrated the Day of Judaism. It has been time of reflection on the Word of God, a time of meetings and prayers. This day should educate believers in Christ about the Jewish roots of Christianity. In this perspective, Christians, deepening their own identity, should increasingly discern what they have in common with the believers of Judaism, namely: the belief in one God, the Bible, religious tradition, and finally the Decalogue as the foundation of moral rights, or the call to daily prayer. Let us pray to God that we may be able to build a world of universal values—where is place for the living God in an increasingly secular society—and the religious brotherhood with the Jews. And for all sins of prejudice and resentment toward other persons, both local and foreign, let us express regret before God, asking Him to bestow upon us mercy, reconciliation, grace and freedom.

COLLECT

Almighty God, send us the Holy Spirit and kindle our hearts with love so that you can be pleased with us through our thoughts and deeds as we love you in our brothers and sisters. Through our Lord Jesus Christ, your Son, who lives with you and reigns in the unity of the Holy Spirit, God forever and ever. Amen.

LITURGY OF THE WORD OF GOD

FIRST READING (Genesis 45:1-5, 7)

RESPONSORIAL PSALM (Ps 105)

Chorus: God remembers His covenant

SECOND READING (Phil 2:1-11)

SONG BEFORE GOSPEL (John 13:34)

GOSPEL (Mat. 5:37-48)

HOMILY

One cannot understand Jesus Christ, His proclamation and mission, without understanding the history and identity of the people of Israel recorded in the Pentateuch, Psalms, and Prophetic Books. For this reason, the Catholic Church in Poland established the Day of Judaism, which is to be celebrated in every church. Its aim is to meet with the living Word of God in different forms so that listeners can relate it to their own lives. The proclaimed Word should be seen in three dimensions: as it is realized in the history of the people of Israel, as it is impersonated in the story of Jesus Christ, and finally, as it is translated into my personal life. The faith, which draws upon Scripture, requires constant actualization of the Word, always understood through the catechetical key. It is something unusual and arousing joy that this Word appears as a manifestation of God's love for us and in addition He will not rest until he finds someone who would like to adopt the Word (Isaiah 55:10). It is addressed to me and to you who are listening. Thus the purpose of listening to the Word is not the cognition of the remote past, but the meeting with God himself today, who still wants to transform our mentality and life that we would finally be deeply satisfied and could bless Him in every situation. The Psalmist says: *I will bless the Lord at all times, His praise shall continually be in my mouth* (Psalm 34).

It is precisely because of the need for being constantly rooted in the Jewish way of listening that for this year's Day of Judaism—after Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob—the figure and the story of Joseph, the son of the latter patriarch, has been selected. Jacob's new name—Israel—received from God, became the name for the Chosen People. Jacob had twelve sons. One of them, Joseph, was the most hated by others because he was gifted to interpret dreams. In effect, there was a close call and he would have been killed by them, but instead they sold him into slavery to Ishmaelite merchants, and they sold him to the high official of the pharaoh of Egypt. In Egypt, Joseph had been experiencing a deep humiliation, went to prison for evil deeds not committed by him, and fell at the bottom. The outward sign of the depression, *kenosis*, that is an attrition of self—"I," was a well, to which he was thrown by his brothers, and subsequently the dungeon in the

Egyptian prison. However, in the course of events Joseph was released and presented to the pharaoh, who in gratitude for explanation of an incomprehensible dream made Joseph his chief assistant - the second man in the state. Joseph's character outlines here the person of Jesus Christ, who suffered the greatest *kenosis*, because *He humbled Himself by becoming obedient to the point of death - the death on a cross* (Phil 2:8). Just as He elevated Joseph, God sat Jesus at His right hand, and *has highly exalted Him and bestowed on Him a name so that at the name of Jesus every knee will bow* (Isaiah 49:4; Phil 2:9-10).

At this point, we can ask the question: What is it all about? Is it that God first throws into the abyss, only to get us, me out of there and reward? Such interpretation seems to be meaningless. In fact, this concern pertains to the meaning of our life, and specific events, especially those that bring suffering. Is suffering the evil? Or is the evil that touches me the last word of God? The history of Joseph and its fulfillment in Christ do not provide affirmative answers to these questions. God does not want the death of the sinner, because he loves him as he is, because He sees that the sinner is unhappy, suffers, and does not know what he lives for; and not only when he repents or turn away from evil ways. God's love is unconditional and can be experienced even in the nethermost depths. This is evidenced by the numerous testimonies of people, such as the Tzadik of Piaseczno, Kelman Kalonimus Shapiro and the Greek Catholic priest Kowcz. Both of them, when in the Nazi death camps, did not avail themselves of the possibility of release –but, like Christ, stayed together with others until the end, consoling people and bearing the witness to the presence of God. The lives of both these extraordinary figures prove something even greater than the mere fact of *kenosis* and exaltation of Joseph. This is revealed in the passage from today's reading from the Book of Genesis. Joseph says to his brothers who are appalled by the possibility of punishment for what they have done to him: *Do not be grieved or angry with yourselves, because you sold me. God sent me before you ... to keep you alive by a great deliverance* (Gen. 45:5, 7). To see and accept the reality of painful history is only possible by the eyes of faith. The Jewish-Christian outlook on life draws upon this

assumption. Looking at the facts from the recent and remote past and questioning about their sense, we cry out to God, asking for the grace of resignation from a culturally widespread way of thinking, built on a raw, selfish fear for oneself. I turn my eyes to the Lord, whom I have already known as the one who does not want my undoing or death, and in Him I am looking for the answers. This process does not involve the obliteration of suffering by means of available measures or palliatives. Instead, it happens through a personal encounter with God in prayer, often through struggle and crying. In truth, during the meeting with his brothers, Joseph is full of emotions and bursts into tears; he is not converted into stone. Due to this spiritual battle, in which God prevails, Joseph can not only forgive his brothers, but he also discerns through his “heavenly” eyes his own historical vocation in the Creator’s Plan, who wants to save and redeem people. God’s understanding is infinitely greater than our, even good, perception of Him. Similarly, in the case of our father Abraham, who was promised not only a son, who he had wished for so much, but also descendants as numerous as the stars in the sky. And how not to be grateful to God for the Jews, for the fact that for millennia they have carried the *Shekinah*, that is, His presence, amidst affliction, persecution, extermination, throughout unfaithfulness and returns, having been singing psalms to the Lord in Israel and in the Diaspora, in sorrow and in joy.

Jesus Christ, accepting the will of the Father in the struggle, sweat, and tears, knew that during the Paschal Triduum all must be saved from eternal death. He, however exalted, would turn out to be a sign of God's love for every human being, who himself is not able to give life, or even do good. That is why Jesus says to us in today's Gospel: *Love your enemies*, as God loves you; you who are bad and all others, regardless persons, sins and the evil that people do, irrespective of their morals, piety, and alleged merits. Otherwise, why would He go through the cross, rise and love you with infinite and powerful Love, which releases from the feeling of meaninglessness, despair, existential death already on earth and offers eternal life instead.

Your sin—Jesus says to the villain crucified with Him—*is forgiven, today you will be with Me in paradise*. We are left the choice who of the two villains we want to be: the one who

acknowledges his own guilt and wants to return to communion with God, or the latter who curses his life and death to the end. But even if you turn away from God the Father, He will not give up and will wait until you decide, like Israel, to turn your eyes back to Him and say: “Amen.”

Professor Jan Grosfeld

PRAYER OF THE FAITHFUL

Trusting in intimacy with God and His redemptive presence in human history, let us cry to Him from the depth of our hearts:

- Let us pray for the Church. Let she fully develop the interfaith dialogue with the followers of Judaism in the spirit of the conciliar declaration *Nostra Aetate* and teaching of blessed John Paul II and Benedict XVI.
- Let us pray for all Christians so that, following Christ and due to His grace, they will treat with respect and love people walking on the way of God’s Covenant with Abraham and Moses.
- Let us pray for the Jews, that faithful to God’s calling, they will be witnesses to One and True God in the world marked by atheism, materialism, time-bound and utilitarian culture.
- Let us pray for all victims of the Holocaust and plea God that the tragedy caused by this extermination will arouse in the hearts of contemporaries a desire for reconciliation, brotherhood, and most of all, encounter with God, who has the saving power.

- Let us pray for peace in the Middle East, for persecuted Christians, and for a just resolution of the Palestinian-Israeli conflict in the spirit of respect for the rights of nations.
- Let us pray for pilgrims visiting the Holy Land so that the recognition of Jesus Christ's homeland would reassert their faith and open them up to the beauty of Gospel's universality, having been spread at first in Samaria, Galilee, and Jerusalem.

O God of Abraham, Isaac and Jacob, O God, whose apostles became witnesses through all the earth, strengthen the spiritual community of Christians and Jews. Through Christ, our Lord.

PRAYER OVER THE GIFTS

O Merciful God, sanctify and accept the gifts offered as a sign of spiritual sacrifice, and make us witnesses to your love for all. Through Christ, our Lord.

COMMUNION ANTIPHON (1 Cor 13:13)

And now these three remain: faith, hope and love. But the greatest of these is love.

PRAYER AFTER COMMUNION

O God, our Father, You have fed us with one Eucharistic Bread, fill us with the grace of the Holy Spirit and fortify us with sweetness of perfect love. Through Christ, our Lord.

PRAYER OF THE HOLY FATHER BENEDICT XVI

on the note put into the Western Wall

in Jerusalem, May 12, 2009

God of all the ages,

on my visit to Jerusalem, the “City of Peace,”

spiritual home to Jews, Christians and Muslims alike,

I bring before you the joys, the hopes and the aspirations,

the trials, the suffering and the pain of all your people throughout the world.

God of Abraham, Isaac and Jacob,

hear the cry of the afflicted, the fearful, the bereft;

send your peace upon this Holy Land, upon the Middle East,

upon the entire human family;

stir the hearts of all who call upon your name,

to walk humbly in the path of justice and compassion.

“The Lord is good to those who wait for him, to the soul that seeks him!” (Lam 3:25).

THE ABCS OF THE DAY OF JUDAISM

The Day of Judaism in the Catholic Church is a special time of communal reflection and prayer. This reflection, drawing upon biblical texts and pronouncements of the Magisterium on the Catholic-Jewish dialogue, should help Catholics in the discovery of Jewish roots of Christianity, in deepening awareness that the Jewish religion in relation to our religion is not *an external reality, but something internal, and that our attitude toward it is different than toward any other religion* (John Paul II); it can be argued that there is a strict kinship between these two religions, and Jews can be called *the elder brothers in the faith* (John Paul II). Building mutual brotherhood and forming the right mentality of the faithful requires God's help, and therefore prayer is so much needed.

After sixteen years since the Day of Judaism (January 17) in the Church in Poland was first celebrated, current development, achievements, but also a visible deviation from the original assumptions should be evaluated. Accordingly, The Polish Bishops' Committee for Dialogue with Judaism wishes to remind and outline to the organizers of the next celebrations on national, diocesan and parish levels the main principles to be taken into account:

1. To explain and popularize the essence of the Day of Judaism
2. To present teaching of the Church on the Jews and their religion after the Second Vatican Council
3. To make prayer an integral part of the celebration of the Day of Judaism

4. To promote the post-conciliar explanations of the texts of the Holy Scripture, which in the past may have been interpreted in an anti-Jewish and antisemitic way.
5. To explain the tragedy of the annihilation of the Jews to the faithful
6. To present antisemitism as a sin (John Paul II)
7. To invite representatives of other Churches and Christian Communities to pray together on this day
8. To invite Jews to participate in the celebration of the Day of Judaism

The Seventeenth Day of Judaism
in the Catholic Church of Poland
January 16, 2014

The Lord is my strength (...).

He has become my salvation

(Ex 15:2)

Keynote of the Chairman
of The Polish Bishops' Committee
for Dialogue with Judaism

This past year, proclaimed “the Year of Faith,” was for us Christians a time of working on our faith, deepening it through prayer and sacramental grace, and bringing it closer to the Bible; it was a time of ecclesial socialization, confessing and sharing the faith. It was also a period of reflection on the renewal of the Church's life, for which the epochal inspiration was the Second Vatican Council, casting the Holy Spirit's light on many areas of church life, and among them on interfaith dialogue, especially with Jews. A key reference point for this dialogue still remains the conciliar document *Nostra Aetate*, leading the ecclesial community out of isolation and closure regarding Jews, and opening up to them as our brothers in the Abrahamic faith. This year prepares us directly for the celebration of the Golden Jubilee of publication of the aforementioned declaration (October 28, 1965).

Since then, many events deepening the Catholic-Jewish dialogue have taken place within the Church. Every pontificate, starting with that of Pope Paul VI, constituted a separate chapter in

the history of mutual relations between Catholics and Jews. Crucial for the current shape of these relationships was the pontificate of blessed John Paul II, who transferred the theological orthodoxy of dialogue to its evangelical orthopraxis. The milestones in this field, which delineate the line of thought and action to be developed have remained the words and gestures of Pope John Paul II toward Jews: the meeting in Rome's Synagogue, establishing relationships with the State of Israel, visit to Israel with prayer at the Western Wall and the words spoken at Yad Vashem, calling Jews elder brothers in the faith, naming antisemitism a sin, and cleansing the memory of the Church of anti-Jewish guilt. John Paul II will remain a role model of dialogue for generations to come.

Pope Benedict XVI went faithfully in the footsteps of his predecessor, bringing his own theological reflection, even talking about Jewish "fatherhood of faith" in relation to Christians. Like John Paul II, he visited synagogues, embarked on a pilgrimage to Israel, organized meetings in Assisi, received Jews in the Vatican in a climate of friendship, and encouraged people to build the bonds of brotherhood with the Jews.

The election of the present pope, Francis, made on March 13, 2013, was received with great satisfaction and hope by Jewish people, because - as pointed out by Shimon Peres, President of Israel, while he was hosting the delegation of the Polish Bishops—Cardinal Bergoglio had given much evidence of his kindness, solidarity, and friendship toward Jews. This was confirmed by the Holy Father in a recent press interview. Two months later, Israel's President paid a visit to Pope Francis in the Vatican, offering an invitation to visit Israel. The invitation was accepted. Papal gestures of openness to dialogue with Jews are coming more and more frequent.

The signs of kindness and commitment on the Jewish-Catholic line should be noted with satisfaction: J. Weiler, a Jew, defends the presence of the crucifix in classrooms of Italian schools; in Strasbourg, Rabbi David Rosen defends Archbishop G. L. Müller against accusations by German politicians. It can be concluded that the climate of openness on the Jewish side is associated with *Dabru Emet*, signed by over a hundred rabbis in 2000, very positively accepted

by a group of American Catholic theologians and the Vatican, yet little appreciated in our country. Of great importance to the dialogue was also the document signed by the rabbis prior to the visit of Pope Benedict XVI to Israel.

There are, of course, displays of negative behavior on both sides, and at times prejudiced people may be fanatically hostile to strangers. But they cannot undo the process, born of the conciliar zephyr of the Holy Spirit. It has become a task for those who are internally free, by the freedom that comes from Christ.

The Seventeenth Day of Judaism, centrally celebrated in Sandomierz, on January 16, 2014 - a day earlier than usually, due to the Sabbath - prepares us directly for the celebration of the 50th anniversary of the conciliar declaration opening the Church to dialogue with Judaism, the root out of which Christianity grows. We are connected with this faith by special ties: first of all by supernatural Revelation, by the covenant with the people of the first election, by the Holy Books (Law, Prophets, Psalms), by the Decalogue, and by the promise fulfilled for us in Jesus Christ, the promise whose fulfillment Jews expect in hope, prayer, and longing. We Christians also look forward to the final return of Christ in Final Judgment. We believe that Christ will be "all in all," completing all of God's promises.

After many centuries of separation and hostility on both sides, the Church rediscovered this particular kind of intimacy with the Jews. Therefore, the "dialogical imperative" does not result, as some argue, from political correctness toward the Jews, from ignorance or cajoling the stronger, but from a fuller understanding of Christian identity, from a fuller reading of the Gospel, and from following Christ, who spoke even with those who did not accept Him. Sometimes He expressed strong criticism, but he himself was without sin. He stressed that He did not come "to abolish the Law or the Prophets," but to fulfill them.

At the essential point of our reflection the question arises: Does Jesus Christ have to separate us completely? How important are the words of Shalom Ben Chorin, who said: "faith in

Jesus divides us, the faith of Jesus brings us together?" On the other hand, Rabbi Byron L. Sherwin gives a different perspective on Jesus:

I propose that Jesus should be regarded as one of the Jewish Messiahs: as the Messiah son of Joseph. It would give him a place within the framework of Jewish theological considerations and brought an end to the interminably long tradition of the actual excommunication of Jesus from the community of faith, to which he belonged.

There is a renewed interest in the Jewish community concerning the thought of Martin Buber, who described Jesus as "brother," thinking of the time when "the resurgent Jewish community will recognize Jesus not only as a great figure in its religious history, but also in the organic context of development of messianism over the centuries, whose ultimate goal is the redemption of Israel and the world." However, the Jewish thinker added: "I equally firmly believe that Jesus will never be deemed by us to be Messiah who came, because it would collide with the deepest meaning of our messianic passion" (after B. L. Sherwin).

The scrutiny of the dialogue may be distorted by confusion of two planes: socio-historical and theological. As for the first, there are different historiographies and philosophies of history. They remain in the hands of historians, yet they cannot be underestimated. We, however, are responsible for the dialogue on the religious and "history of salvation" level, for which the premises are given to us through the Revealed Word and the teaching of the Magisterium of the Church. These premises are not conditioned by the attitude of the Jewish side, because even if there was only one rabbi open to dialogue, he would meet the conditions of the other party. Nonetheless, there is a growing number of such dialogue partners. It should be also mentioned that at the psychosocial level, one could observe different modes of behavior of the Jews toward Christians and vice versa. These behaviors are conditioned by personal or historical reasons; on the Jewish side these reasons are connected with the struggle for identity, the right to the land and State of Israel. Not everyone, after all, respects these rights. Life in exile for two thousand years has produced some defense mechanisms in order to preserve identity. Today, our compatriots in exile could learn the art of preserving their own identity against the threat of assimilation. Hostile

attitudes toward Christians must be seen in the context of a certain mentality that in some Orthodox communities leads to violent reactions for transgressing religious or moral laws, even against their own countrymen. Jews themselves stress that the internal tensions in Israel are sometimes greater than those aimed at Christians. Regardless of the negative behaviors of individuals or groups, “the dialogue with the Jews is a sacred duty.” Christians, to understand themselves, need Judaism much more than Judaism needs Christians.

The watchword of this year's celebration of the Day of Judaism has been taken from the Book of Exodus (15:2): *The Lord is my strength (...). He has become my salvation.* This refers to the liberation of the Israelites from slavery in Egypt, by the power of divine intervention. It has a contemporary reference to the tragic fate of the Jews during the Holocaust. For us Christians, the Old Testament figure of liberation has its fulfillment in the salvific mystery of Christ's Passover. It fulfills itself in the life of the individual Christian, as well as in the life of the Church condemned to extinction by totalitarian systems. Selected biblical texts and the homily in this material prompt us to reflect on this mystery.

Bishop Mieczysław Cisło

Liturgical texts and the homily
on The Seventeenth Day of Judaism
in the Catholic Church of Poland
January 16, 2014

Mass form "The plea for love"

Readings: Exodus 3:1-6, 7a, 10, 13-15; Ps 46; Rom 7: 14-25; John 3:1-3, 14-17

OPENING ANTIPHON (cf. Ez. 36:26-28)

The Lord says: I will remove the heart of stone from your flesh and give you a heart of flesh. I will put My Spirit within you, and so you will be My people, and I will be your God.

INTRODUCTION

For 17 years the Catholic Church in Poland has celebrated the Day of Judaism. It has been time of reflection on the Word of God, a time of meetings and prayers. This day should educate believers in Christ about the Jewish roots of Christianity. In this perspective, Christians, deepening their own identity, should increasingly discern what they have in common with the believers of Judaism, namely: the belief in one God, the Bible, religious tradition, and finally the Decalogue as the foundation of moral rights or the call to daily prayer. Let us pray to God that we may be able to build a world of universal values—where is place for the living God in an increasingly secular society—and the religious brotherhood with the Jews. And for all sins of prejudice and resentment toward other persons, both local and foreign, let us express regret before God, asking Him to bestow upon us mercy, reconciliation, grace and freedom.

COLLECT

Almighty God, send us the Holy Spirit and kindle our hearts with love so that you can be pleased with us through our thoughts and deeds as we love you in our brothers and sisters. Through our Lord Jesus Christ, your Son, who lives with you and reigns in the unity of the Holy Spirit, God for ever and ever. Amen.

LITURGY OF THE WORD OF GOD

FIRST READING (Exodus 3:1-6, 7a, 10, 13-15)

Reading from Exodus

Now Moses was pasturing the flock of Jethro his father-in-law, the priest of Midian; and he led the flock to the west side of the wilderness and came to Horeb, the mountain of God. The angel of the Lord appeared to him in a blazing fire from the midst of a bush; and he looked, and behold, the bush was burning with fire, yet the bush was not consumed. So Moses said, "I must turn aside now and see this marvelous sight, why the bush is not burned up."

When the Lord saw that he turned aside to look, God called to him from the midst of the bush and said, "Moses, Moses!" And he said, "Here I am." Then He said, "Do not come near here; remove your sandals from your feet, for the place on which you are standing is holy ground."

He said also, "I am the God of your father, the God of Abraham, the God of Isaac, and the God of Jacob." Then Moses hid his face, for he was afraid to look at God. The Lord said, "I have surely seen the affliction of My people who are in Egypt, and have given heed to their cry because of their taskmasters, for I am aware of their sufferings. Therefore, come now, and I will send you to Pharaoh, so that you may bring My people, the sons of Israel, out of Egypt."

Then Moses said to God, "Behold, I am going to the sons of Israel, and I will say to them, 'The God of your fathers has sent me to you.' Now they may say to me, 'What is His name?'"

What shall I say to them?” God said to Moses, “I AM WHO I AM”; and He said, “Thus you shall say to the sons of Israel, ‘I AM has sent me to you.’” God, furthermore, said to Moses, “Thus you shall say to the sons of Israel, ‘The Lord, the God of your fathers, the God of Abraham, the God of Isaac, and the God of Jacob, has sent me to you.’ This is My name forever, and this is My memorial-name to all generations.

This is the Word of God.

RESPONSORIAL PSALM (Ps 46)

Chorus: The Lord my strength and the source of courage.

God is our refuge and strength,
A very present help in trouble.
Therefore we will not fear, though the earth should change
And though the mountains slip into the heart of the sea;

Though its waters roar *and* foam,
Though the mountains quake at its swelling pride:
“The Lord of hosts is with us;
The God of Jacob is our stronghold.”

There is a river whose streams make glad the city of God,
The holy dwelling places of the Most High.
God is in the midst of her, she will not be moved;
God will help her when morning dawns.

SECOND READING (Romans 7:14-25)

A reading from the Letter of Saint Paul to the Romans

For we know that the Law is spiritual, but I am of flesh, sold into bondage to sin. For what I am doing, I do not understand; for I am not practicing what I *would* like to *do*, but I am doing the very thing I hate. But if I do the very thing I do not want *to do*, I agree with the Law, *confessing* that the Law is good. So now, no longer am I the one doing it, but sin that dwells in me. For I know that nothing good dwells in me, that is, in my flesh; for the willing is present in

me, but the doing of the good *is* not. For the good that I want, I do not do, but I practice the very evil that I do not want. But if I am doing the very thing I do not want, I am no longer the one doing it, but sin which dwells in me.

I find then the principle that evil is present in me, the one who wants to do good. For I joyfully concur with the law of God in the inner man, but I see a different law in the members of my body, waging war against the law of my mind and making me a prisoner of the law of sin which is in my members.

Wretched man that I am! Who will set me free from the body of this death? Thanks be to God through Jesus Christ our Lord! So then, on the one hand I myself with my mind am serving the law of God, but on the other, with my flesh the law of sin.

This is the Word of God.

SONG BEFORE GOSPEL (Mt 20:28)

Alleluia, alleluia, alleluia

The Son of Man did not come to be served,

but to serve, and to give His life a ransom for many.

Alleluia, alleluia, alleluia

GOSPEL (John 3:1-3, 14-17)

Gospel according to Saint John

Now there was a man of the Pharisees, named Nicodemus, a ruler of the Jews; this man came to Jesus by night and said to Him, “Rabbi, we know that You have come from God *as* a teacher; for no one can do these signs that You do unless God is with him.”

Jesus answered and said to him, “Truly, truly, I say to you, unless one is born again he cannot see the kingdom of God.” As Moses lifted up the serpent in the wilderness, even so must

the Son of Man be lifted up; so that whoever believes will in Him have eternal life. For God so loved the world that He gave His only begotten Son, that whoever believes in Him shall not perish, but have eternal life. For God did not send the Son into the world to judge the world, but that the world might be saved through Him.

HOMILY

The Lord is my strength (...). He has become my salvation (Ex 15:2)

The main theme of the Seventeenth Day of Judaism in the Catholic Church in Poland is a verse from the song sung by Miriam (Moses' sister), after the Israelites left the house of slavery in Egypt and crossed the Red Sea. *The Lord is my strength (...). He has become my salvation.* In a natural way, the Shoah and the deliverance of a small remnant of the European Jews come to mind. We thank God for saving at least some of this people. We are grateful also for the gift of the Righteous Among the Nations, who were bravely saving these vulnerable and weak people. We know, however, and it is no longer a reason to boast, because often even among Catholics may be heard voices as if God had rejected the People of Israel, and thus they should be rather called *the People of the First Election*. Sometimes also another question is raised: Why do Catholics have to deal with Judaism?

In a renowned letter to the editor-in-chief of "La Repubblica," published recently in this newspaper, Pope Francis expressed such an opinion:

You also asked me (...), what should be said to the Jewish brethren concerning the promise that God made to them: is that an empty promise? This question, believe me, is a radical one for us Christians because with the help of God, especially in the light of the Second Vatican Council, we have rediscovered that the Jewish people remain for us the holy root from which Jesus was born. I too have cultivated many friendships through the years with my Jewish brothers in Argentina and often while in prayer, as my mind turned to the terrible experience of the Shoah, I looked to God. What I can tell you, with Saint Paul, is that God has never neglected his faithfulness to the covenant with Israel, and that, through the awful trials of these last centuries, the Jews have preserved their faith in God. And for this, we, the Church and the whole human family, can never be sufficiently grateful to them. Moreover, persevering with faith in the God of the Covenant, they remind everyone, including us

Christians, that we wait unceasingly as pilgrims for the return of the Lord, and that therefore we should be open to him and not remain entrenched in our achievements.²⁶⁶

These are extremely important words. The thought of the Pope justifies theological and social motives for the continuance of this people throughout history, who—from a human point of view and due to desires of wicked people—long since should have been swept from the face of the Earth and wiped out from the memory of other nations. The fate of Israel is, after all, one great sequence of hostility that Jewish people have experienced throughout history. Pope Francis explains how by twist of God's Plan, and despite human logic, this nation has persevered to be a sign; a sign for the world and, paradoxically, a sign for the Church, whose rationale is to exist and act in the world as a sign of salvation for all nations. Therefore, we confront a paradox: On what basis and on what theological principle it can be argued that the Jewish people are a sign for the Church?

Pope Francis teaches that the persistence of the Jewish people in history, reminds people that man is an eternal nomad, whose daily existence is always threatened. Each human being must also be prepared for the fact that the ultimate architect of his or her vision of the world, law and justice, is none other than God.

This is clearly seen on the example of Moses. This miraculously saved Jew, destined to die as a child, from his early childhood strove for the liberation of his people. To achieve this goal, he entered the path of violence. In defense of his co-religionists he killed an Egyptian, and after that he intervened with similar violence against Jews quarreling with each other. Moses' plan was a human plan: to bring freedom for the people of Israel oppressed in Egypt, employing the same measures as the oppressors. These measures included sword, violence, and outrage that brought about even more outrage. After many years spent in the desert, at the burning bush, and the profound mystical experience have made Moses a man who exceeded the limits of his own

²⁶⁶ *Lettera a chi non crede*, „La Repubblica,” September 11, 2013; http://w2.vatican.va/content/francesco/en/letters/2013/documents/papa-francesco_20130911_eugenio-scalfari.html

imagination. Looking at the phenomenon of the burning bush, he realized that there is a fire capable to transform human life without bringing on the horrors of destruction and bloodshed. Then he realized that there is a love that never fades; even though so much love in the world quickly lights up and ends even faster. He discovered that the permanent rescue for the children of Abraham could only come from God. Exploring the sacred and unpronounceable name of God—YHWH—Moses came to the conclusion that this Name expresses more than the philosophical essence of existence: I am Who I am. He realized that He Who Is, is He Who Saves. This Name means: I am present, I get involved in your case. My name is inextricably linked with the liberation of my beloved people.

From that moment, Moses abandoned all human projects of seeking justice, and opened up to the God who saves. As a result, this personal religious experience would lead the chosen people to the Red Sea and to the ecstatic confession: *Lord is my strength. (...) He has become my salvation* (Exodus 15:2).

How many times have we behaved like Moses, reaching for violence while trying to solve the urgent problems? How many times would we prefer to pursue our arguments by invectives, and even fists? Are we able to make a difference?

The conviction about the survival through the intervention of the Lord is expressed by the Apostle Paul; yet the Apostle of the Gentiles brought this experience in to the spiritual dimension. Paul did not struggle with political or economic slavery, but with the slavery of sin. He himself, experienced by trials of sin, torn between a desire to fulfill perfectly all the commandments of the Torah and between the weakness of human nature, brought out a scream of a tormented, defeated man: Wretched man that I am! Who will set me free from the body of this death? (Romans 7:24).

There will be no overstatement, if we say that St. Paul, being Jewish, inherited Jewish identity, and beyond reasonable doubt he was guided by the spirit of Moses. Paul also claimed that a person wishing to break free from the bondage of sin needs something more than just the strength of his or her own will. To overcome sin neither psychological guidance, assertiveness

training nor even the best spiritual guide are good enough. Man seeking freedom from sin, who wants to step on the path of perfect freedom flowing from the grace of God, needs the Lord. No human being cannot handle it on his own. He will not save himself. This theology is aptly epitomized by the great Jewish theologian Abraham Joshua Heschel, though he agrees with it only partially: *Essentially there are no such human acts, which, due to their importance in the world would find recognition in the eyes of God. God can be reached only by God.*²⁶⁷ But God is Spirit, and the spiritual world is hardly attainable. An experience of the burning bush is given only to a few.

At this point, Christians (and not only they) are given someone special: Jesus of Nazareth, to whom was given the sole and unique title of the “Lord,” and whose name means “JHWH Saves.” For Christians, in the person of Jesus the Messiah, the truth about God who fell in love with the world, and who wants to save it at any price, came to all people, Jews and non-Jews. *For God so loved the world that He gave His only begotten Son, that whoever believes in Him shall not perish, but have eternal life* (John 3:16). The confidence that was displayed toward a rejected Jew, Yeshua ben Joseph of Nazareth, gives people the opportunity to reach God by God; it is an access to God, by following in the footsteps of Christ, the God-Man.

This truth can be easily accepted from the Christian point of view. Nevertheless, it is not obvious to our elder brothers in faith - Jews. [It is a religious truth, dogma, appropriate to the particular religion, rather than empirical truth-P.D.] But maybe it does not need to be obvious and both should settle for something else until the Parousia. It is about the point where Christians can meet with the followers of Judaism and the Jews with Christians, outstretching their hands toward each other above the chasm, whose existence is hard to deny. We know that ever and again mankind behaves as if it wanted to annihilate itself. The genocide of the twentieth century and bloody wars plaguing Europe throughout its entire history cannot be described other than the

²⁶⁷ A. J. Heschel, *Człowiek szuka Boga* [Man's Quest for God-TRANS], trans. V. Reder, (Cracow: Znak, 2008), 151.

cyclical attempts of self-destruction. The world brings about the self-destruction by the annihilation of cultures, desire to wipe out ethnic minorities, elimination of the vulnerable, rejection of the defenseless, and annihilation of nations. Humanly speaking, many nations and countries should have not existed long ago. They exist only through the power of the Lord who sets them free, not by human power. Let us think about insane projects of wiping from the map of the world countries such as Poland, other Slavic countries, or Israel.

Following the footsteps of Pope Francis' intuition, let us, Polish Catholics, do not take a stereotypical look at the Jewish people today. Let us look at the Jews and Judaism as a living sign telling us that salvation from misfortunes is always the Lord's creation. If anything is going to save the civilization of technocrats, which seems to claim to be God, it will always be God. In Him is our salvation.

Father Wiesław Dawidowski, OSA, Ph.D.

PRAYER OF THE FAITHFUL

Believing that God continues to speak to His people, let us cry to Him with confidence:

- Let us pray for the Church that she would be open to dialogue with the followers of Judaism in a spirit of respect for her own identity.
- Let us pray for all Christians that they will seek in Jesus the answers for the questions, which rankle their souls as Nicodemus in today's Gospel.
- Let us pray for the Jews that in a world marked by atheism and culture of temporariness they will be a clear sign pointing to the One and true God as the source of life, immortality and eternal salvation.

- Let us pray to God, the Lord of life and death that the tragedy of the Holocaust will transform the minds and hearts of those who do not see the religious sense of dialogue in building Christian-Jewish brotherhood.
- Let us pray for peace wherever wars are going on, for justice where it is lacking, for respect of human dignity wherever it is threatened today.
- Let us pray for ourselves that we will always be guided by the spirit of love, respect and mutual understanding in our efforts to promote dialogue.

O God of Abraham, Isaac and Jacob, O God, whose apostles became witnesses through all the earth, strengthen the spiritual community of Christians and Jews. Through Christ, our Lord.

PRAYER OVER THE GIFTS

O Merciful God, sanctify and accept the gifts offered as a sign of spiritual sacrifice, and make us the witnesses to your love for all. Through Christ, our Lord.

COMMUNION ANTIPHON (1 Cor. 13:13)

And now these three remain: faith, hope and love. But the greatest of these is love.

PRAYER AFTER COMMUNION

O God, our Father, You have fed us with one Eucharistic Bread, fill us with the grace of the Holy Spirit and fortify us with sweetness of perfect love. Through Christ, our Lord.

PRAYER OF POPE JOHN PAUL II

in the intention of the Jewish people, arranged in 1998

God of Abraham, God of Prophets, God of Jesus Christ

In You everything is comprised,

To you everything is coming,

You are the end of everything.

Hear our prayers that we bring for the Jewish people,

Who - because of their ancestors - are still very dear to you.

Arouse in them the continual, and increasingly active desire

to explore your truth and your love.

Be supportive to them, that by striving for peace and justice

they could reveal to the world the power of your blessings.

Support them that they could experience respect and love from those

who still do not understand the scale of the suffering endured by them,

and those who, jointly and severally, in the sense of mutual concern,

feel the pain of wounds that afflicted them.

Remember that new generations of youth and children,

who, consistently faithful to you, will continue

the specific mystery of their vocation.

Strengthen all generations, that through their witness mankind may realize

that your redemptive intent extends on the whole of humanity

and that you, O God, are the beginning for all nations, and their ultimate goal.
Amen.

PRAYER OF THE HOLY FATHER BENEDICT XVI

put into the Western Wall
in Jerusalem, May 12, 2009

God of all the ages,
on my visit to Jerusalem, the “City of Peace,”
spiritual home to Jews, Christians and Muslims alike,
I bring before you the joys, the hopes and the aspirations,
the trials, the suffering and the pain of all your people throughout the world.

God of Abraham, Isaac and Jacob,
hear the cry of the afflicted, the fearful, the bereft;
send your peace upon this Holy Land, upon the Middle East,
upon the entire human family;
stir the hearts of all who call upon your name,
to walk humbly in the path of justice and compassion.

“The Lord is good to those who wait for him, to the soul that seeks him” (Lam 3:25)!

THE ABCS OF THE DAY OF JUDAISM

The Day of Judaism in the Catholic Church is a special time of communal reflection and prayer. This reflection, drawing upon biblical texts and pronouncements of the Magisterium on the Catholic-Jewish dialogue, should help Catholics in the discovery of the Jewish roots of Christianity, in deepening awareness that the Jewish religion in relation to our religion is not *an external reality, but something internal, and that our attitude toward it is different than toward any other religion* (John Paul II); it can be argued that there is a strict kinship between these two religions, and Jews can be called *the elder brothers in the faith* (John Paul II). Building mutual brotherhood and forming the right mentality of the faithful requires God's help, and therefore prayer is so much needed.

After sixteen years since the Day of Judaism (January 17) in the Church in Poland was first celebrated, current development, achievements, but also a visible deviation from the original assumptions should be evaluated. Accordingly, the Polish Bishops' Committee for Dialogue with Judaism wishes to remind and outline to the Organizers of the next celebrations on national, diocesan and parish scale the main principles to be taken into account:

1. To explain and popularize the essence of the Day of Judaism
2. To present teaching of the Church on the Jews and their religion after the Second Vatican Council
3. To make prayer an integral part of the celebration of the Day of Judaism

4. To promote the post-conciliar explanations of the texts of the Holy Scripture, which in the past may have been interpreted in an anti-Jewish and antisemitic way.
5. To explain the tragedy of the annihilation of the Jews to the faithful
6. To present antisemitism as a sin (John Paul II)
7. To invite representatives of other Churches and Christian Communities to pray together on this day
8. To invite Jews to participate in the celebration of the Day of Judaism

The Eighteenth Day of Judaism
in the Catholic Church of Poland
January 15, 2015

*I sought the Lord, and He answered me,
And delivered me from all my fears.*

(Psalm 34:4)

Keynote of the Chairman
of The Polish Bishops' Committee
for Dialogue with Judaism

Human history is essentially marked with specific breakthroughs, and filled with day-to-day time, which is comprised of the lives of individuals and society, as well as daily situations. Undoubtedly, one breakthrough was the Second Vatican Council, which opened minds and hearts of believers to the signs of the time that can be read in the light of the Gospel of Christ. The Council came in the time following a deep trauma, which was the Second World War and the annihilation of the Jewish people in the countries involved in the warfare. The tragedy of the Holocaust awakened consciences and raised the question: Why were the mass atrocities committed in the heart of Christian Europe by citizens of the nation that had developed a high culture? Christians have asked themselves this question of joint responsibility until today.

The Council took up this issue, confessing the complicity of the church leaders, who stated that the Church “decries—not for political reasons, but under the influence of Gospel’s spiritual love—hatred, persecutions, displays of anti-Semitism, directed against Jews at any time

and by anyone.”²⁶⁸ (*Nostra Aetate* 4). The Council strongly separated itself from accusing Jews of collective responsibility for the death of Christ, which was sometimes the reason for rejection and aggression toward them. We believe that the conciliar inspiration to build human and fraternal relations with the Jews came from the Holy Spirit and from self-reflection of believers. In this way, the fundamental option for Catholic-Jewish dialogue was born in the bosom of the Council, as we read in the cited document: [The Council] “wants to foster and recommend that mutual understanding and respect which is the fruit, above all, of biblical and theological studies as well as of fraternal dialogues.”²⁶⁹

It is impossible to mention today in detail all the fruits of the Catholic-Jewish dialogue. Certainly, the general climate of growing trust belongs to these advances, especially on the Jewish side, for which questions about the real intentions of the dialogic initiatives taken by the Catholics had been awakening until recently. Today, more and more often on both sides, the following phrases are accepted: the Jews are our elder brothers, and even fathers in the faith; whoever meets Jesus, meets Judaism; antisemitism is a sin; we are all children of one God, or we have the common father of faith in Abraham. The consequence of the conciliar vision of rooting the Church’s ties with Judaism into the history of salvation, turned out to be a pressing need to ever deeper mutual “understanding and respect.”

Putting into practice the message of the conciliar declaration “*Nostra Aetate*,” Pope Paul VI, as early as in 1966, situated the Secretary for Catholic-Jewish Relations in the Secretariat for Promoting Christian Unity, which was later transformed into the Commission for Religious Relations with the Jews. In this way, the dialogue with Judaism was assigned to the internal Christian dialogue, because Judaism is not an outside religion in relation to Christianity, but remains in an intrinsic, internal bond with her.

²⁶⁸ http://www.vatican.va/archive/hist_councils/ii_vatican_council/documents/vat-ii_decl_19651028_nostra-aetate_en.html

²⁶⁹ Ibidem.

The aforementioned Vatican Commission issued important documents, e.g. in 1985, “The Jews and Judaism in Preaching and Catechesis in the Catholic Church.” Pope Paul VI began, in addition to the developments of the Council, a wide opening to dialogue with the Jews. He made a pilgrimage to Israel, received delegations of Jews in the Vatican, spoke with reverence and respect about the Jews, made a number of pro-Jewish speeches, and offered gestures of brotherhood.

A special chapter in the history of Catholic-Jewish relations was written by John Paul II, through historical events, which were: the visit to the Synagogue of Rome, the visit to Israel and the speeches at Yad Vashem, the visit to Auschwitz-Birkenau, the establishment of diplomatic relations with Israel, numerous groundbreaking theological statements about mutual relations, and personal friendships with Jews in his youth. The pontificate of John Paul II was very noteworthy in history, among other things, due to the faithful and courageous implementation of the spirit of the Gospel and the Second Vatican Council message, which was a major breakthrough in Catholic-Jewish relations.

Benedict XVI kept trying to foster the heritage of his predecessor—he visited three synagogues, paid a visit to Israel, visited the camp in Auschwitz, used to meet with the delegations of the Jews, and delivered important theological speeches on Judaism.

Pope Francis, a trusted friend of the Jews already in the times of pastoral ministry in Argentina, quite quickly after he succeeded Peter’s ministrations, turned his attention to the Catholic-Jewish dialogue, taking in to the Vatican, aside from the delegations of rabbis and representatives of Jewish organizations, a visit of the Israeli President Shimon Peres. Pope Francis visited Israel and organized in the Vatican gardens the prayer of presidents, Palestinian and the Jewish, for peace.

As the fruit of dialogue there appeared on the Jewish side the document “Dabru emet,” where the signatories rejected blaming Christians for the Holocaust: “Nazism was not a Christian

phenomenon.”²⁷⁰ In addition, the document uttered other words, important for dialogue: “Jews and Christians: worship the same God, (...) seek authority from the same book—the Bible, (...) accept the moral principles of Torah, (...) must work together for justice and peace.”²⁷¹

It should be now emphasized that the Catholic-Jewish dialogue is a fundamental option of the Church, the option proven by science and orthopraxis of the post-conciliar popes. This dialogue, which has engaged the particular Churches throughout the world, still needs charismatic leaders to be able to penetrate all of the church environments in order to build peaceful and friendly interpersonal relationships with the Jews. These relationships still require overcoming stereotypes, prejudices, and indifference.

Since 1980 national committees for dialogue with Judaism have been instituted at many conferences of bishops. In 1986, the Polish Episcopate established the Subcommittee for Dialogue with Judaism, which was raised to the rank of a Commission. The Chairman of the one and the other was Bishop Henryk Muszyński. In 1994, this function was taken over by Bishop Stanisław Gądecki. Two years later, the Commission was transformed into the Committee for Dialogue with Judaism. The program goals of the Committee, in addition to serving the Episcopate in Jewish affairs, included building relationships with the Jews, inspiring theological reflection and religious dialogue, and organizing the joint prayers for the victims of the Shoah.

Although in Poland, we do not have a large Jewish community of believers nor Jewish centers of theological studies, because the Jewish community is only recovering, we have an open dialogue with representatives of Judaism, led by Rabbi Michael Schudrich, friendly in mutual relations. The dialogue is an essential issue within the Church—it helps to know deeper and understand the roots of our own religion, which are constituted by the biblical Judaism with all the richness of the Revealed Word, the Covenant, the moral law, the promise of the Messiah, and prayer of the psalms. The objectives of the Committee also include: publishing official documents

²⁷⁰ http://www.jcrelations.net/Dabru_Emet_-_A_Jewish_Statement_on_Christians_and_Christianity.2395.0.html

²⁷¹ Ibidem.

of the Church regarding the Jews and Judaism, and striving for enactment of the guidelines of the Magisterium of the Church, as well as a discussion with the Jews about the Bible, and praying together.

The work of dialogue is still in progress and it represents the will of the whole Church, expressed in the conciliar documents. The popes of the recent pontificates have given examples of incorporating it into practice. Therefore, we face the great task of building a community around those values that are common to us, and which are embraced in the revealed Word of God—the God of the covenant, Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob. The work of dialogue, to be fruitful, must be supported by our common prayer.

The catchword for this year's Day of Judaism is the words of Psalm 34:4: "I sought the Lord, and He answered me, and delivered me from all my fears." These words refer to the existential situation of David, described in 2 Samuel, but also to the disciples of Jesus Christ, depicted in the Gospel of Matthew (8:23-27). The words of the Psalmist have also contemporary references to the tragic fate of the Jewish people and the situation of the Church throughout her dramatic history. The Revealed Truth of God is fulfilled also in the lives of individual Christians, facing life's threats, especially moral evil, from which the Lord saves. The Day of Judaism provides an opportunity for our common reflection on the Word of God in relation to the human fates of Jews and Christians.

Bishop Mieczysław Cisło

Chairman of The Polish Bishops' Committee for Dialogue with Judaism

Liturgical texts and the homily
on The Eighteenth Day of Judaism
in the Catholic Church of Poland
January 15, 2015

Mass form "The plea for love"

Readings: 2 Sm 12,1-5, 7-9b, 13; Psalm 34; Rom 4:1-8; Mt 8, 23-27

OPENING ANTIPHON (cf. Ez. 26:27-28)

The Lord says: I will remove the heart of stone from your flesh and give you a heart of flesh. I will put My Spirit within you, and so you will be My people, and I will be your God.

INTRODUCTION

The Day of Judaism, which is now being celebrated in Poland for the eighteenth time, has been time of reflection on the Word of God, a time of meetings of Christians and Jews, and of prayers. For believers in Christ, it helps to increase awareness of the Jewish roots of Christianity. Deepening their own identity, Christians may increasingly discern what they have in common with the believers of Judaism, namely the belief in one God, the revealed Word of the Bible, religious tradition, the Ten Commandments as the foundation of moral laws, or an invitation to daily prayer. Let us pray to God for the light of knowledge and the will to build a community of brotherhood around the values of God so that, in a secularized society, we may increasingly become witnesses to the living God. For all the sins of prejudice, resentment, exclusion or contempt toward the fellow man, native or foreign, let us repent before God so He will hear us and release us from evil.

COLLECT

Almighty God, send us the Holy Spirit and kindle our hearts with love so that you can be pleased with us through our thoughts and deeds as we love you in our brothers and sisters. Through our Lord Jesus Christ, your Son, who lives with you and reigns in the unity of the Holy Spirit, God for ever and ever. Amen.

LITURGY OF THE WORD OF GOD

FIRST READING (2 Sm 12, 1-5,7-9b, 13)

RESPONSORIAL PSALM (Ps 34)

SECOND READING (Romans 7:14-25)

SONG BEFORE GOSPEL (Mt 20:28)

Alleluia, alleluia, alleluia

The Son of Man did not come to be served,
but to serve, and to give His life a ransom for many.

Alleluia, alleluia, alleluia

GOSPEL (Mt 8:23-27)

HOMILY

He delivered me from all my fears

This year for the eighteenth time, we are celebrating a day in the Church in Poland, which aims to remind us, Catholics, of the bond with the Jews and the common heritage, in which, by the mercy of God, we have taken root as the Church of Christ. On this day we want to give thanks to God for the People, whom He has chosen and constituted as His special property for many centuries before the rise of the community of the disciples of Jesus, a descendant of Abraham, a descendant of David. Especially this year we want to remember the figure of this king and the great work, which is the Psalter (Psalms) in Scriptures, to which he gave rise, and which is permanently associated with his name. The catchword for this year's Day of Judaism has been taken from one of the Psalms: "I sought the Lord, and He answered me, and delivered me from all my fears."

Psalm 34, from which the catchword is taken, begins with the remark: "A Psalm of David when he feigned madness before Abimelech, who drove him away and he departed." The editor of the Psalms refers to an event from the life of the young David, passed by the First Book of Samuel (1 Sam 21:11-22:1). Due to the envy of King Saul, who could not stand the fame of David, still growing after his victories over the Philistines, David must flee before him and sought refuge in the ruler of the town of Gath. It turns out, however, that his fame has also spread there, to the court of the king. David did not feel safe. He was afraid of being released in the hands of his persecutor, so he began to pretend to be mad in front of the king and thus, despised by him, he could go away freely. Why was this event associated with the rest of the Psalm? In a beautiful, poetic form, the song extols the value of trust in God and encourages the hope in deliverance "from all fears." It results from the faithfulness to God, who is always willing to help a humble man. David had experienced this many times. Probably most profoundly when he went as a young boy with his shepherd's sling to fight with an armed, experienced fighter, the Philistine Goliath. But also the episode mentioned in the title of the Psalm, confirmed to David that one can

give up their well-deserved fame, and even appear as a fool in front of people, if one trusts in Him who is not looking at the outward appearance, but knows the human heart. With such confidence, even when David's heart deceived him and led him to crime, the king brought himself to the humble acceptance of the admonition from the prophet, and then having understood his guilt, he confided again in God. "The Lord is near to the brokenhearted and saves those who are crushed in spirit" (Psalm 34:19).

With all positive and negative experiences, encouragement can be derived that resounds in the biblical song: "O magnify the Lord with me, and let us exalt His name together. I sought the Lord, and He answered me, and delivered me from all my fears. They looked to Him and were radiant, and their faces will never be ashamed" (Ps 34:3-5).

In the mutual Christian-Jewish relations, marked by so many injuries [that the Jews suffered mostly from the Christians, starting from 3-4 century CE-P.D.], centuries-old mistrust, resentment, sometimes even hatred, the need "to deliver from all fears" is perhaps more evident than in many other relations. On the one hand—encouraged also by the current Pope Francis—we want to be more and more aware of this fact: "Dialogue and friendship with the children of Israel are part of the life of Jesus' disciples."²⁷² On the other hand, if the mutual knowledge and friendship deepen, more and more clearly it "makes us bitterly and sincerely regret,"²⁷³ because of persecution or unfounded manifestations of hostility, hatred or contempt, of which the Jews have been the subject—especially because those [persecutions] having been shared by the followers of Christ.²⁷⁴

Since the beginning of his pontificate Saint Pope John Paul II, pointed to the mutual prayer and care for each other as the proper way to restore the forgotten brotherhood. He believed that Christians and Jews together can become witnesses to the one God and His commandments

²⁷² http://w2.vatican.va/content/francesco/en/apost_exhortations/documents/papa-francesco_esortazione-ap_20131124_evangelii-gaudium.html

²⁷³ *ibidem*

²⁷⁴ *ibidem*

for all mankind: “Jews and Christians, as children of Abraham, are called to be a blessing for the world (cf. Genesis 12:2 ff.), by committing themselves together for peace and justice among all men and peoples, with the fullness and depth that God himself intended us to have, and with the readiness for sacrifices that this goal may demand. The more our meeting is imprinted with this sacred duty, the more it becomes a blessing also for ourselves.”²⁷⁵ “ The existence of your communities is evidence of the fact that God, who is ‘the fountain of life’ (Ps. 36:9), and whom the psalmist praises as ‘Lord, Father and Master of my life’ (Sir. 23:1), does not allow the power of death to speak the last word. May the one benevolent and merciful Father of life watch over your communities and bless them, especially during the times you are assembled together to hear his holy word. .”²⁷⁶ “As Christians, we cannot consider Judaism as a foreign religion; nor do we include the Jews among those called to turn from idols and to serve the true God (cf. 1 Thess. 1:9). With them, we believe in the one God who acts in history, and with them we accept his revealed word”²⁷⁷—as Pope Francis reminded us recently.

Let the appeal of the Psalm from the distant centuries reach us, backed by the experience of the prophet-king. Let us try to listen to the inspired words as the admonition and encouragement directed to us today. The prophet David reminds us that we can enter a common path of liberation from fear. In adversities, discouragement, or fears we can appeal to the Lord. “O taste and see that the Lord is good; How blessed is the man who takes refuge in Him!” (Psalm

²⁷⁵ John Paul II, *Speech to the representatives of the Jewish community in Mainz*, 17 XI 1980 [in:] Chrostowski W., Rubinkiewicz SDB R. (red.), *Żydzi i judaizm w dokumentach Kościoła i nauczaniu Jana Pawła II (1965-1989)* [*Jews and Judaism in the documents and teaching of John Paul II (1965-1989)-TRANS*], Warsaw 1990, 113. Eugene Fisher and Leon Klenicki, *The Saint for Shalom* (New York: Crossroad, 2011), 60-61.

²⁷⁶ John Paul II, *Speech on the meeting with the Central Council of Jews in Germany* [Cologne May 1, 1987], [in:] Chrostowski W., Rubinkiewicz SDB R. (red.), *Żydzi i judaizm w dokumentach Kościoła i nauczaniu Jana Pawła II (1965-1989)* [*Jews and Judaism in the documents and teaching of John Paul II (1965-1989)-TRANS*], Warsaw 1990, 196. Ibid., 144.

²⁷⁷ *Apostolic Exhortation Evangelii Gaudium*, 247:

http://w2.vatican.va/content/francesco/en/apost_exhortations/documents/papa-francesco_esortazione-ap_20131124_evangelii-gaudium.html#Relations_with_Judaism

34:8) “The Lord redeems the soul of His servants, and none of those who take refuge in Him will be condemned.” (Psalm 34:22).

We can encourage each other to enter this path. We can also pray for one another in this intention. Different opportunities must be looked at to come to know each other better. Such an opportunity may be the Day of Judaism just celebrated in our Church. May it be possible to establish close contacts with some Jewish community? And even if we do not know how to find the Jews living today, should we not care the more about the sometimes forgotten traces of the past? Maybe we did not realize, until now, the case that the Jewish community lived in our neighborhood for centuries. Perhaps its history might be interesting, to find its footprints, and help to preserve them... Maybe the old synagogue, and the Jewish cemetery have not disappeared completely into oblivion, and something could be done to make them become a good witness to our attitude to all places of prayer, to our respect to the ashes of the dead or murdered. Do we have to shrug indifferently: “not our thing?” Even in light of the words of the recent popes mentioned here—by all means it is also our business. The Psalmist exhorts: “Depart from evil and do good; Seek peace and pursue it!”

The incentive for such proactive attitude, for which the buttress is trust in God, we find in today's Gospel passage. Jesus, awakened by his disciples during the storm that raged over the lake, is puzzled by their lack of faith. “Why are you fearful?”—He asks reproachfully those who more than once, accompanying Him, have experienced the signs of divine protection. Once again, He calms the raging elements for them, teaching them trust in the Father, who frees man from all fears. If Jesus was asleep in the boat, it is because he trusted in the disciples: their abilities to steer the boat and their trust in Providence. Even more so He should be able to count on us. We live in a circle of His love, which has already defeated the power of death, hell and the Satan. We have received the Spirit, in whom we cry out to God, “Father!”

Therefore, we should not be afraid to take actively our part in building the foundation of peace and reconciliation among the children of Abraham, according to the will of the One who

turns the sinners into the righteous so that they may witness to the Father of mercy, God of all consolation. Amen.

PRAYER OF THE FAITHFUL

Believing that God continues to speak to His people, let us cry to Him with confidence:

Pray for the Christians that they will be open to religious dialogue with the followers of Judaism in a spirit of mutual acceptance and respect.

- Let us pray for the believers in Christ that facing risks, they put the entire trust in God.
- Let us pray for the Jews that in a world marked by atheism and sin they will be courageous witnesses to the One and True God as the source of life, immortality and eternal salvation.
- Let us pray to God, the Lord of life and death that the tragedy of the Holocaust will transform the minds and hearts of those who do not see the meaning of religious dialogue in building Christian-Jewish brotherhood.
- Let us pray for peace wherever wars are going on, for justice where it is lacking, for respect of human dignity wherever it is threatened today.
- Let us pray for ourselves that we will always be guided by the spirit of love, respect, and mutual understanding in our reflection and efforts to promote dialogue.

O God of Abraham, Isaac and Jacob, O God, whose apostles became witnesses through all the earth, strengthen the spiritual community of Christians and Jews. Through Christ, our Lord.

PRAYER OVER THE GIFTS

O Merciful God, sanctify and accept the gifts offered as a sign of spiritual sacrifice, and make us the witnesses to your love for all. Through Christ, our Lord.

COMMUNION ANTIPHON (1 Cor 13:13)

And now these three remain: faith, hope and love. But the greatest of these is love.

PRAYER AFTER COMMUNION

O God, our Father, You have fed us with one Eucharistic Bread, fill us with the grace of the Holy Spirit and fortify us with sweetness of perfect love. Through Christ, our Lord.

PRAYER OF POPE JOHN PAUL II

in the intention of the Jewish people, composed in Decembers 24, 1998

God of Abraham, the prophets, Jesus Christ, in You everything is embraced, toward You everything moves. You are the end of all things.

Hear the prayers we extend for the Jewish nation which- thanks to its forefathers- is still very dear to you.

Instill within it a constant, ever livelier desire to deepen your truth and love.

Help it, as it yearns for peace and justice, that it may reveal to the world the might of your blessing.

Succor it, that it may obtain respect and love from the side of those who do not yet understand the greatness of suffering it has borne, and those who, in solidarity and a sense of mutual care, experience together the pain of wounds inflicted upon it.

Remember the new generations of youth and children, that they may, unchangeably faithful to you, uphold what remains the particular mystery of their vocation.

Strengthen all generations, that, thanks to their testimony, humanity will understand that your salvific intention extends over all humankind, and that you, God, are for all nations the beginning and the final end. Amen.²⁷⁸

²⁷⁸ Eugene Fisher and Leon Klenicki, *The Saint for Shalom*, 314-315.

PRAYER OF THE HOLY FATHER BENEDICT XVI

placed into the Western Wall

in Jerusalem, May 12, 2009

God of all the ages,

on my visit to Jerusalem, the “City of Peace,”

spiritual home to Jews, Christians and Muslims alike,

I bring before you the joys, the hopes and the aspirations,

the trials, the suffering and the pain of all your people throughout the world.

God of Abraham, Isaac and Jacob,

hear the cry of the afflicted, the fearful, the bereft;

send your peace upon this Holy Land, upon the Middle East,

upon the entire human family;

stir the hearts of all who call upon your name,

to walk humbly in the path of justice and compassion.

“The Lord is good to those who wait for him, to the soul that seeks him” (Lam 3:25)!

PRAYER OF POPE FRANCIS IN THE YAD VASHEM MEMORIAL

MAY 26, 2014 (FRAGMENT):

A great evil has befallen us, such as never happened under the heavens (cf. Bar 2:2). Now, Lord, hear our prayer, hear our plea, save us in your mercy. Save us from this horror. Almighty Lord, a soul in anguish cries out to you. Hear, Lord, and have mercy! We have sinned against you. You reign for ever (cf. Bar 3:1-2). Remember us in your mercy. Grant us the grace to be ashamed of what we men have done, to be ashamed of this massive idolatry, of having despised and destroyed our own flesh which you formed from the earth, to which you gave life with your own breath of life. Never again, Lord, never again! “Adam, where are you?” Here we are, Lord, shamed by what man, created in your own image and likeness, was capable of doing. Remember us in your mercy.²⁷⁹

²⁷⁹ http://w2.vatican.va/content/francesco/en/speeches/2014/may/documents/papa-francesco_20140526_terra-santa-memoriale-yad-vashem.html

THE ABCS OF THE DAY OF JUDAISM

The Day of Judaism in the Catholic Church is a special time of communal reflection and prayer. This reflection, drawing upon biblical texts and pronouncements of the Magisterium on the Catholic-Jewish dialogue, should help Catholics in the discovery of the Jewish roots of Christianity, in deepening awareness that the Jewish religion in relation to our religion is not *an external reality, but something internal, and that our attitude toward it is different than toward any other religion* (John Paul II); it can be argued that there is a strict kinship between these two religions, and Jews can be called *the elder brothers in the faith* (John Paul II). Building mutual brotherhood and forming the right mentality of the faithful requires God's help, and therefore prayer is so much needed.

After eighteen years since the Day of Judaism (January 17) in the Church in Poland was first celebrated, current development, achievements, and the further implementation of the original objectives should be evaluated. Accordingly, The Polish Bishops' Committee for Dialogue with Judaism wishes to remind and outline to the organizers of the next celebrations on national, diocesan and parish levels the main principles to be taken into account:

1. To explain and popularize the essence of the Day of Judaism
2. To present teaching of the Church on the Jews and their religion after the Second Vatican Council
3. To make prayer an integral part of the celebration of the Day of Judaism

4. To promote the post-conciliar explanations of the texts of the Holy Scripture, which in the past may have been interpreted in an anti-Jewish and antisemitic way.
5. To explain the tragedy of the annihilation of the Jews to the faithful
6. To present antisemitism as a sin (John Paul II)
7. To invite representatives of other Churches and Christian Communities to pray together on this day
8. To invite Jews to participate in the celebration of the Day of Judaism

Ostrów Wlkp., dnia 10 marca 2015 r.

Przewielebny Księżę Prałacie

W odpowiedzi na nadesłane pytania informuję, że gdy Sobór Watykański się rozpoczął, byłem w dekanacie krobskim, potem leszczyńskim w Archidiecezji Poznańskiej. W czasie pobytu w tej Diecezji docierały do nas wszelkie informacje o przebiegu Soboru. W tej Diecezji kolejno w Miesięczniku Kościelnym publikowano ukazujące się Konstytucje i Dekrety soborowe. Najpierw opublikowano Konstytucję o Liturgii, potem następne.

Najpierw pojawił się nowy układ czytań mszalnych. Pierwotnie Kuria wskazywała tylko sigle czytań i kazano teksty odszukiwać z całej Biblii. Dopiero później można było teksty drukować na powielaczu.

Lekcje mszalne zaczęli czytać **świeccy, także kobiety – najczęściej ministranci**.

Prawie rewolucyjnym był fakt odwrócenia stołu ołtarzowego do wiernych. Dla kapłana i wiernych było to wielkie przeżycie. Kontakt kapłana i wiernych stał się bliższy. Kapłan musiał się liczyć z tym, że wierni go lepiej widzą, zwracają uwagę na jego zachowanie przy ołtarzu i lepiej mogą przyjmować czytane Słowo Boże.

Wierni przyjmowali zmiany ze zrozumieniem, bo przygotowywali ich duszpasterze.

Sytuacja się polepszyła, gdy Pallotinum wydało lekcjonarze w komplecie na cały rok.

Podobnie przyjęto nowy posoborowy Mszał.

Odnośnie dostępu do dokumentów soborowych sprawa się polepszyła, gdy w roku 1968 Pallotinum wydało wszystkie dokumenty

soborowe. Bardzo ważnym okazał się także indeks tematyczny, co było szczególnie ważne dla katechetów i kaznodziejów.

Powoli w różnych parafiach zaczęto tworzyć rady duszpasterskie, niezależne od rad parafialnych.

Gdy 1 lipca 1981 r. objąłem w zarząd parafię farną w Ostrowie prawie wszystkie podstawowe zalecenia Kurii (dotyczące Soboru) zostały już wprowadzone.

Z wyrazami należnego szacunku


/Ks. Alfred Mąka/

A Letter of Father Alfred Mąka (translated into English), March 10, 2015, Ostrów Wielkopolski, Poland

Ostrów Wielkopolski, March 10, 2015

Most Reverend Father Prelate

In response to the questions posed, I would like to inform you that when the Second Vatican Council began, I was in the Krobsk Deanery, then in the Deanery of Leszno in the Archdiocese of Poznań. During my stay in the Diocese all the information about the proceedings of the Council reached us. In this Diocese, the emerging conciliar Constitutions and Decrees were published consecutively in the Church monthly magazine. The first published was the Constitution on the Liturgy, then the others.

To begin with, a new lectionary of Mass readings was established. Initially, the Curia would indicate only sigla of the readings so the texts were to be searched within the entire Bible. Only later the texts could be printed on a duplicating machine. The readings of the Mass began to be proclaimed by laypeople, including women—mostly altar servers.

Almost revolutionary was the turning the altar toward the congregation. For the priest and the faithful it was a great experience. The connection between priest and people became closer. The priest had to reckon with the fact that the faithful can see him better, pay attention to his behavior at the altar, and can better receive the Word of God.

The faithful accepted the changes with understanding, because their clergymen had prepared them properly. The situation further improved when the publishing house

Pallotinum issued lectionaries for the entire year. Similarly, a new post-conciliar Missal was adopted.

Regarding access to the conciliar documents, the situation improved when, in 1968, Pallotinum published all of them. Also, a thematic index proved to be very important, especially for catechists and preachers.

Little by little, in various parishes they began to establish pastoral councils, independent from parish councils.

When on July 1, 1981 I took the management of the parish in Ostrów Wielkopolski, almost all the basic recommendations of the Curia (on the Council) had already been introduced.

With due respect,

Father Alfred Mąka

Maps



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http://propertyrestitution.pl/gallery/restytucja_mienia/11/mapa1_polska_przed_i_po2wojn timerENG.jpg

Central Europe between 1949-1990



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http://propertyrestitution.pl/gallery/restytucja_mienia/11/mapa2_polska_przed_i_po2wojnieENG.jpg

Poland in Its Borders of 1939 and Today



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²⁸² http://propertyrestitution.pl/gallery/restytucja_mienia/EN_mapa3_s.jpg

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