

CD-1099 Transcription

Speaks at St. Joan of Arc Church service [Minneapolis, Minn.].

25 August 1985.

HARVEY EGAN: But we read *Ivanhoe* and *The Merchant of Venice* and we wondered about them, we heard not stories, but rumors. We sensed some hostility, some mystery and we were pained. But we've made some progress. It's been a long, long time since I've heard anyone say, "Some of my best friends are..." and on and on. Concealing a slur, a kind of discrimination, certainly a stereotype. We've made some progress, though. And one of the great proponents of progress in good relations between Christians and Jewish people, one of the true champions is Rabbi Marc Tanenbaum. [01:00] He is the Director of International Relations for the American Jewish Committee. He's written books, he's traveled widely, he's a powerful proponent, not only for things matters Jewish but for matters human, matters American, matters, all important matters in the human family; he's been a powerful, powerful voice in bringing human beings together. We rejoice that he's here to give us the good news and Jewish people, Catholic people in the modern world, welcome, welcome to Rabbi Marc Tanenbaum. Welcome also to Fred and Anna [Vagly?] who will be singing

a song, one of the songs; they'll try out some of their own Hebrew. They'll be singing, hope you're singing. [02:00] We'll stand, we'll sing right now, please. (Congregation sings "Sing a Song") [03:00] Thank you, thank you, Lord God for calling us to sing, to sing your praises now, this hour, this life and forever that we may sing together with all members of the human family. Before we sing our praise at this celebration we pause quietly for a moment to remember our actions which have not sung glory to God. Our recent sins and selfishness, our ways of departing from God's path, we pause to remember and repent and ask God's mercy. We're sorry for our personal sins but also for our public sins reflected in some [04:00] recent headlines. Airline disasters continue. Lord have mercy.

CONGREGATION: Lord have mercy.

EGAN: Bishop Tutu says delays for justice will bring bloodshed. Lord have mercy.

CONGREGATION: Lord have mercy.

EGAN: Sexual ailments posing colossal threat worldwide. Lord have mercy.

CONGREGATION: Lord have mercy.

EGAN: Rabbi says Fundamentalism threatens pluralism. Lord have mercy.

CONGREGATION: Lord have mercy.

EGAN: Bees bombard Twin City area. Lord have mercy.

CONGREGATION: Lord have mercy.

EGAN: May almighty God have mercy on us, forgive us our sins and bring us to everlasting life, amen. We'll sing our [grieving?] song please. [05:00] (Congregation sings "I Could Have Danced All Night".) [06:00] Nearly half a century ago Pope Pius XI said, "Spiritually, we are all Semites." Explain that to a neighbor right now, will you? Say hello. What does that mean? (Congregation talking to each other.) [07:00] Here we go, we'll sing. (Congregation sings "Sweetest Thing")...[08:00] [09:00]

EGAN: [10:00] Lord God, you created the human family in many different sizes, colors, and convictions, singing many different songs. Forgive the harshness we have inflicted on one another. Lord, grant that we may live gracefully, with every person. Amen. Rosemary Dineen is our lecturer; you may be seated, please.

ROSEMARY DINEEN: A passage from an article by Thomas O. [Fedrici?] of the Vatican office on Christian Unity. None of the inspired Christian sources justifies the notion that the old Covenant of the Lord with his people have been aggregated or in sense nullified. [12:00] The Covenant of the Jewish people is permanent. The Church thus rejects in a clear way every form of proselytism. Also excluded are

all hateful forms of comparison between Christianity and Judaism. Here's a passage from the letter of the Apostle Paul to the Corinthians: "I appeal to all of you, my brothers and sisters, to come to an agreement so that there will be no divisions among you. Be united in one plan and one hope. Do not pass judgment on one another. Final judgment must wait until the Lord comes. Then everyone will receive from God [12:00] their reward or punishment they deserve."

M: This is the word of the Lord. This is in a cave to meditate on the message.

F: [*Hinay matov umah nayim shevat aheem, shevat aheem, gam yachad.*] How good and lovely it is when brothers dwell together in peace.

(Music group performs.) [13:00] [14:00] (applause)

EGAN: We will stand please for the reading of the gospel according to John. Then Jesus said, "I have not come [15:00] to judge the world but to save it. Whoever believes in me believes also in Him who sent me. Do not be worried or upset. There are many rooms in my Father's house."

(Short song.)

MARC TANENBAUM: [16:00] *Shalom*, you all. (laughter) As Father Egan indicated, I've been around a long time and I've been called a lot of things as a result of being

around and involved in an awful lot of activity in many parts of the world. I'm sure that after this morning and after taking part in this incredibly beautiful and real service I'll have to contend with finding myself being called as I go back to Sodom and Gomorrah (laughter) as being known as the 'Disco Rabbi from Minneapolis.'

(laughter) I'm here this morning [17:00] thanks to the matchmaking of Norma Cox who I don't know whether all of you know is president of a very powerful and important organization called the American Women of Radio and Television. I met her at a banquet which my wife presided at, where the guest of honor was Barbara Walters. And coming here this morning after speaking with Father Egan about a week ago on the telephone, I'm persuaded that something very deeply, culturally, anthropologically important is happening. You see there is a theory that the Eigans of the world and probably the Coxes, that the Irish in fact are one of the 10 lost tribes of Israel. (laughter) And it's based on some very serious studies [18:00], for example Gallic is regarded as an offshoot of Hebrew. You know the name Donovan some scholars believe is a joining together, a conflate of the words, Hebrew words *don ovan*, the judge of sin. And there's also a theory that the Blarney Stone is one of the rocks from the Wailing Wall in

Jerusalem which one of the 10 lost tribes took along with them and ended up in Ireland with it and I'm sure that's an explanation of why Jews and Irishmen talk so much with such freedom and genuineness. If the show goes well this morning we're going to take it on the road, Egan & Tanenbaum, what a pleasure. (laughter; applause) [19:00]

I've had a wonderful but very heavy week, couple days; feels like a week, in Minneapolis. I've probably made six speeches since I landed Friday morning here. But when Norma and Father Egan asked me to come to share in this celebration of a Mass with you, I accepted at once. And now that I'm here this morning and share in this opening joyous spirit together with you, I've come to realize that there's something very special about our being together. I don't think our coming together here as Christians and Jews have been coming together in every city in the [20:00] in the United States, especially since Vatican Council II. This year marks the twentieth anniversary of the adoption by Vatican Council II of the historic declaration on Catholic-Jewish relations, *Nostra Aetate*. And I had the privilege to be the only rabbi at Vatican Council II, as official guest observer of Cardinal Bay and Cardinal Sheen of Maryland. And I take special delight in being here because it is the fulfillment of a vision that I experienced firsthand. As I

sat through session of Vatican Council II and felt the outreach, the loving open spirit, especially of the American Catholic hierarchy, which sought to face with honesty and truthfulness [21:00] the history of the past 2,000 years; with it's terrible tragedies that anti-Semitism imposed and inflicted on my people and what it did in the painfulness of our relationship across the millennia and who were determined to write a new chapter based on the truth of our common bonds, our common spiritual patrimony, as the Vatican Council declared. That rejected, deified charge and anti-Semitism and called for mutual respect and fraternal dialogue and joint social action to work together to relief the pain and the suffering of the world. Now is that all rhetoric? Why are we doing this? Is this just [22:00] American togetherness? Or is there something more central, more essential for the salvation of mankind in our turning away from that history of the past and trying to build a new history based on mutual love and caring and compassion and mutual solidarity.

I spent the greater part of my professional career over the past 30 years trying to help relieve the suffering of war refugees, the problems of world hunger, and working in the area of human rights; civil and political liberties. For

the Jewish people, for Catholic people, for all people.

[23:00] There is no greater challenge to the survival of a human family today. There is no greater challenge to the authenticity of our commitments, respectively to the Gospel and to the Torah than the epidemic of dehumanization that is taking place in so many parts of the world today. We have been working in recent months with Catholic Relief Service, which has been magnificent in Ethiopia, in Africa, in many other parts of the world, and with Church World Service and with the American coordinator, Ambassador Douglas, give you a world refugee problems. We cannot begin to comprehend [24:00] what our convictions about human life, the sacred dignity of every individual; the sanctity of every human life which we affirm as central to our faith as Christians and Jews we state our existence on that affirmation. The incarnation of Christ as I understand it is your way of dramatizing the sanctity of every life. The conviction in the Torah that [*Audom niv robert salamelokim?*] that every human being, not just Jews but every human being is a son or daughter of Adam and Eve and is created in the sacred image of God, that's fundamental affirmation of our faith which we come here to celebrate and which we Jews celebrate every Friday and Saturday in our Sabbath service [25:00] and you celebrate in your

Sunday Masses and liturgies. That conviction is being battered in every part of the world. Look at what is going on around us today. In Iran and Iraq a war has been going on for the past four years; 150,000 human beings, most of them children, 12, 13 years old, have been destroyed before the eyes of the world. Who really knows about that? Who really cares? In Lebanon, Israel left Lebanon. And look what is going on between Christians and Muslims. This week alone 300 human beings have massacred themselves and the blasphemy, the scandal of what is going on is that Shiite Muslims and I'm sure some of the Christians believe that in killing another human being they are doing the will of God. [26:00] We have now the phenomenon of Shiite Muslims declaring that if they commit suicide it will assure them a way up to Heaven; that's what they did when they killed some 300 Marines, when they bombed the America Embassy, that is what they are doing every day to each other. And let's face what is happening in Ireland, the tragedy of Ireland. How many of you really care what is happening to your brothers and sisters in Ireland, where day after day after day a bomb is thrown into a pub in Belfast and then the compliment is returned and some Protestants are shot and then some Catholics are shot? And then Irish Presbyterian Fundamentalist preacher has the audacity to

say that this is the Gospel in action, killing other fellow Christians. And that's going on all over the world; in Africa there are six [27:00] million refugee problems, the largest refugee problems are not in the Middle East. The largest refugee problem in the world today is in Africa; six million human beings in Ethiopia and the Sudan. Three, four years ago nearly a million Christians and animists were destroyed in the War of Sudan when a Muslim-Arab tribes over north tried to liquidate them because they were infidels or heretics and the compliment was returned in Uganda; Idi Amin destroyed nearly a half million black Christians, half of them Roman Catholic, half of them Anglicans. The world stood by and said nothing. Indeed, so perverse has become the notion of what constitutes human sanctity, that Idi Amin was invited to the United Nations and given a standing ovation. There is something mad in the world; there's something really crazy in the world. It is a world that has become uprooted from its basic moral, ethical foundations, [28:00] in the biblical tradition, the biblical humanist tradition which if it means anything at all, if there is one absolute that we staked our existence on, it is the absolute conviction that human life means everything or it means nothing. And it begins always in modest ways.

There was a study that was done by a great social scientist, Talcott Parsons at Harvard University, called a study of prejudice. During the period of the '40s, '50s, when there still were some lynchings going on in the South against blacks, he sent a team into some of the small Southern cities to study how a lynching could take place in cities that were Bible Belt. People who went to church not only on Sunday but went to Bible study classes [29:00] in the afternoon and then two, three times a week to church suppers, and then join the White Citizens Council, the Ku Klux Klan. And as they began doing these careful analytic studies of how a lynching could take place in the community, they found that in every city where the lynchings took place, it always began with what Parsons's people found was called "verbal violence." That is, somebody would start rabble-rousing in one of the small towns in the South, would begin talking about the blacks as "niggers," "coons," "nightriders." That as they began the process of dehumanization, they took a human being, reduce them to a caricature, emptied them of their humanism, their humanity, made caricatures out of them, filled with hatred and contempt and then Parsons concludes [30:00] in his study, once you go through that process of dehumanization,

emptying a person of their humanity, they cease to become objects of compassion and human sentiment. And then he says it is an easy thing to take a caricature and swing it from a tree and feel justified in doing that. Well, we Jews know about that because that's exactly what the Nazis did to the Jews. They began with drawing cartoons with Jews with big stomachs and bulbous noses and dollar bills on their faces. And they the Jews, the enemies of Germany, the Jews were responsible for the stab in the back. Jews were responsible for everything. If a railroad went wrong, the Jews did it. If the economy went wrong, the Jews did it. And as we learn from Parsons with the lynching experiences here, once you make people into caricatures and ugly stereotypes, [31:00] all of the human inhibitions disappear and it becomes very easy then to make them objects for destruction and elimination.

I don't want to make a connection between the lynching and the Nazi holocaust. They're inordinate in their differences. But I must tell you, especially since I've been here through these days that we've become uneasy as we now here in the farm belt region, that in the great farm crisis that is taking place, there are now groups that call themselves the Aryan Nation, the Posse Comitatus, the

Christian Identity movement that have begun talking to farmers in their desperation and saying you know why you're losing your farms? You know why the banks are repossessing your machinery and taking your land away from you? The Jews are buying up all the farmland. And they've begun now arming [32:00] farmers. Now the Farm Bureaus know better and the vast majority of enlightened farmers know better, they know that it is a failed governmental agricultural policy which has been bizarre in its consequences for American farmers. The backbone of America is being destroyed by our own government's policy. But yet that's too complicated to talk about budgets and deficits, and so you want to simple answer: the Jews did it.

And I would suggest to you that one of the lessons that I have learned in dealing with problems of refugees and world hunger and the problems of group hatred is that people who really take belief in the sanctity of life, of social responsibility for the quality of the life, we want a civic society who care for the pluralism which has made possible the flourishing of Catholics and Protestants and Jews and increasingly blacks and Hispanics and Asians in this society, this democratic [porolous?] society [33:00] --

(break in audio)

EGAN: Jesus, on the night before you died to bring us life, ate this meal with his friends. He took bread into his holy hands, gave praise and thanks, blessed the bread and shared it with his friends saying, "Take and eat. This is my body." After supper he took the cup into his holy hands so again he gave you praise and thanks and blessed the cup and shared it with his friends saying, "Take and drink. This is my blood, which shall be shed that sins may be forgiven. Do this to remember me." (music: "Hallelujah (Christ Has Come)") [34:00]

EGAN: Mother, you invite us to share in your work of creation. As persons called to create a new society, a world prepared for the full and final coming of your son. As Christians call to form and nourish a Christian community, Mother, you invite us to share in your work of redemption, giving pardon and peace, healing and hope to every person. Lord, inspire us; strengthen us to renounce all violence; to correct every injustice, to overcome complacency, [35:00] to respect every person. Mother, we are grateful for the Eucharistic presence of your Son, here and now. May we who break his bread together live in peace together. To the Lord God, Mother, Son and Holy Spirit, may all honor and glory be given forever. (music: "Hosanna...") [36:00] [37:00]

EGAN: Deliver us Lord from every evil and grant us peace in our day. In your mercy keep us free from sin and protect us from all anxiety, as we wait in joyful hope for the coming of our savior Jesus Christ.

(music: "Lamb of God...") [38:00]

(music: "How Great Thou Art") [39:00] [40:00] [41:00] [42:00]

(applause)

[43:00] (music: "Follow Me") [44:00] [45:00] [46:00]

SINGER: [47:00] One more. (music: "Glory...") [48:00]

EGAN: Lord, [49:00] may our worship together nourish us to become proclaimers of your message and instruments of your peace. Beginning at home and extending to persons everywhere. Giving understanding, respect and justice to former enemies and future friends. Amen. May Almighty God bless you. Creator, Savior, Holy Spirit, amen. Thank you, thank you, Lord for lovely worship, for power message, for dear friend Marc Tanenbaum. He'll be, he'll be in our library, right through that door and you'd like to come and say hello and visit with him for a few [50:00] moments, please do. He'll be there; hope you'll be here. How about next Sunday? Please stand. We'll sing.

SINGERS: Swing low sweet chariot... [50:00] [51:00] [52:00]

(applause)

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