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"Reconciliation." Speech notes. 1987, 1994.

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# THE WEXNER HERITAGE FOUNDATION

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September 2, 1987

Mr. Robert Barzilay  
Editor, Letters to the Editor  
The New York Times  
229 West 43 Street  
New York, N. Y. 10036

To the Editor:

The recent meeting in Rome between Jewish leaders and Pope John Paul, on the eve of his departure for the United States, recalls an episode that occurred almost 27 years ago between an earlier delegation of Jewish leaders and another great Pope, John XXIII.

On October 17, 1960, the first delegation of American Jews ever to be received by any Pope met in the Vatican. There an extraordinary event took place, when the Pope rose and verbally embraced his visitors with the electrifying statement, "I am Joseph, your brother."

I was then executive vice-president of the national United Jewish Appeal, leading a delegation of 130 men and women on their way to Israel. We stopped in Rome to meet with the Pope and give voice to our gratitude for a far-reaching

act of humanity he had performed in 1942. He was then Papal Nuncio in Turkey, and had intervened with the Nazi authorities to permit the sailing through the Dardanelles of two vessels carrying 700 Jewish orphan children to Palestine. He literally saved their lives. We wanted to thank him.

The audience was arranged by Benjamin Swig of San Francisco through two good friends, Cardinal Spellman of New York and the American Ambassador in Rome, James Zellerbach, also of San Francisco.

Once the audience was agreed to in principle, the technical details and arrangements took months to settle. There was a certain stiffness in the air. I had suggested that we employ the classical languages: I would address the Holy Father in Hebrew and he would respond in Latin. Some Vatican officials hesitated, fearing that use of the Hebrew language in this setting might imply recognition of the State of Israel. Thus, their decision was that we would speak in our vernaculars, English and Italian.

The texts flowed back and forth across the ocean for approval on both sides. We prepared a hand-written parchment scroll, similar to the ancient Torah, encased in olive wood from Jerusalem, on which was inscribed our profound gratitude for Pope John's courage and humanitarianism.



On the morning of the audience, everything went smoothly, exactly according to the script. Photographs were taken and the audience was over. Suddenly and spontaneously, as the delegation was preparing to leave, John rose from his throne, lifted his hand in a friendly gesture and started to speak extemporaneously. According to the doctrine of Papal infallibility, every word of the Pope is sacred. Here he was speaking without a text, and the editor of the Osservatore Romano, standing nearby, began to write furiously. All the officials looked anxious, for they had no idea what was coming.

The essence of the Pope's very personal short speech was this: he had been thinking of something intimate and meaningful to say to us, in addition to the generalizations of his prepared remarks. He thought of his personal name, Angelo Giuseppe Roncalli. Giuseppe is translated into English as Joseph. This led him to the thought of the biblical Joseph sitting as vice-premier on the throne of Egypt dealing out food to all the petitioners from the neighboring drought-stricken countries, including Canaan.

As Joseph's 11 brothers -- the very ones who had earlier sold him into slavery and thought he was long dead -- entered the hall, the Bible tells us he recognized them at once, although they did not recognize him. After a certain point, he decided to reveal himself to them,

stretched forth his hand, and said, to their amazement, "I am Joseph your brother." So it was that John XXIII identified himself to us.

In a flash, we understood that the Pope was saying to this Jewish delegation that he and they were brothers. Except for a very few in the innermost circle, no one knew that he was already thinking of convening the Vatican II Council, which would ultimately deal with the most delicate questions, including the charge against the Jews of deicide. This friendly, jovial, almost simple man was offering his hand in brotherhood and friendship, revealing his inner feeling about Jews. The air was charged with excitement. It was an incredible moment.

In the 27 years since then, Catholics and Jews have crossed centuries of misunderstanding, misconceptions, and ill will. Although there is still much ground to cover, the air is filled with hope for further and continuing progress so that one by one the issues which have separated the two faiths will be replaced by ties that bind.

At this moment it is fitting to recall and pay tribute to the memory of Pope John XXIII, who started the march down the path of reconciliation.

*Herbert A. Friedman*

Rabbi Herbert A. Friedman

President

Wexner Heritage Foundation



# PAPAL CALENDAR

10/28/94

PIUS XI 1922-39 - Concordat with Hitler 1933  
repudiated in 1937

\* PIUS XII 1939-58 - Saw him in Castel Gondolfo 1946, after Kielce <sup>program</sup>

\* JOHN XXIII 1958-63 - Saw him <sup>in Vatican</sup> Oct. 60 - USA delegation  
"I am Joseph your brother"

\* PAUL VI 1963-78 - Saw him in Vatican - Oct. 63 - USA delegation  
cool reserved formal - but behind  
scenes - pushed Vatican Council in direction  
John XXIII wanted - Nostra Aetate 1965

JOHN PAUL I - 78 34 days in office

\* JOHN PAUL II - 1978 - present - Saw him in Vatican - April 94 -  
Yom Hashoah commemoration



## **PIUS XI**

**1922-1939**

Made concordat with Hitler's newly formed government in 1933, to "alleviate the difficulties confronting German Catholics" in the words of the Encyclopedia Britannica. From 1933 to 1936 he wrote several protests against the Third Reich. In 1937 he issued the encyclical "Mit brennender Sorge" ("With Burning Anxiety [Worry]") which claimed the German State had violated the 1933 concordat.

## **PIUS XII**

**1939-1958**

**(Eugenio Pacelli)**

Pius attempted to prevent the war and then worked to humanize it and to relieve suffering, although his proclaimed neutrality has been questioned.

Pacelli -

Came from an aristocratic Roman family.

Passionate anti-Communist thus pro-Nazi, in certain sense, namely as bulwark against Communism.

He was Secretary of State under previous pope, Pius XI, who had made concordat in 1933.

He had been papal nuncio to Germany.

He preferred public silence and private diplomacy.

John Morley, himself a Catholic priest, studied all Vatican documents which have been released to the public, and wrote a book entitled, Vatican Diplomacy. His final paragraph:

"It must be concluded that Vatican diplomacy failed the Jews during the Holocaust by not doing all that it was possible to do on their behalf. It also failed itself because in neglecting the needs of the Jews, and pursuing a goal of reserve rather than humanitarian concern, it betrayed the ideals it had set for itself. The nuncios, the secretary of state, and, most of all, the Pope share the responsibility for this dual failure."

We (Phil Bernstein + I) saw: Arthur Bliss Lane (U.S. Ambassador)  
Augustas Cardinal Hlond  
Edward Osobka-Morawski (Polish Prim)  
Yezor Berman (Communist leader)  
No support from anyone

And yet - after Kielce pogrom  
Story of Castel Gondolfo - Sept. 1946 - children  
~~children~~ pastoral letter in Poland. on  
Pope issued \_\_\_\_\_ fire died down lawn

ODESSA network established by  
Vatican (?)

### **JOHN XXIII 1958-1963** (Angelo Giuseppe Roncalli)

He inaugurated changes in Roman Catholicism so far-reaching that his reign must be considered the beginning of a new era in the history of the Roman Catholic Church.

Soon after his coronation, at age 77, he announced almost casually that he was summoning an ecumenical council - the first in almost a century. He said the idea came to him in a sudden inspiration. His purpose was to "bring the church up to date" and to work for its spiritual regeneration. He was the first Pope since the Reformation who acknowledged frankly that Catholicism stood in need of reinvigoration and reform.

The Vatican Council, over whose first session in the fall of 1962 he presided, just a half-year before his death in July 1963, was to make a new start, according to his design, toward putting aside the hostilities of the past. He received Eastern Orthodox, Anglican and Protestant religious leaders with extreme cordiality. He removed certain words offensive to Jews from the official liturgy of the church. He received the Archbishop of Canterbury - the first such meeting since the 14th century - and a Shinto priest, the first time ever in history.

Referring to his simple and unaffected ways, his warm humanity and his instincts for people, the Encyclopedia Britannica contains a moving paragraph:



"He told the inmates of a Roman prison, 'since you could not come to me, I came to you.' When Mrs. John F. Kennedy came to call, he rehearsed in his poor English 'Mrs. K., Madame K.', and when she appeared, he spontaneously opened his arms and cried out, 'Jacqueline.' He once told a Communist diplomat, 'I know you are an atheist, but won't you accept an old man's blessing?' When a shabby peasant woman reached up to touch him as he was being carried through St. Peter's, he stopped to clasp her hand and said, 'There is no reason why you shouldn't get as close as the King of Jordan did.'"

When he died it was generally recognized that he had become one of the best loved men on earth and one of the most popular popes of all time.

Jews Not Guilty of DEicide  
ANTI-SEMITISM DEPLORED  
JEWISH ORIGIN OF XIANITY EMPHASIZED

(We met him in October, 1960)

"I am Joseph your brother"  
Nostra Aetate came out at end  
of Vatican Council II - 1965

PAUL VI  
(Montini)

1963-1978

died Aug. 6, '78

He was conservative, conceived of himself as a pastor, made pilgrimage journeys to every continent. His first was to the Holy Land January 1964 - just a few months after consecration, where he met the Patriarch of the Greek Orthodox Church, in Jerusalem, but not in Israel. (Special road built for him on Mt. Zion.)

His message was one of social justice, charity, peace and brotherhood. His theme was "Every man is my brother."

- pilgrimage to <sup>Holy Land</sup> ~~Israel~~ Jan 64 spend 12 hours
- never used word Israel
- made special road for him to upper room - Last Supper on Mt. Zion
- met Shazar only at Lake of Galilee

(We met him in October, 1963)

Correct  
Proper  
Not warm } Doing his duty

few months after elevation

JOHN PAUL I

was Pope 34 days  
died Sept. 1978

~~But~~ he was hard on Israel.  
Wanted Jerusalem to be internationalized.

But he pushed through Nostra Aetate against the bishops who were reluctant

## JOHN PAUL II 1978 - present

"Redemptio Anno" (1984)

Apostolic letter recognized the centrality of Israel for Jews and acknowledged that "Jews ardently love Jerusalem and in every age venerate her memory."

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In Miami (Sept. '87) "after the tragic extermination of the Shoah the Jewish people began a new period in their history. They have a right to a homeland in the state of Israel as does any civil nation *according* to international law."

PRAGUE - Sept. 90 - "Anti-Semitism is a sin against God and humanity"  
DEC 90 - POPE SUPPORTED THESE SENTIMENTS

In the synagogue in Rome (1991?) when he referred to the Jewish people as "our dearly beloved elder brother." FIRST EVER VISIT OF A POPE TO A SYNAGOGUE

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Visit to Yom Hashoah concert in April 1994.

Private audience in morning, for group of Holocaust survivors.

Lunch with cardinals.

Concert in evening.

Dinner afterwards with conductor and narrator.

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Pope wanted to achieve two things in his reign:

Recognition of Holocaust as major event in history of Judaism.

Recognition of Israel as State.

He did both.



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°**PAUL VI** (1897– ), pope from 1963. Born **Giovanni Battista Montini** in Concesio, near Brescia, he was ordained in 1920. In 1922 he joined the Vatican Secretariat of State and in 1937 was appointed surrogate to the secretary of state, Cardinal Pacelli (later Pope Pius XII). He was in daily contact with \*Pius XII until 1954 and thus was a primary source of evidence for the latter's conduct during the war <sup>Knew</sup> and his attitude toward the Jews. Montini was appointed prosecretary of state in 1952, archbishop of Milan in 1954, and became a cardinal in 1958. The second Vatican Council, convoked by his predecessor, \*John XXIII, was brought to a conclusion by Paul VI (see \*Church Councils). According to reliable sources, his personal intervention led to the approval of the *Nostra aetate* declaration on the attitude of the Church to the non-Christian religions by those bishops who had been reluctant to give the declaration their approval even in its modified form. Paul VI promulgated the declaration in 1965. The pontificate of Paul VI is noted for the extensive trips undertaken by the pontiff. During his first major journey, a pilgrimage to the Holy Land (January 4 to 6, 1964), he spent 12 hours in Israel, but avoided the use of the word "Israel" in all the addresses he made on this occasion. While his attitude toward the State of Israel was reserved, it appeared to have modified after the 1967 \*Six-Day War. In 1969 the pope officially received for the first time Israel's foreign minister, Abba \*Eban. On the other hand, Paul's sermons were not always in line with the council's declaration, especially his reference to the part played by the Jews in the death of Jesus in his sermon on Palm Sunday in 1965, which seemed to indicate a reversal to pre-council theological attitudes.

against

Met Pres.  
Shazar  
near  
Lake of  
Galilee  
12 hours  
in Israel

**Bibliography:** G. Schwaiger, *Geschichte der Paepste im 20. Jahrhundert* (1968); M. Serafian, *The Pilgrim* (1964); X. Rynne, *Second Session* (1964), *Third Session* (1965), *Fourth Session* (1966).

[W.P.E.]



## CONCLUSIONS

### 1. Vatican is hierarchy

scores of cardinals ; thousands of bishops  
doesn't move positions easily or quickly  
~~but~~ remarkable progress in last half century

### 2. Tone comes from Top

Thus, attitude of Pope is crucial.

Present Pope most liberal - except on matters of human sexuality

### 3. Popes have moved in increasingly liberal direction in past half-century

### 4. Process of filtering liberal attitudes downward

This is the task of the future - to get the  
liberal attitude down to the <sup>lowest</sup> ~~last~~ parochial  
school and parish priest.

### 5. You can be helpful - make connections with your local bishop - show your familiarity with the moves the Church is making toward changing past attitudes - ask what you can do to link top Catholic with top Jewish personalities

### 6. Just as you must struggle to strengthen <sup>the</sup> Jewish <sup>will</sup> identity in the coming century - so must you work to strengthen this mood of Reconciliation - and <sup>thus</sup> ~~this~~ will make the future more congenial to our own based on an approach of revealing the beauty of the Jewish tradition to the non-Jew to the non-Jew to our own youth. It's win-win to do it.