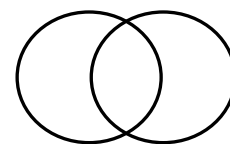


IJCS NEWS



The Institute of Judaean-Christian Studies Annual Newsletter

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Dr. Celia Deutsch delivered the presentation, "A Journey to Dialogue: The Sisters of Zion and Jewish-Christian Relations," at the 26th Monsignor John M. Oesterreicher Memorial Lecture - Pages 3 & 5



Visit the Institute's eRepository and explore many of our historical documents in the areas of biblical studies and Jewish-Christian relations. - Page 5



Fr. Thomas F. Stransky (sitting left) and Msgr. John M. Oesterreicher (standing), 1961
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Rev. Thomas F. Stransky, CSP (1930 – 2019)

by Rev. Lawrence E. Frizzell, D.Phil.

A member of the Congregation of St. Paul (Paulist), Father Thomas Francis Stransky had begun doctoral research in Missiology at Münster, West Germany, when on January 25, 1959, Pope John XXIII announced that he was convening an ecumenical council. The Pope entrusted to Augustin Bea, S.J., the task of preparing *schemata* (drafts) for the Council Fathers to discuss ecumenism and Judaism/the Jewish people. Thirty-year old Thomas Stransky was snatched away from a university setting to become a collaborator on a team that soon included Abbot Leo Rudloff of Jerusalem as member; Gregory Baum, O.S.A., as peritus in ecumenism and Jewish questions; and John M. Oesterreicher of Seton Hall as consultant, in the new Secretariat for Promoting Christian Unity.

Addressing the audience at Seton Hall for the Monsignor Oesterreicher Memorial Lecture on November 9, 1997, Father Stransky remarked that, during his seminary studies he read *The Bridge*, which was edited by Oesterreicher: "He helped stir the initial fires of my own 40-year commitment to the eradication of antisemitism and the fostering of mutual understanding and respect between Catholics and Jews...This paper offers my tokened gratitude to this devout priest and scrupulous

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The Holy See and the State of Israel

Twenty-five Years with Ambassadors

by Rev. Lawrence E. Frizzell, D.Phil.



At the semi-annual meeting in New York City of delegates from the United States Conference of Catholic Bishops and the National Council of Synagogues on June 19, 2019, there was a celebration of the Fundamental Agreement between the Holy See and the State of Israel on December 30, 1993. The exchange of ambassadors in the summer of 1994 marked the highest level of diplomatic relations between the two nations.

This milestone on the political level must be seen in the context of the Second Vatican Council and the Church's Declaration of her relationship to Non-Christian Religions on October 28, 1965. Because of a widespread fear among the Catholic minorities in Arab countries, the Council text noted that the Church was "moved not by any political consideration but solely by the religious motivation of Christian charity" (*Nostra Aetate* no. 4). The Declaration, like all the texts of the Council, was addressed to Catholics, but was of considerable interest to the Jewish people and others. In its final form, the text on the Jews was placed within the context of the Church's relationship to other world religions. My predecessor, Msgr. John Oesterreicher, noted that contemporary Christians seek to understand more deeply how God's salvific gift is offered to the world:

This throws new light on the reason for linking the Declaration on the Jews with the Church's attitude on the religions of humankind. The whole Declaration makes it clear that all singularity exists for the sake of universality, all separation for the sake of commonality. Israel's election, too, is directed toward the all-embracing kingdom of grace. Thus, the Declaration on the Jews has taken on a dimension far surpassing its original importance. It proved its value by becoming the nucleus around which old-new insights and expressions could gather." John M. Oesterreicher, *The New Encounter Between Christians and Jews* (New York: Philosophical Library, 1986), p. 227.

The Declaration defined the term "antisemitism" to mean any display of hatred or persecution "at any time or from any source against the Jews." This protean monster continues to manifest itself in surprising ways, so the call for vigilance of the Fundamental Agreement in that regard remains very relevant. The major effort to overcome manifestations of anti-Jewish bigotry among Christians should be completed by elucidating the many positive ways in which Christian faith-and-practice is rooted in the Biblical and Jewish heritage.

In April 1969, Father Cornelius Rijk, who came from Holland in 1966 to coordinate Catholic-Jewish relations for the Holy See, called a meeting of Catholics to prepare a *schema* (draft) for a document to implement *Nostra Aetate* on a practical level. Twenty-one people from 14 nations gathered in the Motherhouse of the Sisters of Zion in Rome for three days. The relationship of the Holy See and the State of Israel was incorporated into the *desiderata* for developing the application of the Council Declaration. This boldness was perhaps one reason for a delay in presenting the "Guidelines and Suggestions for Implementing the Conciliar Declaration *Nostra Aetate* (No. 4)" until December 1, 1974. This document notes: "On October 22, 1974 the Holy Father instituted for the Universal Church this Commission for Religious Relations with the Jews, joined to the Secretariat for Promoting Christian Unity" (*Guidelines*, Conclusion). The work of this Commission "to encourage and foster religious relations between Jews and Catholics - and to do so eventually in collaboration with other Christians - will be, within the limits of its competence, at the service of all interested organizations..." The delicate matter of the relation between the Church and States in the Middle East was beyond the purview of this commission.

How was this religious dimension distinct from the political order? Diplomatic matters belong to the Holy See's Secretary of State, with the fortuitous result for world-wide relations between Catholics and Jews that the Commission was able to progress in many ways more rapidly than the political situation in the Middle East seemed to allow. After the leaders of Israel and the Palestinians had a moment of acceptance in September 1993, the Holy See moved quickly to form diplomatic agreements with Israel and Jordan.

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(Left to Right) Rabbi David Fox Sandmel, Ph.D, Dr. Celia Deutsch, N.D.S. and Father Sylvester Kansimbi, C.S.S.P., rector of Holy Trinity College

A Journey to Dialogue

The Sisters of Sion and Jewish-Christian Relations

Noted scholar Dr. Celia Deutsch, N.D.S. delivered the 26th Monsignor John M. Oesterreicher Memorial Lecture, which was sponsored by the Institute of Judaean-Christian Studies (IJCS) at Seton Hall University on October 31, 2019. Dr. Deutsch is a Research Scholar in the Religion Department for Barnard College with a specialty in early Jewish and Christian social and religious and intellectual history. She is also a member of the Sisters of Our Lady of Sion, a small international Roman Catholic religious congregation that is committed to the Church, the Jewish People and social justice.

Dr. Deutsch's presentation, "A Journey to Dialogue: The Sisters of Sion and Jewish-Christian Relations," surveyed the history of the Sisters' congregation, beginning with a short biography of Theodore Ratisbonne, a Jewish convert to the Catholic Church who became a priest and founded the Congregation of Our Lady of Sion in France in 1847. The early work of the Sisters of Sion focused on raising and educating orphans and providing social services to the poor, working and middle class families of all religious backgrounds. According to Dr. Deutsch this work went "hand in hand" with the life of private and community prayer, which included prayers for the conversion of the Jewish people, although they were forbidden to actively proselytize. In time this mission of conversion would eventually transform and evolve into the promotion of understanding between Christians and Jews, paving the way for the Sisters of Sion's direct involvement and contributions to *Nostra Aetate*.

Dr. Deutsch carefully outlined the many phenomena that contributed to the gradual transformation of the congregation's mission from conversion of the Jewish people to one of respect and dialogue. A few of the catalysts she mentioned included:

- The Sisters of Sion's increasing encounters with Jews, which created genuine friendships and a reciprocity that resulted in a new commitment to the eradication of antisemitism and ultimately opened the door to a rethinking of a supersessionist theology and anti-Judaism;
- The congregation's "return to the sources," whereby the Sisters concentrated on studying Hebrew, the Jewish Scriptures, Jewish history and various theological documents; and

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Rev. Thomas F. Stransky, CSP - *continued*-

scholar, my gentle mentor and friend” (See [“A Catholic Views Political Zionism and the State of Israel,” Teshuva Institute Papers](#) (South Orange, NJ: Institute of Judaean-Christian Studies, 2000), p. 21).



Father Stransky and Ms. Judith Banki (Sr. Advisor at the Tanenbaum Center for Interreligious Understanding) on October 27, 2013 at the 20th Msgr. John M. Oesterreicher Memorial Lecture.

At the invitation of Monsignor John A. Radano, then chair of Seton Hall University’s Religious Studies Department, Father Stransky was Distinguished Visiting Professor for 1983-84. Besides courses, he gave a series of lectures with titles that evoked the special experience of the universal Church two decades earlier. The lectures were titled: “The Council as *Future Shock*,” “The Third Church,” “Luther and Today’s Second Reformation,” and “Religious Freedom Today.” These and related themes were integrated in Father Stransky’s many publications.

Among Father Stransky’s visits to Seton Hall was the Invitation to celebrate the 60th anniversary of the Institute on October 27, 2013. In the words of Dr. Peter Ahr, a venerable member of the Religious Studies Department, Father Stransky’s “The Genesis of Vatican Council II’s Declaration on the Jewish People (*Nostra Aetate*): An Insider’s View” was the most significant lecture that he had heard at Seton Hall.

For more than a decade Dr. John Borelli, a great American promoter of interfaith dialogue, worked with Father Tom to produce the latter’s memoirs. They will include many years at the Ecumenical Institute Tantur between Jerusalem and Bethlehem, which he sketched in his 1997 lecture on Israel (quoted above). We eagerly await this publication!

After the funeral in St. Paul the Apostle Church in New York City on September 10, 2019, people of many faith backgrounds expressed a deep appreciation for the quiet and persevering dedication of Father Stransky in the service of God and the Church. May his soul rest in peace!

The Holy See and the State of Israel - *continued* -

During the recent commemorative celebration, Archbishop Bernadeto Auza, Papal Nuncio to the United Nations, spoke of “the deep and unique spiritual roots in the Holy Land” which make the Holy See’s connection with the State of Israel unique. Timothy Cardinal Dolan described eloquently the relationship of the Holy See to the State of Israel in spiritual, theological and political terms.

Looking back to the Fundamental Agreement, “the historic process of reconciliation and growth in mutual understanding and friendship between Catholics and Jews” (Preamble) has universal dimensions. This begins with “cooperation in combatting all forms of antisemitism and all kinds of racism and of religious intolerance...” (Article 2). As Christians and Jews in the “Diaspora” learn from each other, spiritual growth should include opportunities for pilgrimages that should include a facet related to the Church and Jews in Israel *today*. Thus will Christian pilgrims become ambassadors, making many small steps toward mutual understanding in the settings of their daily lives.

Save the Date: October 22, 2020

Save the date and plan to join us on Thursday, October 22, 2020, when Dr. Eli McCarthy, Professorial Lecturer who teaches in the Peace Studies at Georgetown, will speak on **Nonviolent Peacemaking** at the 27th Monsignor John M. Oesterreicher Memorial Lecture.

Dr. McCarthy was involved with other such work on behalf of Cardinal Turkson’s Justice and Peace Office, now incorporated into the Dicastery for Integral Human Development. He also made an important contribution to Seton Hall University’s 2019 Conference on Nonviolence and Peace, which examined papal pronouncements on the subject of peace and focused on the teachings of Pope Francis.

Online Publications, Presentations & Resources

Most of the Institute's Publications are Freely Accessible Online



You probably already know you can access many of our academic lectures on [our YouTube channel](#) and most of our radio podcasts of *The Kinship of Catholics & Jews* on [our iTunes channel](#). Perhaps you also know that our current director, the Rev. Lawrence Frizzell, has a [website and blog](#) and online publications sites on [Academia](#) and [SelectedWorks](#), where you can read most of his articles; contributions to books, dictionaries and encyclopedias; conference papers; and biblical commentaries.

But did you know, you can also easily access select writings published from 1947-1993 by Msgr. John M. Oesterreicher, our founding director, as well as other scholarly works by the Institute on Seton Hall University's eRepository? Now that you know,

we invite you to visit the [eRepository](#) and explore the following historical documents in the areas of biblical and Jewish-Christian studies:

- [Teshuva Institute Papers](#)
- [The Bridge](#), Volumes 1, 2, 3, 4 and 5
- [God at Auschwitz?](#)
- [A Witness of God's Triumph](#)
- ["Pro Perfidis Judaeis"](#)
- ["Why Judaeo-Christian Studies?"](#)
- ["Shalom: The Encounter of Christians and Jews and the Catholic Educator"](#)
- [The Rediscovery of Judaism: A Re-Examination of The Conciliar Statement on the Jews](#)

A Journey to Dialogue - *continued* -

- The Sisters of Sion's resistance to the Shoah, which included hiding children and adults, providing false documents and constructing channels of communication for rescue

Following World War II, Dr. Deutsch noted how the Sisters of Sion's change in mission and relations with the Jewish people became the impetus for their collaborative work with various theologians, bishops and fathers of the Second Vatican Council in helping to draft the fourth paragraph of *Nostra Aetate*. This watershed document was promulgated in 1965 and marked a change in the Catholic Church's views and teachings toward Jews and Judaism and started a journey of addressing the injustices of Christian antisemitism.

Today the Sisters of Sion continue to learn about, encounter and appreciate the "otherness" of their sibling tradition and to steadfastly work together with their Jewish partners in matters of social justice and in the care of creation. They are also beginning to think about itinerary ministries beyond the North as they continue to receive invitations to teach fellow Catholic religious, seminarians and priests from Kenya, the Congo, Malta, Mexico and Amazonia. In fact Dr. Deutsch is currently engaged in Zimbabwe where she recently team taught courses at Holy Trinity College with Rabbi David Fox Sandmel. Together they were able to provide a greater pool of learning to the students there and model how they too can become more dialogical in their approach to people of different traditions within their own communities in Southern Africa.

The Sisters of Sion's journey to dialogue continues, as Dr. Deutsch concluded, as an open-ended reality as the congregation considers taking their charism to the Southern hemisphere and encountering others whose cultures and traditions are unfamiliar to them:

...it is about life with the other with a small "o" and God who is Other with a big "O." It is never ending because it continually opens new vistas, new horizons, as does the desert itself, as does the ocean, and as does the wide open grassland of Southern Africa. The challenge is never to stop, never to be content with the resting place. It is to go forth yet again to new encounter.

You can listen to the audio podcast of Dr. Deutsch's lecture in its entirety on the Institute's YouTube channel [here](#).



Thank you for your continued support!

We want to thank all of our supporters and volunteers who devoted their time, talent and treasure to promoting our mission. Your support allows us to continue to answer God's call to advance universal peace while demonstrating compassion, cooperation, justice and charity. We are very grateful for your continued support!

With your assistance we were able to provide scholarships to 23 graduate students in the Master of Arts in Jewish-Christian program at Seton Hall University in 2018. These educators are learning how to promote interfaith understanding and collaboration based on the common foundation of the moral principles that undergird efforts to promote harmony and peace throughout our world.

Make a Donation Today

Making a donation today is a way of helping educators locally and globally to advocate for understanding, respect and goodwill throughout their schools, districts and broader communities. By providing even a small donation, you can help expand school programs to include key elements that build upon diversity; prejudice reduction; community building; and personal responsibility and leadership.

Contact the Father Lawrence Frizzell directly by phone at (973) 761-9751 or via email at lawrence.frizzell@shu.edu to make your tax-deductible donation.

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