Vatican

An older white, red-haired woman stands at a podium with the words Katolicki Uniwersytet Lu

Susannah Heschel, a professor of Jewish studies at Dartmouth College in Hanover, N.H., speaks during the inauguration of the Abraham J. Heschel Center for Catholic-Jewish Relations Oct. 17, 2022, at Poland's Catholic University of Lublin. The photo behind her is of her father, Rabbi Abraham J. Heschel, meeting St. Paul VI at the Vatican in 1964. (CNS photo/courtesy Catholic University of Lublin)



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Vatican City — October 19, 2022

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Pope Francis expressed his hope that a new center for Catholic-Jewish relations in Poland will "foster appreciation of the common heritage, not only of the two religions, but also of the two peoples."

Speaking to Polish pilgrims at his weekly general audience Oct. 19, the pope noted the inauguration two days earlier of the Abraham J. Heschel Center for Catholic-Jewish Relations at the Catholic University of Lublin, Poland.

Susannah Heschel, a professor of Jewish studies at Dartmouth College in Hanover, New Hampshire, spoke in Lublin at the inauguration of the center named after her father, a well-known rabbi and scholar in the United States, who had fled Poland just before the Nazi invasion of the country.

With the Holocaust, she said, "Judaism in Poland was nearly destroyed, but its spirit was preserved in my father's writings."

She expressed her hope that the center would encourage research and excellence in teaching, but "above all, cultivate a new spirit of awe at the holiness of different faiths."

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Archbishop Pierbattista Pizzaballa, the Latin patriarch of Jerusalem, also spoke at the inauguration.

"Our history is a history full of painful wounds and we cannot forget this," the archbishop said, but neither can Catholics and Jewish forget all the progress made in relationships since the "turning point" of the Second Vatican Council.

While interreligious dialogue and building stronger relations with members of every faith are important, he said, "the dialogue with Judaism is the first and most important because it is a dialogue with our roots."

Fr. Miroslaw Kalinowski, rector of the university, said, "The pillars on which the center's activities are based can be summed up in a motto: Common Bible, Common Past, Common Future."