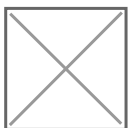




Pope Leo XIV greets Silviu Vexler, president of the Federation of Jewish Communities in Romania, during a ceremony honoring Blessed Iuliu Hossu in the Sistine Chapel at the Vatican June 2, 2025. (CNS/Vatican Media)

Gina Christian

[View Author Profile](#)



OSV News

[View Author Profile](#)

[Join the Conversation](#)

Send your thoughts to *Letters to the Editor*. [Learn more](#)

September 17, 2026

[Share on Bluesky](#)[Share on Facebook](#)[Share on Twitter](#)[Email to a friend](#)[Print](#)

A new Vatican document affirms the Second Vatican Council's landmark teaching on the church's relationship with the Jewish people and those of other faiths, while inviting humanity to enter upon a common "journey of hope."

That journey requires "courage" and "a genuine shift in mindset" to seek "peaceful coexistence" amid "unprecedented challenges," including conflicts, persecution, the weaponization of religion, secularization and polarization, said the document.

And rather than looking to found "one great world religion," authentic interreligious dialogue aims to build "a fraternal society capable of accepting differences," said the text.

On Sept. 16, the Vatican released "A Journey of Hope: Sixty Years of Interreligious Dialogue and Fraternity in the Light of the Conciliar Declaration *Nostra Aetate*."

The 8,600-word note was the result of a collaboration among the Vatican's Dicastery for the Doctrine of the Faith, the Dicastery for Promoting Christian Unity — which also oversees religious relations with Judaism — and the Dicastery for Interreligious Dialogue.

Pope Leo XIV had granted approval of the text on June 22, with official publication taking place Sept. 16.

The five-part "Journey of Hope" began by retracing the "essential stages" in the Church's interreligious dialogue since the 1965 promulgation of *Nostra Aetate*, including the contributions of Pope Leo XIV and his four predecessors.

The note then examined the "visible" and "silent" fruits of *Nostra Aetate*, as well as the "persistent resistance and misunderstandings" that surround the conciliar document.

In their note, the three dicasteries called for a renewed "pedagogy of dialogue," one that puts into practice an informed encounter between Catholic and those of other beliefs.

'Profound change' in response to the Shoah

The note recapped the development and promulgation of *Nostra Aetate*, which "marked a profound change" in how the church both understood and expressed its relationship with those of other faiths.

The dicasteries said *Nostra Aetate* aligned with another conciliar document, *Dignitatis Humanae*, which declared religious freedom a human right.

Specifically, said the note, *Nostra Aetate* was conceived as the church's response to the Shoah, the preferred Hebrew term for the systematic, state-sponsored persecution and murder of 6 million European Jews from 1933 to 1945 by the German Nazi regime, its allies and collaborators.

The note recalled a pivotal meeting between St. John XXIII and French academic Jules Isaac, who lost his wife, daughter and son-in-law at [Auschwitz](#), and who had published a study of the church's long-running "teaching of contempt" regarding Judaism and Jews.

That encounter, dated by scholars to June 13, 1960, is considered a major catalyst for the drafting of *Nostra Aetate*.

The dicasteries said in their note that "official and institutional Catholic-Jewish dialogue finds its foundation" in *Nostra Aetate*, which is also "the first magisterial statement that clearly recognizes the Jewish roots of Christianity."

Advertisement

Nostra Aetate — the tenets of which have been upheld and expounded upon by successive popes — illuminated the "fundamental principle" that "respect and esteem" must undergird interreligious dialogue, said the dicasteries.

Unique dialogue based on a 'rich, shared heritage'

The note highlighted the "distinctive character" of Jewish-Christian dialogue, given the "rich shared heritage" the two faith traditions share.

"What Jesus brought into Christianity, as a Jewish inheritance, forms part of the theological structure of Christianity itself," said the note.

The dicasteries stressed that Jewish-Christian dialogue cannot be regarded as "secondary," but as "a matter of becoming fully aware of one's own original identity."

Citing church teaching, the note observed that "God's covenant with the Jewish people is irrevocable," something that "continually challenges the Church."

That reality "does not mean, for Christians, that there are two paths to salvation or that the covenant with the Jewish people runs parallel to the Christian way of salvation," said the note, stating, "The Church teaches that Christ is the one and only Redeemer."

Still, the "irrevocable covenant has theological significance," said the note, adding, "The more Christians come to know and love the Jewish roots of their own tradition, the better they understand themselves in the practice of faith, and the stronger their religious identity becomes."

Dialogue continues amid modern conflicts

The note emphasized that "the religious life of contemporary Jews" is also "relevant to Christians."

Such "solidarity with the Jewish people also includes the shared struggle against antisemitism," said the dicasteries.

The note admitted that "the conflicts that have erupted in the Middle East in recent years" have "left their mark on Jewish-Christian dialogue," straining "many channels of communication."

Those channels "continue to be tested by differing interpretations of the events that have unfolded, interpretations that are often not unanimous even within the respective religious communities," said the dicasteries.

Nonetheless, "the pillars of dialogue among believers, built over sixty years of common effort, have remained firm," the note said.

Citing St. John Paul II, the dicasteries emphasized that dialogue with other religious traditions is "part of the Church's evangelizing mission."

Fruits of friendship in everyday life

The dicasteries said that six decades after its promulgation, *Nostra Aetate* has borne fruit in the church's relations with Judaism, Islam, Hinduism, Buddhism, Sikhism and numerous faith traditions, including traditional religions.

The note pointed to the postconciliar flourishing of "enduring friendships" among religious leaders, "joint educational and social projects" and collaborative responses to humanitarian needs, conflict and environmental crises.

Such fruits "are often lived out quietly and discreetly, rooted in everyday life" by "priests, religious, and the lay faithful," said the dicasteries.

These results, said the note, "embody the intuition of *Nostra Aetate*: to live in the world as witnesses to the love of God, in dialogue with all."

The dicasteries expressed hope such dialogue could extend to "members of 'new religious movements' and representatives of new religious experiences."

Such "fraternal encounters," while not ecumenical or interreligious dialogue "properly speaking," can provide chances to work together around "shared values" and the "common good," said the note, stressing the need for "clarity about one's own identity" and "mutual respect."

The dicasteries also said another fruit of *Nostra Aetate* was "the growing critical awareness of manifestations of Islamophobia."

"Contemporary challenges" demand a "genuine shift in mindset," including a renewed approach to dialogue itself based on greater religious literacy as well as an authentic commitment to peace, flexibility and friendship, said the note.

"This journey of hope remains open, and all of us are invited to walk it together with courage," said the dicasteries.