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Pope Francis meets with the Jewish community

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Pope Francis had his first meeting last week with members of the Jewish community. He strongly condemned anti-Semitism and promised to continue to promote collaborative relationships with Jewish groups around the world. He stressed the obvious ties Christians and Jews share through the common use of Scripture and the origins of Christianity through Judaism.

Francis also at least indirectly sought to overcome what had been a deterioration of Catholic/Jewish relationships during the papacy of Benedict XVI. The renewed use of a Good Friday prayer insensitive to Jews, the seeking of reconciliation with traditionalist Catholics who tended toward anti-Semitic views, and the effort to beatify Pope Pius XII (seen by many Jews as not having condemned the Holocaust strongly enough) all led to increased tensions with the Jewish community.

Pope Francis cited "Nostra Aetate," a document from the Second Vatican Council, as the foundation for Jewish/Christian relations. This was seen as an encouraging move. The Jewish delegation and Jewish organizations around the world responded favorably to Francis' overtures.

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