

CONCERNING A PRAYER FOR THE JEWS APPROVED BY POPE BENEDICT XVI
Amitie Judeo-Chretienne de France, February 11, 2008
(Jewish-Christian Friendship Association of France)

A return to the ritual of St. Pius V (the Mass in Latin), granted exceptionally to some of the faithful who remain attached to it, should not make us forget that the liturgy of Pope Paul VI, developed after the Second Vatican Council, remains the ordinary ritual for Catholics overall. Furthermore, within the framework of the authorization to return to the previous ritual, a recent Vatican decree has modified the Good Friday Prayer for the Jews in the traditional rite, in order to remove its offensive elements. It is the formulation of this correction which today is provoking debate.

The term "perfidis" applied to the Jews had been suppressed by Pope John XXIII, and today Benedict XVI has removed the reference to their "blindness." Unfortunately, one of the two phrases which make up this prayer mentions the intension that the people of Israel recognize Jesus as "savior of all people." This can be seen as expressive of the tragic proselytizing of the past and providing it with a foundation after the fact. The risk is that it will cause doubts for Jews regarding Catholics, and skepticism as to [Catholic] dialogue with them.

In these conditions, it is indispensable that we go back to the text which, during the preparation of the declaration *Nostra Aetate*, 4, was for the Council Fathers, the essential point of reference: St. Paul's letter to the Romans. When the Apostle speaks of the "hardening" of Israel (Rom 11:23), he does so with reference to the acknowledgement of Jesus as Messiah. Although he takes this for granted, he does not call us to convert the Jews. He says that the question of their hardening will be resolved when "the total number of pagans will have entered in." Therefore, the outcome of this rupture – which he experienced as a drama and a "mystery" whose ultimate meaning would only become clear in the fullness of time – depends upon our own conversion, as Christians, and our mission in the world. As we read this letter, Christians become aware of something that they have too often forgotten: the eschatological dimension of their faith, which places them in the perspective of a future in which Jewish faith and Christian faith are both fully respected. As the Holy See's Commission for Religious Relations with the Jews stated in 1985, in its "Notes on the Correct Way to Present the Jews and Judaism in the Preaching and Catechesis of the Catholic Church" (Paragraph 2, No. 10): "in underlining the eschatological dimension of Christianity we shall reach a greater awareness that the people of God of the Old and New Testament are tending towards a like end in the future: the coming or return of the Messiah – even if they start from two different points of view: awaiting the coming of the Messiah (from the Jewish point-of-view), or awaiting his return (from the Christian point-of-view). According to Christian faith, both Jews and Christians, fully living out their faith, "meet in a comparable hope, grounded in the same promise made to Abraham (Gen 12:1-3; Heb 6:13-18)."

Translation from French by Murray Watson