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## **Jewish-Christian Colloquium. Msgr. Russo: "Anti-Semitism has no place in our society."**

"Presenting today a concrete fruit of this path of dialogue, mutual understanding and cooperation between Jews and Catholics, made possible by the Declaration 'Nostra Aetate' of the Second Vatican Council, is of great significance", said the General Secretary of the Italian Bishops' Conference **Msgr. Russo** in his address at the round table dedicated to the "Commitment to dialogue in schools: IRC texts", held in the framework of the 41st National Jewish-Christian Colloquium in Camaldoli. During the meeting, a joint project promoted by the Italian Bishops' Conference and the Union of Italian Jewish Communities (UCEI), involving the creation of materials describing the key tenets of the Jewish tradition was presented to those present. It will be submitted to publishers of textbooks for the teaching of the Catholic religion, to ensure that errors and distortions are avoided by its contributors during the drafting process, thereby preventing misleading or incorrect interpretations resulting in simplifications and clichés. This, Msgr. Russo explained, "has entailed a critical analysis of some texts already published, and it will ensure that the new editions are updated and enriched."

**Profound and intellectually honest dialogue.** "We attach great value to the drafting of these materials, given the importance of mutual knowledge of Jewish and Christian culture. This effort has brought the Italian Bishops' Conference (CEI) and the Union of Italian Jewish Communities (UCEI) to cooperate, thereby deepening their mutual knowledge and trust. Some interesting, positive, important, promising educational proposals were presented at national level before the pandemic. One such example is the national seminar 'Judaism and Christianity in schools' for teachers and educators, aimed at the correct comprehension and dissemination of the two religions in school teaching. It was an encouraging experience, as it planned and implemented a two-track programme. Some departments of the General Secretariat of the Italian Bishops' Conference have launched a process that is positively marking the relations with the UCEI: *Mutual esteem based on profound and intellectually honest dialogue, in full respect of differences and understanding of each other's religious traditions. The intention is to ensure that this approach is replicated throughout Italy. COVID-19 has compelled us to interrupt this process, but surely it has not caused us to abandon it. On the contrary, it further strengthened our determination to work and walk together.* In fact, the General Secretariat of the Italian Bishops' Conference has indeed invested in and intends to continue its efforts to ensure that these processes become deeply established throughout the national territory involving the greatest possible number of teachers and educators on a permanent basis." However, the CEI Secretary pointed out, "in addition to the school environment, which is fundamental, I am also thinking of our pastoral workers and those who, in general, are tasked with educational activities that form the fabric of the community of believers and of society itself, the polis. Without forgetting young people, who are far ahead of us in the field of ecumenism and interreligious dialogue, especially if they are directly involved, living in multi-denominational and multi-religious contexts. Listening to them is a precious and important resource." **Guided by the Encyclical "Fratelli Tutti"**. My thoughts go to Pope Francis, to his words, said Msgr. Russo, "when he speaks of politics as a lofty vocation." "Recognizing that all people are our brothers and sisters, and seeking forms of social friendship that include everyone, is not merely utopian," writes the Pope. "It demands a decisive commitment to devising effective means to this end. Any effort along these lines becomes a noble exercise of charity. For whereas

**individuals can help others in need, when they join together in initiating social processes of fraternity and justice for all, they enter the "field of charity at its most vast, namely political charity.**

This entails working for a social and political order whose soul is social charity." Therefore, according

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to the Secretary of the Italian Bishops' Conference, "an understanding of the foundations of Christianity and Judaism is urgently needed in our present-day reality in order to counter the prejudices that have sadly marked, and sadly continue to mark, even today's world with acts of anti-Semitism and hatred. Anti-Semitism has no place in our society." **The Church is shaped by the Holy Spirit.** The Department for Ecumenism and the Secretariat have launched a process for pastoral activity at territorial level, involving the appointment of regional representatives in charge of the ecumenical and inter-religious dimension. "This is a new process. And it requires time and patience," said Msgr. Russo. "This doesn't mean inaction but care and attention in weaving authentic and project-generating relationships. It's the precious work of those who are familiar with the effort of proceeding together along the same path, so that Christian communities may initiate structural processes for the good of the Church,

**Never forgetting that the Church is shaped by the Holy Spirit. It is He whom we must listen to, for He works ahead of us, more and better than we do. It is the Holy Spirit we must yield to in order to respond fully to the call we have received, our faith.**

History is shaped by facts, and they tell us that what we can do should be done, and done well, with conviction and competence." It is our hope, he concluded, that "this cooperation will continue and grow over time, and that it will inspire us to pursue the struggle for peace and justice to flourish in a society that is increasingly thirsting for them." **Not a mere theological exercise.** Msgr. Russo's words were echoed by **Noemi Di Segni**, President of the UCEI, who participated in the meeting from Jerusalem and highlighted it as "an opportunity for sincere and mutual dialogue towards concrete and lasting results. *It is not a purely theological exercise, such as knowing each other's prayers, but rather the ability to be together, for mutual listening and understanding* In fact, knowledge and education are fundamental today for starting any project, any prospect of coexistence. And all of this must start with the young and the very young". It is from them, she concluded, that must "start anew."

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