



Committee on Ecumenical and Interreligious Affairs

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January 15, 2013

Dear Members of the USCCB Catholic-Jewish Dialogues:

Last week we all read the widespread media reports about an interview that Bishop Bernard Fellay, head of the “Society of St. Pius X” (a traditionalist movement that broke away from the Catholic Church in 1988), gave on December 28, 2012 in New Hamburg, Ontario. In his remarks, Bishop Fellay described Jews as “the enemies of the Church.” Referring to Jewish support for the Second Vatican Council, he then remarked that “Vatican II is their (the Jews’) thing, and not the Church’s.”

These statements come at the end of two years of talks between the Vatican and the Society of St. Pius X to reconcile the sad division that occurred between them some twenty-five years ago. In his role as chief shepherd of the Church, Pope Benedict XVI made every effort to help Bishop Fellay and his followers to accept the teachings of the Second Vatican Council as a precondition for full communion with the Catholic Church. Disappointingly, serious divisions in belief and practice remain to prevent reconciliation.

In response to Bishop Fellay, Vatican press spokesman, Fr. Federico Lombardi, S.J., said on January 4, 2013: “It is absolutely unacceptable, impossible to define Jews as enemies of the Church.” Fr. Lombardi then commented at length on the many efforts made since the Second Vatican Council – especially by Pope John Paul II and our present Holy Father, Benedict XVI – to extend the teachings of *Nostra Aetate* throughout the Church and to condemn anti-Semitism as having no place in Christian life. Fr. Lombardi concluded by saying: “The Church is deeply committed to dialogue with Jews.”

As the Chairman of the Bishops’ Committee on Ecumenical and Interreligious Affairs, I would like to add my own voice to Fr. Lombardi’s in affirming the relationship that all of us have worked so hard to create and sustain over almost 50 years since the publication of *Nostra Aetate*. I wish to assure you as both colleagues and friends, that the Holy See and the USCCB find the statements of Bishop Fellay both false and deeply regrettable. His remarks are not only prejudiced, but also hurtful. Comments that cause pain to our Jewish partners are painful to us, as well.

I am grateful to Jewish agencies and individuals who have published statements in recent days, reaffirming the truth: that the Catholic Church has renounced centuries-old attitudes of anti-Judaism that blamed Jews collectively for the death of Christ and denied the validity of God's covenant with his chosen people, begun in Abraham and continued into our present day. The Catholic Church deeply values the friendship of the Jewish people and looks forward to the day when bias against them is eliminated everywhere.

I would also take this opportunity to thank each of you who represent so many important Jewish partnerships with the USCCB – in rabbinical organizations, seminaries, social and political agencies, universities and others – for your continued commitment to our on-going dialogue. May God bless and keep you in our common work!

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Denis J. Madden". The signature is written in a cursive style with a small cross at the beginning.

Most Reverend Denis J. Madden
Chairman, Bishops' Committee for Ecumenical and Interreligious Affairs