

Cardinal Koch text on "the Jews, our elder brothers"

From the Religious Information Service (SIR) (Italy); <http://www.agensir.it>

January 17, 2013

Translated from the Italian by Father Murray Watson

The Jews: "Our elder brothers": Cardinal Kurt Koch, the president of the Vatican's Commission for Religious Relations with the Jews, told SIR: "I am very grateful that the churches in Italy are celebrating the 'Day for Judaism'. And I am also very happy about this date [i.e, January 17], because it falls just before the Week of Prayer for Christian Unity. This Day, therefore, shows the relationship between the Church and the synagogue". "The Jews," the cardinal said, "are our elder brothers; especially in Benedict XVI's vision of the unity between the two Testaments, we are irrevocably bound to the Jewish people. This vision is also made clear in the light of the conciliar declaration 'Nostra Ætate'". With regard to concerns about a probable 'opening' to the Priestly Fraternity of St. Pius X, the cardinal was very clear: "There is no doubt in the Catholic Church that this declaration [Nostra Ætate] still retains its value today. It is only the group of the Lefebvrites who do not accept it who do not accept ecumenical dialogue, relations with the Jews or religious freedom. These are, however, central points of the Holy Father's magisterium, and if there is a group that does not accept a Council, and does not accept a teaching of the Magisterium [literally, "a Magisterium"], then one must ask how it is that they can see themselves as Catholic. This is the fundamental issue". The cardinal then recalled what Father Lombardi had said regarding some of the wording of Bishop Fellay, of the Lefebvrites: "Any form of anti-Semitism is a non-Christian act, and the Catholic Church must fight with all its strength against that phenomenon". Is there, then, any risk of taking 'backward' steps? "Absolutely not," Cardinal Koch responded, "since the Church cannot call the Council into question. That is unthinkable. And the Holy Father cannot deny his [own] magisterium.