

**NATIONAL COUNCIL OF SYNAGOGUES  
UNITED STATES CONFERENCE OF CATHOLIC BISHOPS**

**MINUTES**

**JUNE 20, 2016**

**CARDINAL COOKE CATHOLIC CENTER, NY**

**Attendance:**

**H. E. Cardinal Timothy Dolan, Bishops Robert Barron, Frank Caggiano, Basil Losten, Denis Madden, James Massa; Bishops William Murphy, David Talley, David Zubik were unable to attend. Rev. Lawrence Frizzel, Msgr. John Kozar, Rev. James Loughran, Rev. Brian McWheeney, Msgr. Guy Massie, Rev. David Michael, Msgr. Robert Stern and Rev. Dennis McManus Rabbis David Straus, Alvin Berkun, Noam Marans, David Sandmel, Harold Berman, Jonathan Waxman, Steve Gutow, Adam Gregerman, Jeffrey Wohlberg, Lewis Eron, Wayne Franklin, Joel Meyers, Daniel Polish**

**Guests:**

**Rev. Ronald Roberson, Rabbi Yitz Greenberg**

Cardinal Timothy Dolan opened the meeting with a reading from the Book of Psalms.

New members of the group were introduced.

Cardinal Dolan welcomed Rabbi Harold Berman as the incoming Director of the National Council of Synagogues.

Rev. Ronald Roberson, CSP, Associate Director of the USCCB Secretariat of Ecumenical and Interreligious Affairs spoke about "The Eastern Catholic Churches: Their Origins, Structure and Presence in the Middle East Today."

Rev. Roberson illustrated, with lists and charts, the various Eastern Catholic Churches, and their memberships. He listed them according to Canonical Status (form of leadership) and according to membership statistics. He also discussed some of the theological divisions that brought about splits over the course of the centuries and discussed efforts at reconciliation through various councils of the Catholic Church through history. He also spoke of the historical missionary efforts of the Church in bringing some of the people in various areas under Roman Church authority, resulting in various Church denominations within Catholicism that affirm the authority of the Pope (as opposed to the Orthodox Churches that do not) but maintain distinctive traditions and forms of leadership and ritual.

Additional discussion clarified some of the political history of the split between Rome and Constantinople and differences in relationships between church authorities and secular authorities, historically, between the East and the West.

Rabbi Yitz Greenberg discussed the recently issued Orthodox statement regarding Christianity. He emphasized that the statement:

- Sees Christianity as emerging from Jewish roots as part of a divine plan to bring a knowledge of God to the world – Christianity is viewed as being in partnership with Judaism in this endeavor.
- Reflects the positive developments, post-Holocaust, through which Christian efforts have worked to eliminate anti-Semitism from the church.
- Suggests work that is needed for Jewish self-reflection in the elimination of trends that are anti-pluralism.
- Notes that Jewish and Christians have more in common that should unite us as opposed to those issues that divide us.
- Identifies Jews and Christians as partners in seeking the redemption of the world.
- Notes that we are joint witnesses in a secular world. And in a world where hatreds still seem to be the result of some religious influences, we are witnesses that past hatreds can be overcome. But overcoming past hatreds isn't enough. We need to work on common causes of Tikkun Olam.

After lunch Rev. David Michael, ecumenical advisor to Cardinal Sean O'Malley, Archbishop of Boston, reviewed the incident and the responses concerning epithets that were used before and during a basketball game between Newton North High School and Catholic Memorial School. Coincidentally the incident occurred on the day after Cardinal O'Malley spoke to the Jewish community emphasizing how much had been achieved in the fifty years since Nostra Aetate.

As reported, North Newton students made derogatory comments about the all-male Catholic School, and the students from Catholic Memorial responded with "You killed Jesus." The Catholic students were reprimanded immediately and were required to apologize and shake hands with the Newton North principal at the end of the game. The Archdiocese coordinated with the AJC and the ADL on statements made to the press and followed up with meetings of faculty and students, even though the school is not technically a part of the structure of the archdiocese. Much work and reflection followed in searching for how such ideas found their way into the expressions of the students, and how any such expressions can be avoided in the future. AJC and ADL representatives and the staff of the school and the archdiocese expressed gratitude for the cooperation and support of all the leadership involved. There was concern expressed about what similar follow-up has been taken at Newton North. No one seemed to have a clear answer regarding action at Newton North.

Rev. Dennis McManus discussed the recent statement of the CMSM (Conference of Major Superiors of Men) in favor of BDS. He emphasized that it is a small group, outside the framework of the USCCB and its statement was issued without review by those in the office of Interreligious Affairs. It is regretted and efforts are being made to show how the limited information and limited experience of the group's leadership caused an unfortunate statement to be issued.

There was also discussion of recent moves to bring some of the extreme right groups who have not previously endorsed Nostra Aetate back into the mainstream of the church. It was emphasized that desire for unity does not compromise the principles of the church and Nostra Aetate will not be compromised.

A report from the Israel Embassy was shared. Israel is proud of being the only place in the Middle East where Christian communities are growing. Even though much of that growth is immigration from Russia, the indigenous Christian communities of Israel are growing as well. Attacks on churches by extremists have been investigated and prosecuted vigorously. Discussions over funding for Christian schools are still in progress but many of the issues have already been resolved.

There was a discussion regarding a protocol for issuing statements from the group on issues of concern when they arise. The challenge is that both groups are responsible to larger bodies and must clear statements with them, although individuals as leaders can issue statements in their own names.

There was also discussion, for this purpose and for other issues, of having a small executive working committee of the discussion group. This would involve co-chairs, perhaps one or two others from each group and members of the staff.

Information was shared about the upcoming conference of the International Council of Christians and Jews in Philadelphia in July. Anyone interested was encouraged to register and participate.

November 7, 2016 was set for the next meeting at the Jewish Theological Seminary in New York.

June 21, 2017 was set for the meeting following that, hopefully at St. Patrick's Cathedral with a tour of the facility for those who are interested.