

CONSULTATION BETWEEN THE US CONFERENCE OF CATHOLIC BISHOPS
AND THE NATIONAL COUNCIL OF SYNAGOGUE
MAY 22, 2012 AT THE CATHOLIC CENTER IN NEW YORK CITY

The semi-annual consultation between the Bishops Committee on ecumenical and Interreligious affairs of the US Conference of Catholic bishops and the National Council of Synagogues took place on May 22 in New York at the Catholic Center. Bishop Denis Madden of the Baltimore Archdiocese and Rabbi David Straus of the Main Line Reform Temple in Wynnewood, Pennsylvania presided.

The morning session was devoted to a study and critique of the new volume, *The Jewish Annotated New Testament*, edited by Professor Amy-Jill Levine of Vanderbilt University and Professor Marc Brettler of Brandeis University. Professor Levine explained why she was so keen to produce such a novel volume. She reminded the audience that the New Testament is a part of ancient Jewish history, that it contains some of the earliest references to the Pharisaic movement in Judaism, that its central characters were all Jewish, and that it is an invaluable source for the history of the Second Temple period in Jewish history. Moreover, she stressed that it is vital to study the New Testament so that Jews may gain greater respect for their Christian neighbors even as Christians ought to study the Jewish elements of the New Testament to learn about the Jewish roots of Christianity and how to relate better to their Jewish neighbors. Professor Levine also stressed her conviction that such studies dispel stereotypes and invidious comparisons while fostering a greater sense of mutual respect and understanding. She believes that this volume if used properly can help clergy to avoid anti-Jewish teaching and preaching and develop a deeper feeling of respect for one another for ultimately we do need each other.

In his response, Father Professor John Donahue of Loyola University in Baltimore described the volume as “an outstanding book” containing splendid commentaries on the books of the New Testament as well as fine essays at the end of the volume on a variety of vital subjects. Professor Donahue recommended that it become a primary or accompanying text in every seminary, along with the Jewish Study Bible, which he extolled. The new Jewish Annotated New Testament is a tribute to the historical-critical method of studying Scripture, is attractive and eminently readable. Fr. Donahue observed that the volume is wonderfully timely since Catholics are now contemplating the 50th anniversary of the Second Vatican Council and its historic pronouncement on the Jews, *Nostra Aetate*.

A number of the representatives urged that the new volume be recommended to pastors for pastoral work, theologians and Bible teacher, as well as textbook authors and editors because of its remarkable scholarly insights and educational and theological value.

The business session of the consultation heard a report on the Middle East and the progress between the Israeli government and the Vatican to conclude the details of its Fundamental Agreement. Father Dennis McManus described the frustrating attempt to bring the Pope Pius X Society back into the Catholic fold. It appears that the group, which can only return if it accepts the teachings and

principles of the Second Vatican Council is about to split into two because one large group refuses to abide by those teaching even they are part of the Catholic Magisterium and thereby binding on all Catholics.

A report on the Vatican archives presented a more hopeful picture that they might be open soon as the Vatican has hired new archivists to assist in the monumental task of sifting through perhaps one-million documents.

The Catholic participants included: Bishop Denis Madden, Bishop Basil Losten, Rev. Professor Laurence Frizzell, Fr. Drew Christiansen, Msgr. Robert Stern, Fr. Dennis McManus, and Br. David Carroll.

The Jewish participants included: Rabbis Joel Meyers, Jonathan Waxman, David Sandmel, David Straus, Lewis Eron, Alvin Berkun, Jeffrey Wohlberg, Jerome Davidson, Dan Polish, Gilbert S. Rosenthal, and Professor Ruth Langer, Judith Hertz and Betty Ehrenberg.