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- E. Robert Goodkind

Partner and American Jewish Committee President E. Robert Goodkind Leads First American Jewish Organization Audience with Pope

Pryor Cashman partner and American Jewish

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Pope Receives American Jewish Committee at Vatican

March 16, 2006 – American Jewish Committee President E. Robert Goodkind led a leadership delegation in a private audience with Pope Benedict XVI at the Vatican today. AJC is the first American Jewish organization the pope has received.

Both AJC and the pope saluted the spirit of cooperation and mutual respect that characterizes Catholic-Jewish relations, recalled the historic Nostra Aetate document issued 40 years ago, and called for dialogue among Christians, Jews and Muslims.

“We appreciate your forceful condemnations of anti-Semitism,” said Goodkind as he addressed the pope in front of the AJC delegation of 28 leaders from across the U.S. He praised the pope’s “unwavering determination to see that the immense tragedy of the Holocaust is appropriately remembered and never forgotten.”

Goodkind reviewed AJC’s leading role since its founding 100 years ago in advancing Catholic-Jewish relations, especially in the efforts leading up to the promulgation of Nostra Aetate, and he also praised the pope’s commitment to the landmark document.

“We deeply appreciate your clear determination to carry forward the luminous spirit of Nostra Aetate and the many subsequent Vatican notes and guidelines related to it,” said Goodkind. “Helping to maintain that spirit is the training of future clergy, conducted by the American Jewish Committee and the Vatican’s Commission for Religious Relations with Jewry currently taking place at the Cardinal Bea Center at the Gregorian Pontifical University and at other institutions with which AJC is affiliated in the United States.”

The pope warmly welcomed AJC, and engaged each member of the delegation in brief conversation after his formal remarks.

“I trust that this meeting will further encourage your efforts to increase friendship between the Jewish people and the Catholic Church,” said the pope. “Jews and Christians have a rich common patrimony. In many ways this distinguishes our relationship as unique among the religions of the world.”

Rabbi David Rosen, AJC’s international director of interreligious affairs, said, “It is always wonderful from our perspective to hear his profound commitment to Catholic-Jewish relations and his emphasis on the uniqueness of the relationship.” The pope recently honored Rosen by making him a Knight Commander of the Order of Saint Gregory the Great. He is the first Israeli and only Orthodox rabbi to receive the papal knighthood.

The pope also called for respect of all religious symbols and places of worship, and said that Christian, Jewish and Muslim leaders should work together for world peace. “Religious leaders have a responsibility to work for reconciliation through genuine dialogue and acts of human solidarity,” said the pope.

In a meeting with Vatican officials earlier in the day, AJC asked the Holy See to play a role in initiating a trilateral dialogue among Christians, Jews and Muslims.

“We believe that our extensive and ongoing global efforts to foster good relations among all faith communities – especially in the Holy Land – constitute a pressing moral responsibility that is of the greatest significance for world peace,” said Goodkind in his remarks at the papal audience.

On the shared global interests of the Christian and Jewish communities, Goodkind said, “We stand together in firm moral solidarity, working to push back against intolerance, to promote human dignity, and to awaken the collective conscience of mankind.”

Goodkind emphasized that responding to urgent world issues “requires resolve in the face of terror and violent intimidation.” That is the first priority, he added.

“Any accommodation between Israel and its neighbors that is not only based upon unequivocal recognition of the State of Israel as the homeland of the Jewish people, but also the repudiation of the menace of terrorism, will serve only to postpone the achievement of peace,” Goodkind said. [Click for Goodkind's remarks at the audience.](#)

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