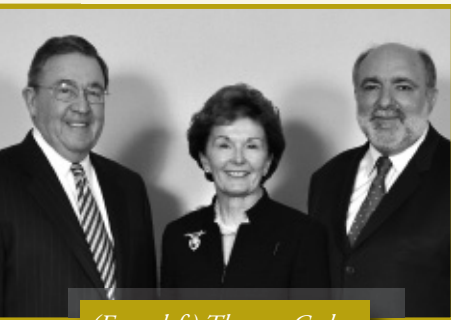


# Fostering a New Era in Catholic-Jewish Relations

October 28, 1965 stands as a landmark date in the history of Jewish-Catholic relations. On that date, the Second Vatican Council, in response to a call put forth by Pope John Paul XXIII, issued a statement on Jews and Judaism, *Nostra Aetate*.



(From left) Rabbi Kenneth E. Ehrlich, Dean, HUC-JIR/Cincinnati; James A. Miller, Bartlett and Company, Tribute Dinner Corporate Council Co-Chair; Michael J. Graham, S.J., President of Xavier University; Patty and Louis Beck, Tribute Dinner Co-Chairs; Rabbi Ellenson; and Kevin Kabat, CEO, President and Chairman of Fifth Third Bank, Tribute Dinner Honoree



(From left) Thomas Cody, Vice Chair of Macy's, Tribute Dinner Honorary Co-Chair; Mary Ellen Cody; and Rabbi Ellenson

This document provided a positive assessment of the role played by the Jewish people throughout history and decisively repudiated anti-Semitism. The spirit of openness and dialogue found in its pages contained a promise of hope and reconciliation, as well as a recognition of the common heritage that forged both the Church and the Synagogue. This document marked the advent of a new era in Catholic-Jewish relations, and the spirit of ecumenism, religious tolerance, and appreciation that marked its pages opened new avenues for Jewish-Catholic dialogue and cooperation.

In the years that have passed since *Nostra Aetate* was written, both HUC-JIR and Xavier University (XU) have attempted to build on the promise and possibility that the document provided. Xavier and HUC-JIR have on occasion exchanged faculty, allowed and encouraged students at one institution to study at the other in fields as disparate as education and business administration, and worked together on exhibitions and common projects that testify to the presence of God's grace in our midst. It is with the conviction that both the Catholic and Jewish tradi-

tions require that we do the work of the Divine in this world that an exciting and unprecedented partnership between this great Catholic university and this venerable Jewish seminary has been created.

XU and HUC-JIR have embarked upon a groundbreaking collaboration – the first of its kind between a Jewish seminary and a Jesuit university – to create a Jewish and Interfaith Studies Program that will be offered to undergraduates at Xavier and to rabbinical and graduate students at HUC-JIR. The creation of this joint program in Jewish and Interfaith Studies will allow for the rich human and intellectual treasures and programs that exist at each of these schools of higher education to enrich the lives of both. This unique collaboration symbolizes the transformational visions and shared values of the institutions' two presidents, Father Michael Graham and Rabbi David Ellenson.

"This partnership can serve as a beacon to all persons in Cincinnati and beyond as to how these religious traditions can and do promote the life-affirming qualities inherent in each," said Rabbi Ellenson. "It will provide a potent assertion that what unites Catholics and Jews as persons of faith is far more significant than those issues that differentiate us, for each tradition and its adherents seek to worship and serve God."

The lead gift for this initiative is an inaugural gift of \$750,000 from the Macy's Foundation, which was announced on September 4, 2008, when Tom Cody, Macy's Divisional Vice Chairman, met with Father Graham and Rabbi Ellenson. Don Stone, Governor Emeritus, has also supported this groundbreaking project.

A Steering Committee consisting of HUC-JIR and XU faculty and administration will determine annual course offerings at both institutions and oversee assessment of courses and instructors, consistent with the two institutions' policies and procedures. The first phase of the program, which began during the 2008-09 academic year, has

HUC-JIR faculty teaching undergraduate courses in Jewish Studies, thus enabling XU to establish a minor in Jewish Studies. Many courses to be offered during the next years – including Jewish theology, Jewish Biblical interpretation, literary theory and criticism, Rabbinic literature, Jewish history, Jewish belief, practice, worship and ritual, ethics, Biblical archaeology, and Biblical Hebrew – are interdisciplinary and some will be team-taught by XU and HUC-JIR faculty. XU students will have full access to the extensive holdings of HUC-JIR's Klau Library and American Jewish Archives.

The second phase of the program will begin in the 2009-2010 academic year, when XU faculty will teach or participate in a number of courses in HUC-JIR's School of Graduate Studies. XU faculty will be invited to assist with the guidance of doctoral dissertations and comprehensive exams.

Through this program, HUC-JIR's and XU's faculty will develop dynamic and collegial partnerships as teachers and mentors who will nurture ecumenical understanding among their students and impart the wisdom of both faiths. In doing so, the promise inherent in *Nostra Aetate* will find concrete expression, and the messianic promise that lies at the heart of both traditions will find fuller realization.

Additionally, HUC-JIR is in the nascent stages of creating yet another scholarly collaboration with the University of Cincinnati (UC). When completed, this joint venture, linking HUC-JIR's faculty, the Klau Library, and the American Jewish Archives with Xavier and UC, will position the Cincinnati campus as one of the most prestigious centers of Jewish and Interfaith Studies worldwide, offering an unparalleled scope, depth, and breadth of academic excellence. Furthermore, the enhancement of the campus's technological infrastructure of eLearning-classrooms and online resources will extend the courses and curriculum created through these partnerships throughout the College-Institute's centers of learning in Los Angeles, New York, and Jerusalem.