



AUSTRALIAN CATHOLIC BISHOPS CONFERENCE

November 25, 2005

A statement from the Catholic Bishops of Australia to mark the 40th anniversary of *Nostra Aetate*

This year marks the fortieth anniversary of *Nostra Aetate*, the statement of the Second Vatican Council on relations between the Church and non-Christian religions. It was an epoch-making document, and we cannot let the anniversary pass without expressing our gratitude for all that it has made possible and our hopes for the future to which it points.

The statement was a turning-point in the long and tortured history of the relationship between Christians and Jews. Since 1965, *Nostra Aetate* has had a great impact on that relationship, and that is cause for thanksgiving after so much sorrow and suffering.

In Australia, it has meant that the Catholic Church has become increasingly involved in dialogue and collaboration with the Jewish community, and in this anniversary year we commit ourselves to developing still further the friendship that has been struck and the mutual respect which this implies.

Nostra Aetate has also been a spur to dialogue with other communities representing the great world religions in Australia. In particular, our contact with the Islamic community has increased as new conversations and exchanges have begun to take place. This is for us a source of real rejoicing, all the more so because peace in this country and in the world depends in part upon peace between Judaism, Christianity and Islam. But we look beyond the three monotheistic religions to the other religions of the world with whom we have increasing contact, such as Buddhism and Hinduism, as we seek to shape words and deeds of peace for the sake of the human family.

Our hope now is that the interreligious dialogue made possible by *Nostra Aetate* will grow still deeper. As religious leaders, we pledge ourselves to carry forward in every way possible the vision of the Vatican Council's teaching in the years that lie ahead. May the God of peace be with us all.

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