

Jewish-Catholic bonds of friendship continue to grow in Australia

"The spirit of warmth and openness between the Catholic Church and the Jewish community, which developed dramatically under Pope John Paul II, has set a firm foundation for the bonds of friendship and co-operation to grow stronger and deeper", was the conclusion reached by the participants in the 8th "Annual Conversation" of the Australian Catholic Bishops' Committee for Ecumenism (ACBC) and the Executive Council of Australian Jewry (ECAJ) held in May 2005.

The Annual Conversation jointly chaired by Bishop Michael Putney of Townsville and Jeremy Jones of the ECAJ took place at St Mary's Cathedral, Sydney.

The Conversation opened with a tribute to the work of the late Pope John Paul II in advancing relations between Catholics and Jews, and concluded with an in-depth consideration of the direction and tenor of Jewish-Catholic relations since the publication of the Vatican II document *Nostra Aetate* in 1965, with special focus on Australian experiences.

The participants in the Conversation also engaged in a session titled "Life and death questions: reflections on the life of Terry Schiavo", where Dr Bernadette Tobin, Director of the Plunkett Centre for Ethics in Health Care and Rabbi Jeremy Lawrence of the Great Synagogue Sydney led discussion involving biblical and religious sources, community values, government and judicial opinions and humanitarian considerations of responses to people with Post Coma Unresponsiveness.

Reflecting on the current international and domestic position of Jewish-Catholic relations, Jeremy Jones said "we have moved dramatically from a position of suspicion and distrust to one of respect and co-operation, where we can discuss all issues openly and frankly".

Bishop Putney noted "All of us, Jews and Catholics, have learnt so much about and from each other on how we can work to inject ethics, morality and a spirit of human kindness into public debate and policy."

"We have been inspired by the recent correspondence between Pope Benedict XVI and the Chief Rabbi of Rome, which demonstrated clearly the respect, warmth and fraternity which currently characterises the Catholic-Jewish relationship", the Conversation participants concluded.

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Delegations:

Executive Council of Australian Jewry

Jeremy Jones (Immediate Past President, Executive Council of Australian Jewry) Co-Chair
Grahame Leonard (President, ECAJ)
Rabbi John Levi (Deputy President, ECAJ; Union for Progressive Judaism)
Rabbi Jeremy Lawrence (Great Synagogue, Sydney)
Rabbi David Freedman (Kehillat Masada, St Ives, Sydney)
Ms Peta Pellach (Shalom Institute)
Mr Athol Morris (ACT)

Australian Catholic Bishops Conference

Bishop Michael Putney (Bishop of Townsville and Chair, Bishops' Committee for Ecumenical and Interfaith Relations) Co-Chair

Bishop Geoffrey Jarrett (Bishop of Lismore and Secretary, Bishops' Committee for Ecumenical and Interfaith Relations)

Bishop Jeremiah Coffey (Bishop of Sale)

Bishop Anthony Fisher op (Auxiliary Bishop of Sydney)

Associate Prof Bernadette Tobin (Director, Plunkett Centre for Ethics in Health Care, St Vincents Hospital, Darlinghurst)

Michael Brown (Executive Secretary, Bishops Committee for Ecumenical and Interfaith Relations)