

Teaching on Jews and Judaism in Selected US Catholic Seminaries

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Introduction

“The history of relations between Jews and Christians is a tormented one,”¹ but following centuries of distrust, the relationship took an historic turn for the better with the promulgation of *Nostra Aetate* at the Second Vatican Council in 1965.² In the years following the council, the Roman Catholic Church, profoundly affected by the devastation of the Second World War and the *Shoah*, understood the importance of addressing antisemitism not only in the broader society but also in the Church itself. As the generation that lived through the war are now for the most part gone, and as the Church leaders who first implemented the council’s decrees have also faded from the scene, it is worth taking stock of the Church’s current commitment to correcting past faults and building a better relationship with the Jewish community. In keeping with this broader agenda, this study reports the results of a survey of the academic deans of Roman Catholic seminaries in 2019, which sheds light on what priests learn about Jews and Judaism during their formation. This study has four parts: (1) summarizing briefly the relevant teachings of the Catholic Church on Catholic-Jewish relations and its guidelines for priestly formation, (2) presenting demographic information about the US Catholic and Jewish populations and rising antisemitism in the country, (3) summarizing data from one-on-one interviews with the academic deans or their designees from selected major seminaries and noting areas of concern, and (4) offering recommendations based on the study’s findings and suggestions for further study.

I. The Catholic Church’s Teachings

The Catholic Church has promulgated official documents, both from the Holy See and from the US Conference of Catholic Bishops (USCCB), which state the Church’s teachings on the two issues that are relevant to this study: (1) the relationship of the Church to Jews and Judaism and

¹ Commission for Religious Relations with the Jews, *We Remember: A Reflection on the Shoah*, The Holy See, Dicastery for Promoting Christian Unity, March 16, 1998, <http://www.christianunity.va/content/unitacristiani/en/commissione-per-i-rapporti-religiosi-con-l-ebraismo/commissione-per-i-rapporti-religiosi-con-l-ebraismo-crrc/documenti-della-commissione/en1.html>; Edward Kessler, *An Introduction to Jewish-Christian Relations* (Cambridge, UK: Cambridge University Press, 2013); Eugene J. Fisher, *Faith without Prejudice: Rebuilding Christian Attitudes toward Judaism* (New York: Paulist Press, 1977).

² *Declaration on the Relation of the Church to Non-Christian Religions—Nostra Aetate*, §4, in *The Sixteen Documents of Vatican II and the Instruction on the Liturgy with Commentaries by the Council Fathers*, comp. J. L. Gonzalez (Boston, Daughters of St. Paul, 1967).

(2) guidelines for the education of Catholic priests. The official documents not only present the Church's perspective on these issues, but they also serve as the basis for an assessment of the Church's adherence to its own standards. Although the following survey of Church documents does not exhaust the relevant literature, it identifies and highlights key elements in official Catholic statements.

A. Catholic-Jewish Relations

1. *The Holy See*

For the Catholic Church, the most important document on Catholic-Jewish relations is the fourth section of *Nostra Aetate* from Vatican II. Many commentators view it as one of the major achievements of the council.³ In addition to opening dialogue with the Jewish community, *Nostra Aetate* pointedly denounces antisemitism and instructs those involved in Catholic preaching and catechetics of their responsibility to present Jews in the proper light. Significantly, *Nostra Aetate* states that “[a]ll should see to it, then, that in catechetical work or in the preaching of the word of God they do not teach anything that does not conform to the truth of the Gospel and the spirit of Christ. Furthermore, . . . the Church . . . decries hatred, persecutions, displays of anti-Semitism, directed against Jews at any time and by anyone.”⁴

In the years since the promulgation of *Nostra Aetate*, the Holy See's Commission for Religious Relations with the Jews (CRRJ) has issued a series of instructions on the Church's understanding of its relationship to Jews and Judaism. In 1974, the CRRJ stated that given the history of antisemitism and the close historical relationship between the Church and Judaism, the Church has an obligation to understand contemporary Judaism: “On a practical level in particular, Christians must therefore strive to acquire a better knowledge of the basic components of the religious tradition of Judaism; they must strive to learn by what essential traits the Jews define themselves in the light of their own religious experience.”⁵ The CRRJ highlighted the particular responsibility that preachers have in dealing with scriptural passages that may support antisemitism: “With respect to liturgical readings, care will be taken to see that homilies based on them will not distort their meaning, especially when it is a question of passages which seem to show the Jewish people as such in an unfavorable light. Efforts will be made so to instruct the Christian people that they will understand the true interpretation of all the texts and their meaning for a contemporary believer.”⁶

The CRRJ acknowledges that when it comes to references to Jews and Judaism, the Church must take “special attention” to avoid errors at “all levels of Christian instruction.”⁷ For example,

³ Zion Evrony, ed., *Jewish-Catholic Dialogue: Nostra Aetate, 50 Years on* (Vatican City: Urbaniana University Press, 2016); Gilbert S. Rosenthal, ed., *A Jubilee for All Time: The Copernican Revolution in Jewish-Christian Relations* (Eugene, OR: Pickwick, 2014); Pim Valkenberg and Anthony Cirelli, eds., “Part IV: Dialogue with Jews” in *Nostra Aetate: Celebrating 50 Years of the Catholic Church's Dialogue with Jews and Muslims* (Washington, DC: Catholic University of America Press, 2016).

⁴ *Nostra Aetate*, §4.

⁵ CRRJ, *Guidelines and Suggestions for Implementing the Conciliar Declaration “Nostra Aetate”* (n. 4), The Holy See, Dicastery for Promoting Christian Unity, December 1, 1974, “Preamble,” <http://www.christianunity.va/content/unitacrisciani/en/commissione-per-i-rapporti-religiosi-con-l-ebraismo/commissione-per-i-rapporti-religiosi-con-l-ebraismo-crre/documenti-della-commissione/en3.html>.

⁶ CRRJ, §II.

⁷ CRRJ, §III.

teachers should not set the Hebrew Scriptures/Old Testament and the New Testament against each other, claiming that the “former seems to constitute a religion of only justice, fear and legalism, with no appeal to the love of God and neighbor.”⁸ For teachers to use catechisms, religious textbooks, and the mass media effectively in presenting Jews and Judaism requires “thorough formation of instructors and educators in training schools, *seminaries* and universities.”⁹ The CRRJ also encourages Catholic institutions of higher education to engage in research into “problems bearing on Judaism and Jewish-Christian relations,” and “[w]herever possible, chairs of Jewish studies will be created, and collaboration with Jewish scholars encouraged.”¹⁰

In 1985, the CRRJ issued guidance to preachers and catechists on presenting Jews and Judaism.¹¹ The CRRJ wrote, “Because of the unique relations that exist between Christianity and Judaism—‘linked together at the very level of their identity’—relations ‘founded on the design of the God of the Covenant,’ the Jews and Judaism should not occupy an occasional and marginal place in catechesis: their presence there is essential and should be organically integrated.”¹² The CRRJ cautioned against religious instruction that treats Jews only from an historic perspective, stating that the shared patrimony of Christians and Jews requires “‘due awareness of the faith and religious life of the Jewish people *as they are professed and practiced still today.*’”¹³

The CRRJ directly addressed the danger of antisemitism in Catholic catechesis: “The urgency and importance of precise, objective and rigorously accurate teaching on Judaism for our faithful[,] follows . . . from the danger of anti-Semitism[,] which is always ready to reappear under different guises.”¹⁴ For the CRRJ, the most effective way to combat antisemitism among the faithful is not just addressing it when it arises but teaching about the unique “‘bond’” that joins the Church to Jews and Judaism.¹⁵

The CRRJ advises preachers and catechists to remember the Jewish roots of Christianity¹⁶ and to take particular care in presenting Jews in the context of the New Testament.¹⁷ The CRRJ underscores the problems that arise when one reads references to Jews in the New Testament uncritically, without understanding the historical context of the New Testament and the conflict between the early Church and the Jewish community.¹⁸ The CRRJ states that it is particularly concerned with how preachers and catechists refer to Jews in preparing homilies and lessons for the last weeks of Lent and Holy Week.¹⁹ The CRRJ reminds preachers and catechists that they should not confuse the Jews who did not accept the teachings of Jesus with contemporary Jews,²⁰ nor should they hold Jews living at Jesus’ time or today responsible for his passion and death.²¹

⁸ CRRJ, §III (citations omitted).

⁹ CRRJ, §III (italics added).

¹⁰ CRRJ, §III.

¹¹ CRRJ, *Notes on the Correct Way to Present Jews and Judaism in Preaching and Catechesis in the Roman Catholic Church*, The Holy See, Dicastery for Promoting Christian Unity, June 24, 1985, <http://www.christianunity.va/content/unitacristiani/en/commissione-per-i-rapporti-religiosi-con-l-ebraismo/commissione-per-i-rapporti-religiosi-con-l-ebraismo-crre/documenti-della-commissione/en2.html>.

¹² CRRJ, §I.2. (citations omitted).

¹³ CRRJ, §I.3 (italics added in the original in citing the source).

¹⁴ CRRJ, §I.8.

¹⁵ CRRJ, §I.8.

¹⁶ CRRJ, §III.

¹⁷ CRRJ, §IV.

¹⁸ CRRJ, §IV.1.A.

¹⁹ CRRJ, §IV.1.A.

²⁰ CRRJ, §IV.1.A, F.

²¹ CRRJ, §IV.2.

The CRRJ also states that “[e]ducation and catechesis should concern themselves with the problem of racism, still active in many forms of anti-Semitism.”²² Consequently, the CRRJ exhorts Church members to engage with the Jewish community to overcome a legacy of dangerous ignorance: “There is evident in particular a painful ignorance of the history and traditions of Judaism, of which only negative aspects and often caricature seem to form part of the stock ideas of many Christians.”²³

In preparing to mark the millennium in 2000, a time for repentance and renewal, the CRRJ reflected on the meaning of the *Shoah* for the Church and its responsibility to make amends and learn from it.²⁴ The CRRJ wrote that the Church’s relationship with Judaism is unique, a relationship that is significantly different than its relationship with any other religion.²⁵ Moreover, the CRRJ stated that reflecting on the *Shoah* calls Christians to take a moral inventory of what gave rise to it, noting in particular the relationship between centuries of Christian anti-Judaism in Europe and the Nazi persecution of Jews.²⁶ The CRRJ acknowledged that for many Christians, their failure to oppose the antisemitic program of National Socialism remains a “heavy burden of conscience” that calls for “penitence.”²⁷

In looking toward the future, the CRRJ appeals to “Catholic brothers and sisters to renew the awareness of the Hebrew roots of their faith.”²⁸ As an act of repentance, the CRRJ writes, the Church must make a “binding commitment,” in the words of Pope St. John Paul II, to “ensure that evil does not prevail over good as it did for millions of the children of the Jewish people . . . Humanity cannot permit that to happen again.”²⁹

In 2015, to mark the fiftieth anniversary of the promulgation of *Nostra Aetate*, the CRRJ restated the significance of *Nostra Aetate* in the life of the Church, noting in particular the rejection of supersessionism: “While affirming salvation through an explicit or even implicit faith in Christ, the Church does not question the continued love of God for the chosen people of Israel. A replacement or supersession theology which sets against one another two separate entities, a Church of the Gentiles and the rejected Synagogue whose place it takes, is deprived of its foundations.”³⁰ The CRRJ also took the occasion to state plainly that the Church is not interested in proselytizing Jews: “[T]he Catholic Church neither conducts nor supports any specific institutional mission work directed towards Jews.”³¹ In regard to priestly formation, the CRRJ expressly stated that seminaries are to include in their curricula not only *Nostra Aetate* but also other recent teachings on Catholic-Jewish relations from the Holy See: “[I]t is important that Catholic educational institutions, particularly in the training of priests, integrate into their

²² CRRJ, §VI.2.

²³ CRRJ, “Conclusion.”

²⁴ CRRJ, *We Remember: A Reflection on the Shoah*, The Holy See, Dicastery for Promoting Christian Unity, March 16, 1998, <http://www.christianunity.va/content/unitacristiani/en/commissione-per-i-rapporti-religiosi-con-l-ebraismo/commissione-per-i-rapporti-religiosi-con-l-ebraismo-crre/documenti-della-commissione/en1.html>.

²⁵ CRRJ, §I.

²⁶ CRRJ, §II.

²⁷ CRRJ, §IV.

²⁸ CRRJ, §V.

²⁹ CRRJ, §V.

³⁰ CRRJ, “*The Gifts and the Calling of God are Irrevocable*” (*Rom 11:29*): *A Reflection on Theological Questions Pertaining to Catholic—Jewish Relations on the Occasion of the 50th Anniversary of “Nostra Aetate”* (No. 4), The Holy See, Dicastery for Promoting Christian Unity, December 10, 2015, §17, <http://www.christianunity.va/content/unitacristiani/en/commissione-per-i-rapporti-religiosi-con-l-ebraismo/commissione-per-i-rapporti-religiosi-con-l-ebraismo-crre/documenti-della-commissione/en.html>.

³¹ CRRJ, §40.

curricula both ‘Nostra aetate’ and the subsequent documents of the Holy See regarding the implementation of the Conciliar declaration.”³²

2. *The US Catholic Bishops*

In 1985, the Secretariat of Catholic-Jewish Relations (SCJR) of the National Conference of Catholic Bishops (NCCB), the predecessor agency of the USCCB, published revised *Guidelines for Catholic-Jewish Relations*.³³ The document, which focused on pastoral concerns in the US, echoed the Holy See’s statements on the importance of the Catholic-Jewish relationship. Noting that the US had the largest Jewish population in the world, the bishops acknowledged the historic opportunity they had to advance Catholic-Jewish relations.³⁴ The bishops’ guidelines offered general principles and recommended programs for their readers’ consideration.³⁵

Among the guidelines’ general principles were the following: (1) that each diocese should designate a person who is responsible for Catholic-Jewish relations, which is a concern even in areas where no Jewish communities may exist;³⁶ (2) that “Catholics should take the initiative . . . in fostering Catholic-Jewish understanding;”³⁷ (3) that Catholics should avoid proselytizing Jews;³⁸ (4) that preparation for interreligious marriage “should expect each party to know well both religious traditions so as to be cooperative with the religious duties of the spouse;”³⁹ (5) that interreligious marriages should have “[c]ontinuing pastoral care;”⁴⁰ and (6) that dialogue with the Jewish community should attempt to understand how Jews understand themselves, especially in regard to the *Shoah* and the State of Israel.⁴¹

Among the guidelines’ recommended programs were the following: (1) that “[d]iocesan and parochial organizations, schools, colleges, universities and especially *seminaries* should organize programs to implement the conciliar statement [*Nostra Aetate*] and subsequent official documents;”⁴² (2) that “[s]pecial care should be taken never to use the pulpit to portray Judaism as rejected by God or in any way unworthy of our love and esteem;”⁴³ and (3) that “Catholic *seminaries* and institutions of higher learning are especially important centers for . . . ongoing scholarly activity [related to improving Catholic-Jewish relations],” establishing whenever possible “chairs of Jewish studies.”⁴⁴

³² CRRJ, §45 (italics added).

³³ Secretariat for Catholic-Jewish Relations, Bishops’ Committee for Ecumenical and Interreligious Affairs, National Conference of Catholic Bishops, *Guidelines for Catholic-Jewish Relations*, rev. ed. (Washington, DC: USCCB, 1985), <http://www.usccb.org/beliefs-and-teachings/ecumenical-and-interreligious/jewish/upload/Guidelines-for-Catholic-Jewish-Relations-1985.pdf>.

³⁴ SCJR, “Perspectives.”

³⁵ SCJR, “General Principles” and “Recommended Programs.”

³⁶ SCJR, “General Principles,” par. 1.

³⁷ SCJR, “General Principles,” par. 2.

³⁸ SCJR, “General Principles,” par. 6.

³⁹ SCJR, “General Principles,” par. 8; see also Francis, *On Love in the Family—Amoris Laetitia*, March 19, 2016, §248, https://www.vatican.va/content/dam/francesco/pdf/apost_exhortations/documents/papa-francesco_esortazione-ap_20160319_amoris-laetitia_en.pdf.

⁴⁰ SCJR, *Guidelines for Catholic-Jewish Relations*, “General Principles,” par. 8.

⁴¹ SCJR, “General Principles,” par. 9.

⁴² SCJR, “Recommended Programs,” par. 3 (italics added).

⁴³ SCJR, “Recommended Programs,” par. 4.

⁴⁴ SCJR, “Recommended Programs,” par. 9 (italics added).

The bishops reiterated the 1975 Vatican guidelines in stressing the importance of recognizing Judaism “as a living tradition that has had a strong and creative religious life through the centuries.”⁴⁵ They also restated the Church’s strong denunciation of antisemitism: “a frank and honest treatment is needed in our history books, courses and *seminary curricula* of the history of Christian anti-Semitism, which climaxed in so much persecution, and the Nazi attempt to destroy the Jewish population of Europe.”⁴⁶ In light of *Nostra Aetate*, the bishops also called for a reexamination of the reference to the “the Jews” in the Gospel of John and other New Testament sources that appear to portray Jews in an exclusively negative way.⁴⁷

In 1988, in accordance with the recommended programs in the bishops’ 1985 guidelines, the Bishops’ Committee on the Liturgy (BCL) of the USCCB issued *God’s Mercy Endures Forever*, instructions on presenting Jews and Judaism in Catholic teaching and preaching.⁴⁸ The document expressly addressed two “[r]easons for increased sensitivity” to the ways in which homilists refer to Jews and Judaism.⁴⁹ First, the bishops noted that an awareness of both the historical and continuing links to Judaism enrich Catholic scriptural reading and liturgy.⁵⁰ Second, the bishops stated that “false or demeaning portraits of a repudiated Israel may undermine Christianity as well.”⁵¹ The bishops wondered whether one can proclaim God’s salvific covenant in Christ without also affirming God’s faithful covenant with Israel.⁵²

The 1988 instruction provides counsel on how to deal with the risks of misinterpretation that arise in the lectionary at Advent, Lent, Holy Week, the Easter Season, and other times of the liturgical year.⁵³ The scope of this paper precludes a discussion of the scriptural and theological issues related to each liturgical season, but it is worth highlighting the BCL’s concerns regarding the treatment of the passion narratives in Holy Week:

Because of the tragic history of the “Christ-killer” charge as providing a rallying cry for anti-Semites over centuries, a strong and careful homiletic stance is necessary to combat its lingering effects today. Homilists and catechists should seek to provide a proper context for the proclamation of the passion narratives.⁵⁴

The bishops provide other practical pastoral advice to preachers and teachers: (1) avoid assigning collective responsibility for the crucifixion to Jews,⁵⁵ (2) participate in Jewish-sponsored Seders but avoid any initiatives to Christianize them,⁵⁶ (3) encourage joint Christian-Jewish

⁴⁵ SCJR, “Recommended Programs,” par. 10(a).

⁴⁶ SCJR, “Recommended Programs,” par. 10(c).

⁴⁷ SCJR, “Recommended Programs,” par. 10(g).

⁴⁸ Bishops’ Committee on the Liturgy, USCCB, *God’s Mercy Endures Forever: Guidelines on the Presentation of Jews and Judaism in Catholic Preaching* (Washington, DC: USCCB, 1988), <http://www.usccb.org/beliefs-and-teachings/ecumenical-and-interreligious/jewish/upload/God-s-Mercy-Endures-Forever-Guidelines-on-the-Presentation-of-Jews-and-Judaism-in-Catholic-Preaching-1988.pdf>.

⁴⁹ BCL, §8.

⁵⁰ BCL, §8.

⁵¹ BCL, §8.

⁵² BCL, §8.

⁵³ BCL, §§11-31.

⁵⁴ BCL, §21; see also USCCB, *The Bible, the Jews, and the Death of Jesus: A Collection of Catholic Documents* (Washington, DC: USCCB, 2004).

⁵⁵ BCL, *Gods Mercy Endures Forever*, §26.

⁵⁶ BCL, §28.

services commemorating the *Shoah*,⁵⁷ (4) communicate the importance of the Hebrew Scriptures and their connection to the New Testament rather than reducing them to a secondary status,⁵⁸ and (5) recognize the Jewishness of Jesus and his affinity with the Pharisees.⁵⁹

Following the Holy See's 1998 publication of *We Remember: A Reflection on the Shoah*, the Secretariat for Ecumenical and Interreligious Affairs (SEIA) of the NCCB issued a detailed guide in 2001 for implementing the Vatican's directive in the US.⁶⁰ Significantly, the bishops' guide on teaching about the *Shoah* explicitly addressed the responsibility of seminaries to develop curricula responsive to the Holy See's instruction.⁶¹

The bishops, following *We Remember*, distinguish between anti-Judaism and antisemitism, defining the former in terms of Christian polemics and the latter in terms of a "modern racial and neo-pagan ideology."⁶² The bishops acknowledge, however, that "Christian anti-Judaism did lay the groundwork for racial, genocidal anti-semitism by stigmatizing not only Judaism but Jews themselves for opprobrium and contempt. So the Nazi theories tragically found fertile soil in which to plant the horror of an unprecedented attempt at genocide."⁶³ As the bishops explain, the "reason to include the *Shoah* in Catholic education is that the Church today, speaking for and to all Catholics, needs to remind future generations to be ever-vigilant so that 'the spoiled seeds of anti-Judaism and anti-semitism [will] never again be allowed to take root in any human heart.'"⁶⁴

B. Priestly Formation

Given the extensive literature on the Catholic Church's official teachings on priestly formation, this section identifies only the most significant documents and then reviews them only from the limited perspective of whether they refer, even obliquely, to learning about Jews and Judaism in the context of training seminarians.

1. The Holy See

Although instructions on priestly formation from the Second Vatican Council and the Holy See do not specifically address Catholic-Jewish relations, they do mention the importance of priests developing pastoral skills in dialogue, tolerance, and open mindedness in multi-religious societies.⁶⁵ The International Catholic-Jewish Liaison Committee (ILC), sponsored by the CRRJ,

⁵⁷ BCL, §29.

⁵⁸ BCL, §31.

⁵⁹ BCL, §31.

⁶⁰ Secretariat for Ecumenical and Interreligious Affairs, NCCB, *Catholic Teaching on the Shoah: Implementing the Holy See's "We Remember,"* (Washington, DC: USCCB, 2001), <http://www.usccb.org/beliefs-and-teachings/ecumenical-and-interreligious/jewish/upload/Catholic-Teaching-on-the-Shoah-Implementing-the-Holy-See-s-We-Remember-2001.pdf>.

⁶¹ SEIA, 2.

⁶² SEIA, 9.

⁶³ SEIA, 10.

⁶⁴ SEIA, 4 (citation omitted).

⁶⁵ *Decree on Priestly Training—Optatum Totius*, proclaimed by Pope Paul VI, October 28, 1965, in *The Sixteen Documents of Vatican II and the Instruction on the Liturgy with Commentaries by the Council Fathers*, comp. J. L. Gonzalez (Boston, Daughters of St. Paul, 1967), §19; John Paul II, *Pastores Dabo Vobis: To the Bishops, Clergy and Faithful on the Formation of Priests in the Circumstances of the Present Day*, March 25, 1992, §§6-7, http://w2.vatican.va/content/john-paul-ii/en/apost_exhortations/documents/hf_jp-ii_exh_25031992_pastores-dabo-vobis.html.

however, stated that “the curricula of Catholic seminaries and schools of theology should reflect the central importance of the church’s new understanding of its relationship to Jews.”⁶⁶ Consequently, the ILC made the following recommendations:

- Courses on Bible, patristics, early church history and liturgy should incorporate recent scholarship on Christian origins. Illuminating the complex developments by which both the church and rabbinic Judaism emerged from early Judaism will establish a substantial foundation for ameliorating “the painful ignorance of the history and traditions of Judaism of which only negative aspects and often caricature seem to form part of the stock ideas of many Christians.” Opportunities for faculty to continue their own learning about Jewish-Christian relations should be available so that their courses will reflect the richness of contemporary scholarship.
- Courses dealing with the biblical, historical and theological aspects of relations between Jews and Christians should be an *integral* part of the seminary and theologate curriculum, and not merely electives. All who graduate from Catholic seminaries and theology schools should have studied the revolution in Catholic teaching on Jews and Judaism from *Nostra Aetate* through to the prayer of Pope John Paul II at the Western Wall on March 26, 2000.⁶⁷

In 2016, the Holy See’s Congregation for the Clergy (CC) issued *The Gift of Priestly Vocation—Ratio Fundamentalis Institutionis Sacerdotalis*, which sets the norms for priestly formation in the Catholic Church throughout the world.⁶⁸ The *Ratio* states that various “disciplines should be considered an integral part of the course of theological studies, such as ecumenism and the history of religions, especially those that are most commonly found in each country.”⁶⁹ Moreover, seminary professors should give “privileged attention” to the “Pontifical Magisterium and Ecumenical Councils,”⁷⁰ which would include *Nostra Aetate* and other instructions from the Holy See on the Church’s relations with the Jewish community.⁷¹

2. The US Catholic Bishops

The USCCB’s governing document on seminary education at the time of the survey of the seminaries in 2019 was the fifth edition of the *Program of Priestly Formation*, published in 2006.⁷²

⁶⁶ International Catholic-Jewish Liaison Committee, *Recommendation on Education in Catholic and Jewish Seminaries and Schools of Theology*, May 4, 2001, http://www.vatican.va/roman_curia/pontifical_councils/chrstuni/relations-jews-docs/rc_pc_chrstuni_doc_20010504_new-york-seminari_en.html.

⁶⁷ ILC, *Recommendation* (citation omitted; italics in original).

⁶⁸ Congregation for the Clergy, *The Gift of the Priestly Vocation—Ratio Fundamentalis Institutionis Sacerdotalis*, *L’Osservatore Romano*, December 8, 2016, <http://www.clerus.va/content/dam/clerus/Ratio%20Fundamentalis/The%20Gift%20of%20the%20Priestly%20Vocation.pdf>.

⁶⁹ CC, §175.

⁷⁰ CC, §187.

⁷¹ See above pt. I.A.1.

⁷² USCCB, *Program of Priestly Formation*, 5th ed. (Washington, DC: USCCB, 2006).

In the interim, the US Catholic bishops issued the sixth edition of the *Program of Priestly Formation* in 2022.⁷³

In reference to seminary education in 2019, the US bishops noted that among the significant elements that define the context of priestly formation in the US in the twenty-first century is that “[t]he Catholic Church in the United States continues to be firmly committed to and engaged in ecumenical and interreligious dialogue and cooperation.”⁷⁴ Both recent editions of the *Program of Priestly Formation* establish standards for training candidates for the priesthood, which include spiritual, intellectual, and pastoral norms. In discussing “norms for spiritual formation” of seminarians in 2006, the bishops stated that “[c]onsideration should . . . be given to interaction with those of other religions.”⁷⁵ Furthermore, one of the “intellectual formation norms” for the theological curriculum was interreligious dialogue and an awareness of world religions.⁷⁶ The bishops wrote, “Particularly important is an awareness of world religions and their relationship to Christianity. This is especially true of Judaism, Islam, and certain Asian religions.”⁷⁷ In the 2022 edition of the *Program of Priestly Formation*, the bishops omitted this language, arguably retreating from expressly mentioning the significance of tending to the relationship between the Church and the Jewish people. In 2006, the bishops also noted the value of “[s]tudies in the belief and practices of . . . religions.”⁷⁸ The bishops stated that among the elements of “pastoral formation” is “[r]eligious pluralism.”⁷⁹ They advised that seminarians “need to know, appreciate, and learn how to work within the ecumenical and interfaith context that forms a backdrop for life in the United States and for the Catholic Church in this nation.”⁸⁰ Although the bishops did not directly address Christian antisemitism in 2006, in 2022, the bishops included an oblique reference to adhering to the Church’s teachings on Jews and Judaism in their discussion on the importance of forming candidates for the priesthood in homiletics.⁸¹

II. Pastoral Care and Catholic-Jewish Demographics in the US

To understand the significance of priestly formation in the US and the key role the US Catholic Church plays in Catholic-Jewish relations, it is important to keep in mind three sets of data: (1) the relatively large size of the US Jewish community in comparison to Jewish communities in other parts of the world, (2) the relatively significant rates of Catholic-Jewish marriages in the US, and (3) the increasing incidents of antisemitism in the US in recent years.

⁷³ USCCB, *Program of Priestly Formation in the United States of America*, 6th ed. (Washington, DC: USCCB, 2022).

⁷⁴ USCCB, *Program of Priestly Formation*, 5th ed., §12; see also USCCB *Program of Priestly Formation*, 6th ed., §21(c).

⁷⁵ USCCB, *Program of Priestly Formation*, 5th ed., §126.

⁷⁶ USCCB, *Program of Priestly Formation*, 5th ed., §216; cf. USCCB, *Program of Priestly Formation*, 6th ed. §352.

⁷⁷ USCCB, *Program of Priestly Formation*, 5th ed., §216.

⁷⁸ USCCB, §224; see also USCCB *Program of Priestly Formation*, 6th ed., §352.

⁷⁹ USCCB, *Program of Priestly Formation*, 5th ed., §239.

⁸⁰ USCCB, §239; see also USCCB, *Program of Priestly Formation*, 6th ed., §370(j).

⁸¹ USCCB, *Program of Priestly Formation*, 6th ed., §§138, 215. Only in a tangential reference to “Church Tradition” in discussing the importance of homiletics do the bishops refer to the CRRJ’s *Notes* and *We Remember*. Inexplicably, the bishops neglect to refer to their own teaching documents on the appropriate way to refer to Jews and Judaism in preaching. USCCB, *Program of Priestly Formation*, 6th ed., §370(a) and 145n436.

A. The Relatively Large Size of the US Jewish Community

Nowhere else on earth do more Catholics and Jews live side by side than in the US. In 2022, most of the worldwide Jewish population of about fifteen million lived either in the US (forty-eight percent) or Israel (forty-seven percent).⁸² The next eight countries with the largest Jewish populations have a significantly smaller percentage of the worldwide Jewish community: France (ca. three percent), Canada (ca. three percent), the UK (ca. two percent), Argentina (ca. one percent), Russia (ca. one percent), Australia (ca. one percent), and Germany (ca. one percent).⁸³ Of the twenty metropolitan areas in the world with the largest Jewish populations, ten are in the US: New York (ranked second after Tel Aviv with 1,970,000 Jews), Los Angeles (fourth), Southeast Florida (sixth), Philadelphia (eighth), Chicago (ninth), Boston (tenth), San Francisco (eleventh), Washington (fifteenth), Baltimore (eighteenth), and Detroit (twentieth).⁸⁴ Most of these cities also have large Catholic populations. In rank order, Los Angeles, New York, Chicago, Boston, Washington, Philadelphia, Miami, and Detroit are among the cities in the US with the largest number of Catholics.⁸⁵

B. Significant Rates of Catholic-Jewish Intermarriage in the US

According to the Pew Research Center, when Jews marry outside their faith in the US, the spouse is most likely to be Catholic.⁸⁶ Among intermarried Jews, thirty-nine percent are married to Catholics, and only twenty-three percent are married to Protestants, even though Protestants outnumber Catholics in the US by nearly two to one.⁸⁷ The findings come as no surprise to rabbis, social workers, or members of the Jewish community, but there are no studies that explain the predominance of Catholic-Jewish marriages among Jews who marry non-Jews.⁸⁸ One might speculate that Catholic-Jewish marriages are simply a matter of geography, that both Catholics and Jews tend to live in major metropolitan areas, especially in the Northeast.⁸⁹ Some experts think, however, that socioeconomic factors, including education and career goals, are a more likely

⁸² “Vital Statistics: Jewish Population of the World (1882-Present),” Jewish Virtual Library, accessed December 15, 2023, <https://www.jewishvirtuallibrary.org/jewish-population-of-the-world>. Jewish population data depend on how statisticians define being a Jew. Emily Guskin, “How Many Jews Live in the U.S.? That Depends on How You Define ‘Jewish,’” *Washington Post*, February 23, 2018, https://www.washingtonpost.com/news/post-nation/wp/2018/02/23/measuring-the-size-of-the-u-s-jewish-population-comes-down-to-identity/?noredirect=on&utm_term=.b40dc15dac6d. In comparing Catholic-Jewish encounters in the US with those in Israel, it is helpful to keep in mind that Israel’s population is over nine million, comprised of over seven million Jews, whereas the population of Latin Rite Catholics in Israel is only 27,500. “Israel’s Independence Day 2023,” Central Bureau of Statistics, April 24, 2023, <https://www.cbs.gov.il/en/mediarelease/Pages/2023/Israel-Independence-Day-2023.aspx>; “Latin Patriarchate: Number of Christians in the Holy Land,” Saint James Vicariate for Hebrew Speaking Catholics in Israel, accessed December 16, 2023, <https://www.catholic.co.il/?cat=&view= article&id=417&m=>.

⁸³ “Vital Statistics.”

⁸⁴ “World Jewish Population,” SimpleToRemember.Com, accessed December 16, 2023, <https://www.simpletoremember.com/vitals/world-jewish-population.htm>.

⁸⁵ Jose Karlo Mari Tottoc, “20 Most Catholic Cities in the US,” Insider Monkey, August 22, 2023, <https://www.insidermonkey.com/blog/20-most-catholic-cities-in-the-us-1184587/>.

⁸⁶ Pew Research Center, *America’s Changing Religious Landscape*, May 12, 2015, 47, <https://www.pewforum.org/2015/05/12/americas-changing-religious-landscape/>.

⁸⁷ Karen Goldberg Goff, “Why Do Jews Marry Catholics?” 18 Doors, accessed December 18, 2023, https://18doors.org/why_do_jews_marry_catholics/.

⁸⁸ Goff.

⁸⁹ Goff.

explanation for the affinity than geographic proximity.⁹⁰ Excluding the Orthodox Jewish community, the rate of intermarriage among US Jews has been steadily increasing; among those who have wed since 2010, sixty-one percent married a non-Jewish spouse.⁹¹

C. Increased Incidents of Antisemitism in the US

Both Pope Francis and the US Catholic bishops have expressed concern with the significant increase in antisemitic incidents in the US.⁹² According to the most recent data from the Anti-Defamation League (ADL), there were 3,697 reported incidents of antisemitism⁹³ in the US in 2022, an increase of thirty-six percent from 2021 and the highest number on record since the ADL first began monitoring antisemitic incidents in 1979.⁹⁴ In 2022, the ADL reported 589 incidents in which Jewish institutions were targeted, a twelve percent increase from the previous year.⁹⁵ Synagogues were the most targeted Jewish institutions, being involved in half of the incidents.⁹⁶ The ADL has also reported that since Hamas' attack on Israel on October 7, 2023, antisemitic incidents in the US increased almost 400 percent.⁹⁷

FBI Hate Crime statistics released for 2022 corroborate the ADL's findings.⁹⁸ According to the FBI, US law enforcement agencies reported that in 2022, there were 2,293 victims of anti-religious hate crimes; 1,122 of the victims were targets of anti-Jewish bias.⁹⁹ From 2021 to 2022, anti-Jewish hate crimes in the US increased thirty-seven percent.¹⁰⁰

⁹⁰ Goff.

⁹¹ Pew Research Center, *Jewish Americans in 2020*, May 11, 2021, 93, [https://www.pewresearch.org/religion/2021/05/11/jewish-americans-in-2020/file:///C:/Users/gjazz/Downloads/PF_05.11.21_Jewish.Americans%20\(1\).pdf](https://www.pewresearch.org/religion/2021/05/11/jewish-americans-in-2020/file:///C:/Users/gjazz/Downloads/PF_05.11.21_Jewish.Americans%20(1).pdf).

⁹² Francis, "Angeles Message on Attack in Tree of Life Synagogue in Pittsburgh," CCJR Dialogika Resources, October 28, 2018, <https://ccjr.us/dialogika-resources/documents-and-statements/roman-catholic/francis/francis-2018oct28>; Francis, "Address to the American Jewish Committee," CCJR Dialogika Resources, March 12, 2019, <https://ccjr.us/dialogika-resources/documents-and-statements/roman-catholic/francis/francis-2019mar8>; USCCB, "U.S. Bishops' Committee on Ecumenical and Interreligious Affairs Emphasizes Recommitment to Relationship with Jewish Community," November 28, 2022, <https://www.usccb.org/news/2022/us-bishops-committee-ecumenical-and-interreligious-affairs-emphasizes-recommitment-0>.

⁹³ The ADL defines incidents of antisemitism as follows: "vandalism of property or as harassment or assault on individuals and/or groups, where either 1) circumstances indicate anti-Jewish animus on the part of the perpetrator or 2) a reasonable person could plausibly conclude they were being victimized due to their Jewish identity. Vandalism against Jewish religious institutions or cemeteries may also be included." ADL, *Audit of Antisemitic Incidents, 2022*, March 23, 2023, <https://www.adl.org/resources/report/audit-antisemitic-incidents-2022>.

⁹⁴ ADL.

⁹⁵ ADL.

⁹⁶ ADL.

⁹⁷ ADL, "ADL Center on Extremism Notes Nearly 400-Percent Increase in Preliminary Antisemitic Incidents Reported Year over Year," press release, October 24, 2023, <https://www.adl.org/resources/press-release/adl-records-dramatic-increase-us-antisemitic-incidents-following-oct-7>.

⁹⁸ "Hate Crime Statistics, 2022," FBI Uniform Crime Report, accessed December 15, 2023, <https://cde.ucr.cjis.gov/LATEST/webapp/#/pages/home>. The FBI defines a hate crime as a "criminal offense against a person or property motivated in whole or in part by an offender's bias against a race, religion, disability, sexual orientation, ethnicity, gender, or gender identity." "Hate Crimes," FBI, accessed December 15, 2023, <https://www.fbi.gov/investigate/civil-rights/hate-crimes#Definition>.

⁹⁹ "Hate Crime Statistics, 2022,"

¹⁰⁰ ADL, "Reported Anti-Jewish Hate Crimes Increased by More than 37 Percent, Reaching Highest Number in Almost Three Decades, and Second-Highest Number on Record," October 16, 2023, <https://www.adl.org/resources/press-release/adl-fbi-data-reflects-deeply-alarming-record-high-number-reported-hate>.

D. The Implications for Priestly Formation in the US Catholic Church

As the US bishops acknowledge, formation of seminarians for priestly ministry in the US must take into account the particularly American context.¹⁰¹ What this means in terms of the Catholic Church's relationship with the Jewish community is that future priests should understand the unique role of the American Catholic Church's relationship with Judaism. Even though the Jewish community in the US is small,¹⁰² nowhere else do Catholic and Jews come into such frequent contact with each other. In preparing pastors for ministry, especially in major metropolitan areas, the US Catholic Church must be mindful of the significance of the Jewish community in its midst, remembering the importance of the US Jewish community in terms of its relative size in comparison to worldwide Jewry. Priestly ministry in a pluralistic society such as the US means knowing how to be a good neighbor. Priests-in-training who want to be mindful of their Jewish neighbors should learn how to provide sensitive pastoral care to Catholic-Jewish families and how to be effective allies in fighting against the alarming increase in antisemitism.

III. Information on Seminary Teaching on Jews and Judaism

A. Methodology: Interviews with Seminary Academic Deans or Their Designees

The question presented for research was whether, or to what extent, Catholic theologates in the US are implementing the Church's postconciliar teachings related to Jews and Judaism in programs of priestly formation. A thorough study would involve making onsite visits, collecting course syllabi and reading lists, conducting focus groups with seminarians and recent graduates, monitoring classes, and interviewing faculty and staff. Of particular interest might be the gathering of information on the attitudes that recent seminarians may have toward interreligious encounters while claiming a strong Catholic identity. Given limited resources and time constraints, the focus of this study was on taking a preliminary step in what could easily become a much larger research project. Based on the recommendations of the Rev. Dennis McManus, a consultant to the USCCB on Jewish affairs, the current study involved interviewing the academic deans at ten diocesan US theologates, which were chosen based on geographic representation, size, and significance to the US Catholic Church. By interviewing the selected academic deans on their seminaries' curricula, one would expect to obtain a sense of what seminarians are learning about Jews and Judaism, whether priestly formation comports with *Nostra Aetate* and subsequent related guidance from the Holy See and the USCCB. The ten seminaries selected for study trained, for the most part, diocesan seminarians, although religious orders also sent candidates to some of the schools. The number of seminarians studying theology at each school ranged from sixty-three to two hundred.¹⁰³ Three of the nine seminaries were in rural settings; three were in suburban settings; and three were in urban settings.¹⁰⁴ Two of the schools had a relationship with a separate, larger university, and four of the schools had educational components that were independent of the seminaries.

¹⁰¹ USCCB, *Program of Priestly Formation*, 5th ed., §12; USCCB, *Program of Priestly Formation*, 6th ed., §§20-21.

¹⁰² Shawn Fielding, "Calculate the Size of the U.S. Jewish Population," Pew Research Center, October 1, 2013, <https://www.pewforum.org/2013/10/01/jewish-population-calculator/>.

¹⁰³ App. A.

¹⁰⁴ App. A.

The initial approach was to send emails to the selected deans requesting their participation in the study. Given the small sample size and to encourage cooperation, an assurance of anonymity for both the seminaries and the deans was an express precondition for the interviews.¹⁰⁵ Of the ten seminaries contacted, nine provided information. Eight of the academic deans answered the questions directly; one dean referred the inquiry to a faculty member to respond; and one dean requested that another faculty member supplement his interview. The single academic dean who did not participate in the study did not respond to repeated attempts to contact him via telephone, email, and a letter delivered by a private overnight courier. Eight of the nine interviews were by telephone; one was in person.

The interviews covered the same or similar questions, derived from the Catholic Church's teachings on relations with the Jewish community.¹⁰⁶ Not all of the interviews were of the same length, as they depended on the availability of the interviewees. Consequently, the interviewees did not answer all the same questions. Two of the deans requested a copy of the questions in writing in advance, which were sent to them prior to the interviews. This study does not attempt to compare the seminaries, as each has its own unique resources, location, structure, constituency, and history.

B. Summary of Collected Data

The responses from the seminaries appear in summary form in Appendix A. All the deans acknowledged the importance of integrating into the seminary curriculum the Church's recent teachings on Jews and Judaism, and they said that seminary courses in Scripture, patristics, liturgy, ecclesiology, church history, ecumenical theology, pastoral and moral theology are sensitive to this concern. One academic dean, however, acknowledged that references to Jews in the seminary's biblical curriculum tended to have a "Marcionite flavor."¹⁰⁷ Given the limitations of this study, it was not possible to verify independently the deans' assessment of the courses. The interviews did indicate, however, significant differences in the seminaries' relationship to the Jewish community, the opportunities students had to study in Israel and with rabbinic students, the exposure students had to Jewish scholars, and the access students had to courses concerning Jews and Judaism.

Few of the seminaries provided opportunities for students to have contact with members of the Jewish community. Three of the seminaries belonged to consortia of theological schools that allowed for the possibility that students could study alongside rabbinic students, but the deans at these schools acknowledged that a student opting to take advantage of these opportunities was rare. None of the seminaries had a Jewish scholar or rabbi on staff; at best, students might encounter a rabbi or Jewish scholar as a guest lecturer,¹⁰⁸ through supervised ministry in a hospital setting,¹⁰⁹ through enrolling in a course at an affiliated university,¹¹⁰ or as a docent on a study tour of Israel.¹¹¹

¹⁰⁵ Numbers, ranging from one to nine, replace the names of the seminaries, and initials, ranging from A.A. to I.I., replace the names of the academic deans or their designees.

¹⁰⁶ The list of questions is available from the author.

¹⁰⁷ E.E., interview by author, Fifth Seminary, March 1, 2019.

¹⁰⁸ A.A., interview by author, First Seminary, March 13, 2019.

¹⁰⁹ C.C., interview by author, Third Seminary, March 27, 2019.

¹¹⁰ E.E., interview by author.

¹¹¹ D.D. interview by author, Fourth Seminary, March 1, 2019.

Some of the schools provided opportunities for students to visit or study in Israel, but the range of programs varied widely. As part of its regular program, one school required students to participate in an extended study tour in Israel.¹¹² Other schools provided the opportunity for two-to-four week programs in Israel, often for transitional deacons,¹¹³ while five schools either had no program to study in Israel or encouraged students to visit Israel on their own.¹¹⁴ Some of the academic deans noted that providing the opportunity for study in Israel was particularly difficult for the growing number of seminarians who are not US citizens as they might risk having difficulty reentering the country.¹¹⁵

Six of the nine surveyed seminaries had no relationship with the nearby Jewish community.¹¹⁶ One dean admitted that he initially resisted responding to the request for an interview because he would have nothing to report regarding the seminary's relationship with the large Jewish community in his city.¹¹⁷ Some of the academic deans' comments were difficult to hear. One academic dean, trying to put the best face on his seminary's lack of any relationship with the local Jewish community, volunteered that there was a faculty member who had a Jewish wife.¹¹⁸ Responding to the same question about his seminary's relationship to the local Jewish community, another academic dean could only offer as an example that a music minister on staff also worked at a Reform synagogue.¹¹⁹ Two academic deans reported that their seminaries had some relationship with local Jewish congregations. One of the seminary's relationship appeared somewhat tenuous, consisting of being located adjacent to a neighboring synagogue, belonging to a consortium of theological schools that included a Jewish member, and hosting a Jewish senior citizens' group that contacted the seminary to arrange a visit.¹²⁰ The other seminary appeared to have a more substantive relationship with nearby Jewish congregations, where a faculty member cultivated ongoing relationships with rabbis and routinely accompanied seminarians to Sabbath worship and other events in the Jewish community.¹²¹

The seminaries offered no training to Catholic priests in tending to the pastoral needs of Catholic-Jewish couples and families.¹²² Surprisingly, when asked about teaching seminarians about the pastoral care of Catholic-Jewish couples, many of the academic deans, even in cities with large Catholic and Jewish populations, understood the question solely in terms of compliance with the canon laws pertaining to interfaith weddings.¹²³

The most significant finding that emerged from the interviews with the academic deans is the failure of most seminaries, in light of the Church's historic antipathy toward the Jewish community, to provide guidance on how to preach and teach about Jews and Judaism.¹²⁴ Of particular concern is the failure of most seminaries to provide guidance to future preachers on dealing with New Testament passages that negatively portray Jews. The academic dean at one

¹¹² D.D., interview by author.

¹¹³ A.A. interview by author; F.F., interview by author, Sixth Seminary, March 25, 2019; H.H., interview by author, Eighth Seminary, April 2, 2019.

¹¹⁴ App. A.

¹¹⁵ A.A., interview by author; B.B. interview by author, Second Seminary, March 15, 2019.

¹¹⁶ App. A.

¹¹⁷ C.C., interview by author.

¹¹⁸ B.B., interview by author.

¹¹⁹ C.C., interview by author.

¹²⁰ I.I., interview by author, Ninth Seminary, March 4, 2019.

¹²¹ D.D., interview by author.

¹²² App. A.

¹²³ App. A.

¹²⁴ App. A.

seminary admitted, “This is a lacuna in our program.”¹²⁵ The homiletics professor at another school conceded that this issue is “not on our radar screen.”¹²⁶ In regard to the treatment of Jews and Judaism in catechetics, almost all of the surveyed seminaries reported that they do not offer catechetical courses to seminarians.¹²⁷

The surveyed seminaries have a mixed record in remembering and teaching about the *Shoah*.¹²⁸ To its credit, one seminary holds an annual study day on the *Shoah*, coordinated with the nearby Jewish community and scheduled in April, close to Holocaust Remembrance Day (*Yom HaShoah*).¹²⁹ Although seminary courses on modern Church history may include information on the *Shoah*, most of the seminaries do not hold any programs specifically addressing the topic.¹³⁰

As to the subjects of antisemitism and the modern State of Israel, some of the academic deans said these matters might be addressed in an occasional lecture series, a program at an affiliated university, or a study tour in Israel, but no seminary addresses either topic as a regular part of its curriculum.¹³¹

C. Areas of Concern

The interviews with the academic deans suggest five areas of concern: (1) cultivating ties with the local Jewish community, (2) responding to the pastoral needs of Catholic-Jewish couples and families, (3) remembering and teaching about the *Shoah*, (4) preparing homilists and catechists, and (5) promoting scholarly research on Christian-Jewish issues.

1. Cultivating a Relationship with the Jewish Community

The record of the seminaries’ relationship to Jewish communities is at odds with the US Catholic bishops’ statement that “Catholics should take the initiative in fostering Catholic-Jewish understanding.”¹³² Although one may be inclined to grant leeway to rural seminaries located far from synagogues and Jewish institutions, the 1974 Vatican guidelines did not allow such latitude.¹³³ “The problem of Jewish-Christian-Relations concerns the Church as such, since it is when ‘pondering her own mystery’ that she encounters the mystery of Israel. Therefore, even in areas where no Jewish communities exist, this remains an important problem.”¹³⁴

For seminaries in urban and suburban settings with large, vibrant Jewish communities at their doorsteps, isolation from the local Jewish community is difficult to understand in light of the Vatican’s exhortation that Catholic teaching is to present not only Jews and Judaism from an historical perspective but also from a contemporary one, which entails being aware of the “faith and religious life of the Jewish people *as they are professed and practiced still today*.”¹³⁵ As the CRRJ observed in regard to the relationship between Catholics and Jews, “[o]ur two traditions are

¹²⁵ I.I., interview by author.

¹²⁶ C.C., interview by author.

¹²⁷ App. A.

¹²⁸ App. A.

¹²⁹ E.E., interview by author.

¹³⁰ App. A.

¹³¹ App. A.

¹³² SCJR, *Guidelines for Catholic-Jewish Relations*.

¹³³ CRRJ, *Guidelines*, “Conclusion.”

¹³⁴ CRRJ.

¹³⁵ CRRJ, *Notes*, §I.3.

so related that they cannot ignore each other. Mutual knowledge must be encouraged at every level.”¹³⁶

2. Providing Pastoral Care to Catholic-Jewish Couples and Families

The lack of attention to the pastoral care of Catholic-Jewish couples and families is a significant deficiency in priestly formation, especially in large metropolitan areas, perhaps not in terms of the percentage of Catholics marrying Jews but in terms of the significance that US Catholic-Jewish households have for worldwide Catholic-Jewish relations.¹³⁷ The US Catholic bishops have acknowledged the importance of providing “continuing pastoral care” to Catholic-Jewish couples and families,¹³⁸ but the surveyed seminaries provide no training to priests, even in dioceses with significant Catholic-Jewish marriages, on what that pastoral care entails.

3. Remembering and Teaching about the Shoah

Based on the interviews with the academic deans, there is little evidence that US seminary education consciously implements the Church’s official teachings on remembering the *Shoah*, especially the Holy See’s *We Remember* and the corresponding guidelines from the USCCB.¹³⁹ As the bishops explained, the goals that seminaries and other Catholic educational institutions should have in designing a curriculum implementing *We Remember* are as follows: (1) “[t]o provide Catholics with accurate knowledge and respect for Judaism . . . ;” (2) “[t]o encourage a positive appreciation of Jews and Judaism and the ongoing role of the Jewish People in God’s plan of salvation,” (3) “[t]o promote [a] spirit of repentance and conversion,” and (4) “[t]o arm Catholics for the ongoing fight against traditional Christian anti-Judaism and modern racial antisemitism.”¹⁴⁰ One wonders whether seminaries are doing their part “to remind future generations to be ever-vigilant that ‘the spoiled seeds of anti-semitism [will] never again be allowed to take root in any human heart.’”¹⁴¹

4. Preparing Homilists and Catechists

The survey of the seminaries indicates that they should take more seriously the responsibility of preparing future preachers to be mindful of presenting Jews and Judaism in accordance with official Church teaching.¹⁴² *Nostra Aetate* plainly states the importance of not representing in Catholic preaching that Jews are “rejected or accursed by God.”¹⁴³ The CRRJ’s *Notes* highlights common mistakes in presenting Jews in relationship to the New Testament,¹⁴⁴ and its subsequent *Guidelines* cautions homilists not to distort biblical texts, especially in passages

¹³⁶ CRRJ, “Conclusion.”

¹³⁷ See above pts. II.A, B.

¹³⁸ SCJR, *Guidelines for Catholic-Jewish Relations*; Ongoing Consultation of the National Council of Synagogues and the US Conference of Catholic Bishops’ Committee for Ecumenical and Interreligious Affairs, “Joint Communique,” Baltimore, MD, November 16, 2004, <http://www.usccb.org/news/2004/04-237.cfm>.

¹³⁹ CRRJ, *We Remember*; SEIA, *Catholic Teaching on the Shoah*.

¹⁴⁰ SEIA, *Catholic Teaching on the Shoah*, 2, 4.

¹⁴¹ SEIA, 4 (citation omitted).

¹⁴² See CRRJ, *Notes*; BCL, *God’s Mercy Endures Forever*.

¹⁴³ *Nostra Aetate*, §4.

¹⁴⁴ CRRJ, *Notes*, §§IV.1-2.

that seem to portray the Jewish people in “an unfavorable light.”¹⁴⁵ It appears that seminarians learning to prepare homilies are not familiar with the document *God’s Mercy Endures Forever*, the bishops’ thoughtful guidance on presenting Jews and Judaism in preaching.¹⁴⁶ One academic dean said that he was well aware of the bishops’ guidance on preaching in reference to Jews and Judaism, but he acknowledged that the seminarians are not acquainted with it.¹⁴⁷ Given that no reference to the document appears in the recent editions of the bishops’ *Program of Priestly Formation*, the seminarians’ lack of awareness of the guidance is unsurprising. The homiletics courses appear to miss, as the bishops observe, that it is “the indispensable role of the homilist in ensuring that God’s Word be received without prejudice to the Jewish people or their religious traditions.”¹⁴⁸

In regard to presenting Jews and Judaism in accordance with the Church’s teachings, the seminaries’ record in forming seminarians as catechists does not fair better than their record in forming homilists.¹⁴⁹ Almost all of the surveyed institutions do not offer courses to seminarians on catechetics, and even when seminarians might take such courses, understanding how religious instruction should take into account the Church’s relationship with Jew and Judaism is at best, according to one academic dean, “tangential.”¹⁵⁰

5. *Promoting Scholarly Research on Christian-Jewish Issues*

According to the interviews with the academic deans, most of the surveyed seminaries have no Jewish scholars or rabbis on staff.¹⁵¹ One would be hard pressed to characterize any of the seminaries as centers for collaborating with Jewish scholars, as both the Holy See and the USCCB encourage.¹⁵² Moreover, no seminary, even ones affiliated with universities that take pride in adhering to Catholic doctrine, have a “chair of Jewish studies,” even though both the Holy See and the USCCB expressly recommended establishing one whenever possible.¹⁵³

IV. Recommendations and Suggestions for Further Study

A. Recommendations

The information collected for this study suggests that the US Catholic Church should consider taking the following remedial steps:

¹⁴⁵ CRRJ, *Guidelines*, §II.

¹⁴⁶ BCL, *God’s Mercy Endures Forever*.

¹⁴⁷ I.I., interview by author.

¹⁴⁸ BCL, *God’s Mercy Endures Forever*, “Introduction.” Resources for homily preparation may include the following: John T. Pawlikowski, *Christ in Light of Christian-Jewish Dialogue*, Studies in Judaism and Christianity, ed. Lawrence Boadt et al. (Ramsey, NJ: Paulist Press, 1982); John T. Pawlikowski and James A. Wilde, *When Catholics Speak About Jews: Notes for Homilists and Catechists* (Chicago: Liturgy Training Publications, 1987).

¹⁴⁹ App. A.

¹⁵⁰ App. A.

¹⁵¹ App. A.

¹⁵² CRRJ, *Guidelines*, §III; SCJR, *Guidelines for Catholic-Jewish Relations*, “Recommended Programs,” par. 9.

¹⁵³ CRRJ, *Guidelines*, §III; SCJR, *Guidelines for Catholic-Jewish Relations*, “Recommended Programs,” par. 9.

- **Survey US Catholic Seminaries to Determine to What Extent They are Implementing Church Guidelines on Presenting Jews and Judaism in Preaching and Teaching**

The findings of this preliminary research suggests that the USCCB should initiate a more extensive study to determine whether US seminaries are preparing priests who are trained to preach and teach in accordance with the Church's instructions on presenting Jews and Judaism. In 1982, Dr. Eugene Fisher, who was then a consultant to the US Catholic bishops, published a curriculum on Christian-Jewish relations for seminaries.¹⁵⁴ Dr. Fisher's short book may still provide a useful guide for conducting a survey of seminary curricula.¹⁵⁵ Another ready resource is the previously cited 2001 curriculum recommendations from the ILC.¹⁵⁶ The inventory of Catholic seminaries should also assess whether the seminaries have developed a curriculum on the *Shoah* that is consistent with both the Holy See's and the USCCB's guidelines. Based on the results of its own survey, the USCCB should then provide resources and direction to seminaries, including follow-up monitoring, to encourage compliance with official Church teachings concerning the Church's relationship with the Jewish community.

- **Revise Future Editions of the *Program of Priestly Formation* to Include Explicit References to Church Guidelines on Presenting Jews and Judaism in Catholic Teaching and Preaching**

In reviewing revisions to the *Program of Priestly Formation*, the USCCB should consider whether the text explicitly refers to the responsibility seminaries have to ensure that future priests comply with Church teachings on presenting Jews and Judaism in preaching and teaching. The absence of any relationship between many seminaries and the Jewish community, coupled with the failure to collaborate with Jewish scholars and prepare homilists, suggests that the bishops may want to remind the seminaries of their responsibility to implement *Nostra Aetate* and the subsequent teachings on Catholic-Jewish relations from both the Holy See and their own conference.

- **Appoint a Person at Each Seminary Who is Responsible for Promoting Catholic-Jewish Relations**

The US bishops' 1985 *Guidelines for Catholic-Jewish Relations* recommends that each diocese designate a commission or a member of a

¹⁵⁴ Eugene J. Fisher, *Seminary Education and Christian-Jewish Relations: A Curriculum and Resource Handbook* (Washington, DC: NCEA, AJC & NCB, 1983); Eugene J. Fisher, "Sources for the Study of Catholic-Jewish Relations," *Journal of Ecumenical Studies* 50, no. 4 (Fall 2015): 539-60.

¹⁵⁵ Dr. Fisher stated that the Secretariat did follow up with seminaries after the publication of his curriculum in 1982, noting that at the time, all agreed to adopt the curriculum, and some stated that they already had; but he had no current information about "what the present status is in terms of courses in the Bible, Catholic history with relation to the Jews, or liturgy and homiletics." Eugene J. Fisher, email message to author, April 13, 2019.

¹⁵⁶ ILC, *Recommendation*.

commission to be responsible for Catholic-Jewish relations.¹⁵⁷ Either the USCCB should revise its guidelines, or seminaries should take the initiative, to designate a person at each seminary who is responsible for promoting Catholic-Jewish relations. The absence of any contact between many of the surveyed seminaries and local synagogues, even in urban centers with thriving Jewish communities, suggests that many seminaries have neglected the Church's express commitment to improve Catholic-Jewish relations. Designating one person at each seminary who is responsible for fostering Catholic-Jewish relations might be a practical step toward refocusing attention on this agenda.

- **Develop Pastoral Care for Catholic-Jewish Couples and Families**

Marriage between Catholics and Jews is a sensitive subject, but it is a subject that neither the Church nor the Jewish community can ignore. Given the close ties between the Church and Judaism, the Church has a responsibility not to abandon Catholic-Jewish couples, especially given the unique relationship between Catholics and Jews in the US. Seminary education that limits pastoral care to the correct application of the appropriate intermarriage canons to Catholic-Jewish couples is insufficient. Bishops, seminaries, and pastors should develop collaboratively a curriculum for theological students who can anticipate ministering to Catholic-Jewish couples and families. This project would most likely entail gathering diocesan guidelines, identifying promising practices, listening attentively to faithful Catholic-Jewish couples and families, and consulting with Jewish dialogue partners. Ministering to Catholic-Jewish couples and families also requires assisting seminarians in developing the necessary interpersonal skills to show sensitivity to each family member's religious tradition and practice.

- **Ensure that Seminarians Receive Rigorous Training on Preaching on Jews and Judaism Consistent with Catholic Teaching**

In the course of his ministry, every Catholic preacher will have to interpret the lections during Lent, on Good Friday, and at other times when some of his predecessors on similar occasions misconstrued the New Testament to unleash anti-Jewish sentiment that historically led to antisemitism and violence against Jews. Seminaries have a formidable responsibility to teach priests-in-training about this history and to take deliberate steps to avoid its repetition. Unfortunately, the surveyed seminaries did not include in their homiletics courses guidance for seminarians on how to preach on sensitive New Testament passages that portray Jews in a negative way. Vicious negative stereotypes about Jews, often reinforced by unaware Christian preaching, have an enduring power unless allies make a conscious effort to address them. Given the tragic history of anti-Judaic preaching and resurgent antisemitism in the US, seminaries and those who are responsible for their oversight should immediately review homiletics courses to ensure that no student becomes entrusted with the office of preaching without first receiving

¹⁵⁷ SCJR, *Guidelines for Catholic-Jewish Relations*, "General Principles," par. 1.

thorough training on how to deal appropriately with the negative references to Jews in the New Testament, especially in the Gospel of John.

B. Suggestions for Further Study

The recommendations in the previous section include both explicit and implicit topics for further research, most notably the suggestion to survey all US seminaries to gather more detailed information on how they train students on the Church's relationship to Jews and Judaism. In keeping with the recommendation that seminaries assess their homiletics programs to ensure that students deliver responsible sermons when preaching on the Gospel of John and other New Testament passages that treat Jews harshly, it would be instructive to collect and analyze the sermons of Catholic preachers on sensitive lectionary readings. Such studies may shed light on a number of related issues, such as the preachers' theological interpretations of the selected passages, the effectiveness of seminary training in avoiding the historic pitfalls of misinterpreting problematic scriptural texts, and the messages that congregants receive about Jews and Judaism today.¹⁵⁸

Conclusion

The Catholic Church has clear teachings on building a strong, respectful relationship with the Jewish community in the spirit of *Nostra Aetate*. The Church has equally clear teachings about the appropriate formation of priests. This study of nine US seminaries suggests, however, that there are significant discrepancies between the official teachings on the Church's relationship to Jews and Judaism and how seminaries are implementing those teachings in training future priests.

¹⁵⁸ See George Jacobs Mazza, "The Presentation of Jews and Judaism in Roman Catholic Preaching: A Qualitative Content Analysis of Selected Contemporary Homilies" (PhD diss., The Catholic University of America, 2024), ProQuest Dissertations & Theses Global.

Appendix A

Table Summarizing Teaching on Jews and Judaism to Theology Students in Selected US Catholic Seminaries (2019)

School	Site	Students	Relation to Jewish Community	Rabbi Instructor	Study with Rabbinic Students	Courses Presenting Jews and Judaism	Course on Pastoral Care of Jewish Couples	Course on Catechesis	Study in Israel	Homiletics Course Dealing with Anti-Judaism in Scripture	Programs on Holocaust, Antisemitism, Israel
1	Rural	97	Warm, but no details	Guest lecturer	Possible through consortium	Hebrew, Scripture	No, only marriage canons	No course offered	Pilot Project (2.5 weeks)	Not sure	Occasional special lecture series
2	Urban	90	None	None	No	Old and New Testament, Not Sure if Addressed in Patristics	No	No	None	Not sure	None
3	Urban	77	None	None on staff; ministry supervisor is a rabbi	Handful of students may participate in two-week consortium program	Liturgy, Old Testament, Integrated into Other Courses			None	Only if it arises in a student's sermon	None
4	Suburban	200	Warm relation to nearby synagogues	Rabbi lectures through study tour	No	Integrates in Courses	Not directly		Required 9.5 week study tour to Israel		Addressed in study tour
5	Suburban	63	None	No staff rabbis, but rabbis with university and pastoral placement		Ecclesiology, Ecumenical Theology, Church History, biblical courses with "Marcionite flavor"	No, only canon law	Tangential	None	No	Programs through affiliated university; no programs on antisemitism or Israel

School	Site	Students	Relation to Jewish Community	Rabbi Instructor	Study with Rabbinic Students	Courses Presenting Jews and Judaism	Course on Pastoral Care of Jewish Couples	Course on Catechesis	Study in Israel	Homiletics Course Dealing with Anti-Judaism in Scripture	Programs on Holocaust, Antisemitism, Israel
6	Rural	160	None	No rabbis on staff	No	Scripture, Ecclesiology	Not sure		3-week deacon tour	Yes, but not in "explicit" way	None through the seminary, but affiliated university may offer programs
7	Urban	60	None	None	No	Ecclesiology, Pastoral and Moral Theology			None	Not sure	None currently
8	Urban	84	None	None; rabbi on staff of campus ministry of affiliated university	No	Scripture, Church History, Christ and Religions	No	No	Month-long Seminar	No	Jerusalem Seminar
9	Suburban	92	Contact with Jewish relations council; consortium with rabbinic seminary; visit to synagogue	Yes	Possible through consortium	Jewish Roots of Christianity; Jewish Liturgy; Ecclesiology; Patristics; Church History		Students do not take courses on catechesis	None but student may travel on own to Israel	No	None