



## THE MOBILE DIALOGUE

By: Paul J. Filben, Editor

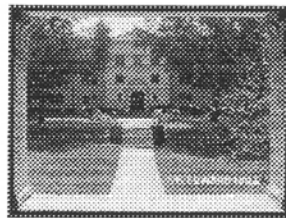
It was my pleasure to be in Tampa, Florida for the opening of the New Center for Catholic-Jewish Studies at St. Leo College. With good reason, many throughout the country will find this specific event a step forward in Catholic-Jewish Relations. Those of us in the southern part of these United States welcome this Center with enthusiasm because it represents for us a real presence of the ongoing Dialogue in the south. We dedicate ourselves to offering our help in every way possible to assure the success of this timely venture as St. Leo College greets the new millennium with a new Center for Catholic-Jewish Studies, and as it becomes *St. Leo University*.

For those who are not familiar with Saint Leo College, it is a Catholic, liberal arts-based college serving people of all faiths. It was founded in 1889 by the Order of St. Benedict and is located at Wesley Chapel near Tampa, Florida. Congratulations to the American Jewish Committee and Saint Leo College for presenting an informative and hugely successful conference.

### The New Center for Catholic- Jewish Studies

The American Jewish Committee and Saint Leo College have established a new Center for Catholic and Jewish Studies. The inaugural dinner and the endowment of the Center was held on February 21, 1999. A major conference followed at the Saint Leo campus, near Tampa Florida, from February 21 through February 23, 1999. The theme was an important one: "Teaching the Holocaust: Catholic and Jewish Perspectives."

Prominent leaders from both faith communities participated in this very special conference.



St. Edward Hall on the campus of Saint Leo College near Tampa, Florida

Among the speakers were the Rev. Michael B. McGarry, the Director Designate of the Tantar Ecumenical Institute in Jerusalem and the author of *Christology after Auschwitz*; The Rev. James Loughran, the Interreligious and Ecumenical Officer of the Archdiocese of

New York; and Professor Michael Marrus, University of Toronto and author of *The Holocaust in History*. The purpose of The Center for Catholic-Jewish Studies is to promote understanding of Catholic and Jewish traditions by offering scholarships, conferences, educational courses, lectures, publications and other related activities. Both the AJC and St. Leo's are firmly committed to a sense of unity between Catholics and Jews and to educate society on their respective philosophies relative to modern life and public policy.

### Jan Karski Honored with Eternal Light Award

The man who risked his life and bared his soul to save Jews; who brought honor to his country, his people and his Church was unfortunately unable to attend the Inaugural Dinner for the Center because of illness. Mr. Karski was hospitalized just prior to his scheduled visit to the

Center where he was to be presented with the Eternal Light Award. His indomitable spirit and his passion to speak and teach the truth have not diminished over the years. An instinctive survivor, a soldier driven by a single-minded focus on his mission, an extraordinary man in an

extraordinary time, Jan Karski became a legend. He was a Polish patriot and a Catholic who loved his country and all of its citizens. When the Nazis invaded, he did not shift his allegiance from democracy to fascism. He stood as he always did, on the side of honor, valor and decency.



# Shalom, Pope!



Pope John Paul II, along with a rabbi and several leaders of other religious faiths came together in St. Louis to pray that their collective prayer would signify to the world. . .our shared commitment to ever greater understanding and cooperation." Rabbi Robert Jacobs, vice president of the St. Louis Rabbinical Association, read a passage from Isaiah. He read the first sentence in Hebrew. It was the first time a rabbi gave a reading at a Catholic service officiated by the Pope. Religious leaders from many diverse groups were represented at the cathedral: Baptist, Episcopal, Lutheran, Greek Orthodox, Islam, Mormon, Buddhists and others.

"We fuse our voices with so many others to welcome you," were the words of a spokesperson for the group. "Your visit has been an opportunity for all of us to reflect on our faith." The pope

said he was pleased that the leaders could join him. "Today", he said, "divine providence has brought us all together and enabled us to pray: "O God, let all the nations praise You," quoting a



Pope John Paul II at the St. Louis Cathedral January 27, 1999

psalm that was sung during the service. The pope noted that the world is poised to enter a new millennium and leave a century "at once marked by unprecedented progress and by a tragic toll of human suffering," world politics have radically changed, leaving "America with a heightened responsibility to be for the world an example of a genuinely free,

democratic, just and humane society."

America first proclaimed its independence on the basis of self-evident moral truths, he said. "America will remain a beacon of freedom for the world as long as it stands by those moral truths which are at the very heart of its historical experience." And so America: If you want peace, work for justice. If you want justice, defend life. If you want life, embrace the truth — the truth revealed by God."

Vice President Al Gore and his wife were among those in attendance along with Rosa Parks the civil rights pioneer whose refusal to give up her seat on a bus in 1955 lead to the Montgomery bus boycott. The Pope may or may not have seen the message hanging from a banner atop an apartment complex across the street from the cathedral. In bold black lettering it said: "*Shalom, Pope!*"

"And so America: If you want peace, work for justice".....  
John Paul II

## Summer Teachers Program

From July 1 through July 23, the 15th annual group of US public secondary school teachers will be traveling to Poland and Israel. During this three week program, participants will explore the history of the Holocaust and Jewish Resistance. As have previous groups, these teachers will be meeting with prominent experts in the

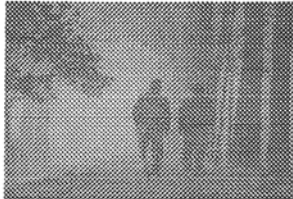
field of Holocaust education. This internationally acclaimed program is sponsored by the Jewish Labor Committee's Education Chapter, the American Gathering of Holocaust Survivors, and the American Federation of Teachers. Among the many topics to be explored is how the subject can best be taught in public secondary

schools. As part of the program, teachers visit Yad Vashem and also hear firsthand accounts by survivors from diverse walks of life in Israel. The stop in Poland will include visits to infamous concentration camps. Interested persons may contact the Dialogue for additional information on this extraordinary program.

## The Pain of Healing: The Sensitive World of Christian-Jewish Dialogue

Harsh criticisms by some Jewish groups of the Vatican's exploration of its actions during the Holocaust could unintentionally hinder the sensitive and complex work of Catholic-Jewish Relations. Cardinal Edward Cassidy, president of the Commission for Religious Relations with the Jews wrote, "Some of the good work that has been done is under threat". While his words were diplomatic, his intent was unmistakable. "More recent attempts to influence the internal process of the Catholic Church is deeply resented," he stated. "Persons very dear to the Catholic faithful are condemned without proof." Some Jewish groups are aggressively pressing for access to the church's wartime archives. This comes amid Jewish concern and anger over a campaign by Catholic extremists to mount large crosses near the Auschwitz concentration camp to symbolize Christian suffering. Some are also concerned that Edith Stein, a Jewish convert to Catholicism and a nun, who was murdered at Auschwitz is being considered for sainthood. It is important to note that fundamental changes for the better are, at the same time, quite evident. Consider the fact that the Church, for over two millennia had no official position of any kind regarding "the Jews." In 1965, less than 35 years ago, the church declared that Jews are not col-

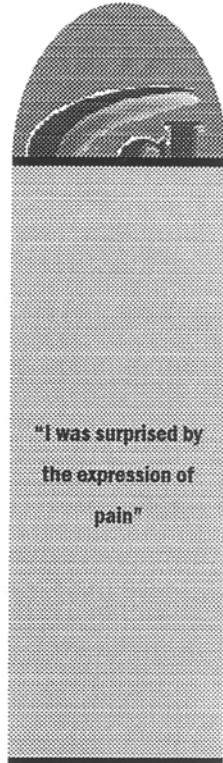
lectively responsible for the death of Jesus, and that Catholics should spiritually draw closer to Jews. Since then, an increasing array of activity in this complex arena has taken place. There are



The path is difficult: Let us be kind to one another as we walk toward healing.

now Holocaust Memorial Day ceremonies in churches, teacher exchanges in private schools, and academic conferences similar to the one this reporter attended at the New Center for Catholic-Jewish Studies in Tampa's Saint Leo College. Since the latter days of the George Wallace administration, there has been a Holocaust Memorial Service in the State Capitol of Montgomery. With world focus on aging Shoah survivors, emotions are coming to the fore. The church has privately criticized some Jewish groups, particularly the World Jewish Congress, but to little avail, according to Dr. Eugene Fisher of the National Conference of Catholic Bishops. Jews should realize, he said, that the cardinal's advocacy within the Vatican for strong Jewish ties is "seriously eroded with each public attack, particu-

larly when the WJC says things like the Vatican helped Nazis flee, and other really off-the-wall stuff. People see that and say, "It's gone beyond civil discourse and to personal attacks, accusing the Pope of trying to whitewash the Holocaust, which is absurd, and to whitewash Auschwitz, which is absurd." Dr. Fred Katz, Johns Hopkins retired professor of sociology said "I was surprised by the expression of pain. I didn't realize there was that feeling among senior Catholic leaders when they have felt, and I think rightly so, that they have taken great steps and even some risks to improve relations with the Jewish world." In response to Cardinal Cassidy, Rabbi James Rudin sought to put the cardinal's word's into context of the overall picture of the Dialogue. "It's not small when two of the world's great faith communities systematically and creatively set out to repair the enormous damage that had taken place over the centuries," he said. "What is needed now is an intensification of the exploration, and the Vatican has provided the mandate." Rabbi Rudin concluded: "I'm suggesting Catholics and Jews now look at the Sinai and Calvary events...and if we Jews are indeed the elder siblings, then who are the Catholics? ...Do we not have an obligation to find out what our younger siblings think?"



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The Mobile Area Christian-Jewish Dialogue

1537 Deerwood Drive East  
Mobile, Alabama 36618-3089

Phone: 334-342-9384  
Fax: 334-342-8714  
Email: pfliben@dibbs.net

  
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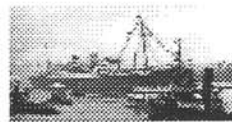
The Mobile Jewish Welfare Fund Cultural Committee will present Mr. Eli N. Evans, author of *The Provincials: A Personal History of Jews in the South*. The topic of his lecture is: *Growing Up Jewish in the South*. He will be speaking at Springhill Avenue Temple Tuesday, April 20 at 7:30 PM. Admission is free. Mr. Evans will sign copies of his books after the talk.

### *Yom haShoah*

The Dialogue is planning a very special ceremony for this year's Day of Remembrance for Victims of The Holocaust. We are extending a special invitation to children of all ages as we honor especially, the memory of the one and a half million children who perished in the Shoah. **The date is April 12, Monday. The place is Ahavas Chesed Synagogue at 7:00PM.** A separate mailing will be sent with details. This year is the 60th Anniversary of the sailing of the SS St. Louis which departed from Hamburg, Germany on May

## News and Notes

13, 1939 carrying 936 Jews fleeing Nazi persecution. After both Cuba and the United States refused entry to the ship's passengers, the St. Louis was forced to return to Europe on June 6. The ship was able to dock in Antwerp, Belgium and the passengers were dispersed throughout Belgium, France, Netherlands and Great Britain. After the 1940 German



invasion of western Europe, the former St. Louis passengers (with the exception of those

sent to Great Britain) again found themselves under Nazi rule. A number of these Jewish refugees, who had seen the lights of Miami but were denied entry to the United States, subsequently perished in the Holocaust. The Survivors Registry of the USHMM has embarked on a project to find out what happened to each passenger. Following an international sweep of archival materials as well as connections with Jewish communities worldwide, there are several dozen passengers for whom there is still no information. We remember each of them.