

The Rochester Agreement

*All your works shall praise you, O Eternal One, and all your faithful ones shall bless you.
(Ps. 145:10)*

The Rochester Board of Rabbis, the Jewish Community Federation of Rochester and the Roman Catholic Diocese of Rochester,

Aware of our dependence on and responsibility to the one God in whose image we are all created, and whose work of justice and peace has been entrusted to us,

Conscious of the unique nature of the relationship between the Catholic Church and the Jewish people, and of the historic process of reconciliation and growth in mutual understanding and friendship between Catholics and Jews since the Second Vatican Council,

Mindful of the long-standing spirit of friendship and cooperation which has marked relations between the Jewish and Roman Catholic communities of the Rochester area, and of the signing on Dec. 30, 1993/16 Tevet 5754, of the Vatican-Israel Fundamental Agreement, and,

Realizing that such an agreement will provide a sound and lasting basis for the continuing development of our present and future relations and for the furtherance of the many tasks which we face in common,

Agree upon the following articles:

Article 1. The Rochester Board of Rabbis, the Jewish Community Federation of Rochester and the Roman Catholic Diocese of Rochester, in the spirit of their respective religious traditions, the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, the Declaration of Independence of the state of Israel, the declarations on Religious Freedom and on the Relation of the Church to Non-Christian Religions of the Second Vatican Council (*Dignitatis Humanae* and *Nostra Aetate*), and the recent Fundamental Agreement between the Holy See and the state of Israel, affirm the continuing commitment of their two communities to uphold and observe the right of every human being to freedom of religion and conscience.

Article 2. The Rochester Board of Rabbis, the Jewish Community Federation of Rochester and the Roman Catholic Diocese of Rochester commit themselves to appropriate cooperation in combating all forms of anti-Semitism, racism, anti-Catholicism and religious intolerance, and in promoting mutual understanding, and respect for human life and dignity.

Article 3. The Rochester Board of Rabbis, the Jewish Community Federation of Rochester and the Roman Catholic Diocese of Rochester commit themselves to foster the maturing relationship of mutual respect and cooperation between our two communities by promoting a deeper knowledge of and respect for each other's history, traditions and sensitivities.

To this end, the two communities are encouraged to find ways to promote:

- a. Richer and more frequent communication that will serve to instruct, enlighten and heal.

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- b. Efforts to ensure appropriate and accurate curriculum when teaching about each other's religious traditions. Such efforts might be enhanced by consultations between clergy, educators and interested laity. Joint learning experiences might also be sought.
- c. Efforts to transmit moral and ethical values from the past to the present and future, as exemplified in "A Lesson of Value: A Joint Statement on Moral Education in the Public Schools," issued in 1990 by the Synagogue Council of America and the National Council of Catholic Bishops.
- d. Efforts to deepen awareness and sensitivity to issues of particular contemporary concern to each community. In the Jewish community, for example, these include such areas as the vital link between the state of Israel and the Jewish people, the continued presence of anti-Semitism and the deep concern over interfaith marriages. In the Catholic community, these include increasing anti-Catholic sentiment and deep concern over issues concerning the sacredness of life.

Article 4. The Rochester Board of Rabbis, the Jewish Community Federation of Rochester and the Roman Catholic Diocese of Rochester, recognizing a common interest in working together to create a society free from violence and prejudice, agree to:

- a. Respond publicly to acts of religious, racial, ethnic or any other kind of intolerance by publicly denouncing such acts.
- b. Work to educate and sensitize our own communities to the evil of such intolerance.
- c. Educate and inform each other on matters of public concern, and,
- d. Support whenever possible efforts in our communities and in the community at large to provide for the basic needs of all citizens.

Article 5. Where there are parallel services in our two communities, individuals associated with the Roman Catholic Diocese of Rochester and the Jewish Community of Rochester are encouraged to discuss specific ways in which such ongoing contact might be beneficial to both communities.

Examples of such groups which might meet are:

- a. The Rochester Board of Rabbis and the Priests' Council.
- b. Jewish Family Services and Catholic Family Services.
- c. The Department of Jewish Education of the Jewish Community Federation of Rochester, the Educators' Council of the Jewish Community and the Faith Development Ministry of the Catholic Diocese of Rochester.
- d. The Department of Community Relations of the Jewish Community Federation and the Department of Ecumenical and Interreligious Affairs of the Catholic Diocese of Rochester.
- e. Local synagogues and parishes and other grass-roots organizations, and
- f. Jewish and Catholic chaplains at area hospitals and institutions of higher learning.

Article 6. The director of ecumenical and interreligious affairs of the Roman Catholic diocese and the director of community relations of the Jewish Community Federation will be responsible for forming and chairing a committee for the ongoing implementation of this agreement.

***Signed in Rochester, N.Y., this eighth day of May, in the year 1996,
which corresponds to the nineteenth day of Iyar, in the year 5756.***