

## **JUDAISM**

By Paul McKenna

*Judaism is the faith of a community, a people, a nation grounded in historical struggle and centred in a land considered Holy; a faith that calls for the preservation of the identity of the Jews as a distinct and distinguishable people.*

### ***Hear, O Israel: The Lord Our God Is One***

Judaism is the religious or spiritual tradition that underpins a Jewish civilization dating back some 4,000 years. Jews of today run the entire gambit from those who believe that every syllable of the *Torah* is infallible, dictated by God, to those who do not believe in God at all. But most Jews, whether religious or non-religious, place a high value on Jewish history, culture and tradition for it is here that they find strength, identity and a common sense of destiny. What this means is that while many Jews are not practitioners of the Jewish religion, most continue to be influenced by at least some of the traditions of Judaism.

In the Judaic worldview, holiness and history are considered to be inseparable. In fact, Judaism is the most historically minded of the world's religions. The God of Israel is revealed not primarily in sun or storm or fertility, but in the historical events and struggles of the Jewish people. For the believing Jew, God acts in history.

And the first significant figure in this history was Abraham, the leader of a nomadic tribe which originated somewhere in the ancient Middle East. Abraham's culture was essentially polytheistic (a belief in many gods). What differentiated Abraham from his religious surroundings was his total conversion to the notion of one God (monotheism) known as Yahweh. Moreover, Abraham's intuition endured to become the central theological affirmation of the Jews - "Hear, O Israel: The Lord Our God is One" (*Deuteronomy 6:4*). And this monotheistic tradition later became the cornerstone of both the Islamic and Christian faiths.

For his part, Abraham was promised a holy land and blessings upon his descendants if he would but be faithful to God's will (*Genesis 17:4-7*).

**SACRED LITERATURE** The Hebrew Bible, the Talmud and the Midrash are Judaism's most sacred books.

**HEBREW BIBLE** - The Bible, composed of 24 books, contains the same writings as the Protestant Christian version of the Old Testament (although the books are ordered differently). These Scriptures, some of which date back to 1000 B.C.E., are the product of several writers and were originally transmitted orally. Jewish scholars divide the Bible into three distinct sections each edited (i.e. canonized) at different times:

1) *THE TORAH*, edited by 600 B.C.E., consists of the first five books of the ' Bible - Genesis, Exodus, Leviticus, Numbers & Deuteronomy - and chronicles events from the creation of the world to the death of Moses. (Torah also refers to the handwritten scroll of these five Mosaic books; this scroll is housed in the ark of each synagogue and is the most revered object in Jewish ritual.)

Religious Jews consider the Torah to be their most sacred text, In Jewish tradition, the continuous in-depth study of the Torah is the highest priority. The Torah is 'holy' because it contains the Law as revealed to Moses. Jewish Law can be defined as a body of religious and civil prescriptions that detail the ways in which the believer should act.

One of Judaism's primary concerns is the achievement of God's will in the affairs of humanity -the faithful Jew can fulfill God's will by obeying the divine laws as outlined in the Torah. (As Jewish history progressed, the notion of 'Torah as Law' expanded beyond the first five books of the Bible and came to include the Talmud and other 'sacred literature and traditions.)

But Torah has a significance that goes beyond conformity to legal codes. In its broadest meaning, Torah refers to the 'total way of life' to which the Jewish believer aspires; accordingly, Torah encompasses all the vastness and variety of Jewish tradition and is synonymous with learning, wisdom and the love of God.

2) *THE PROPHETS* - This section (edited by 200 B.C.E.) contains the historical books (Joshua, Judges, Samuel and Kings), the major prophets (Isaiah, Jeremiah and Ezekiel) and the twelve minor prophets including Amos, Micah and Hosea.

3) *HOLY WRITINGS* - This third segment is comprised of the remaining books including the Psalms, Job, Proverbs and the Song of Songs.

**THE TALMUD** - Over the centuries, the ancient laws and ethical teachings of the Torah and other Biblical writings were strengthened, added to or modified in order to suit contemporary circumstances. This oral body of 'rabbinical commentary, known as the Talmud, was finally written down around 600 C.E. Its 63 books - a vast compilation of sayings; metaphysical speculations, science, history, parables and biographies - were originally composed by the rabbis to help explain the Law to their people. Across the ages, the Talmud has played a vital role in Judaic law, Jewish education and rabbinical training. It has also inspired a unifying role among Jews worldwide.

**THE MIDRASH**-This holy text is likewise a collection of rabbinical commentary on the moral teachings of the Bible. Its legends, exegesis and homilies are frequently quoted in Jewish literature and sermons.

### *Exodus*

The pivotal point in Judaic history is the Exodus event: here God intervened to liberate the Hebrews from their Egyptian slavemasters (approximately 1300 B.C.E. [*Before Common Era*]). But for the Jews this was more than just an act of political liberation. The Exodus experience followed by God's revelation to Moses on Mount Sinai provided the Hebrews with a new and fuller understanding of God's nature: God disclosed Self as a Being of unutterable greatness and holiness, an eternal God of righteousness, compassion and loving kindness, a personal God with a deep and abiding interest in humanity, a God who had come to the Jews to arrange a *covenant*, an agreement with them: "I will give them a heart to acknowledge that I am Yahweh. They shall be my people and I will be their God, for they will return to me with all their heart" (Jeremiah 24:7). In this relationship, then, the Hebrews were clearly expected to reciprocate by way of loyalty, worship and obedience to the divine commandments.

*"In Hinduism, this Supreme Reality was always seen as manifesting in the Cosmos and in the human soul. In Israel the same supreme reality is experienced primarily as manifesting in history, in the history of a particular people. That is the unique character of the revelation to Israel. Whenever God reveals Godself in Israel, it is always in relation to the history of the people." Bede Griffiths*

### ***Israel: The Jewish People In History***

The notion of Israel is absolutely central to Judaism and can be appreciated on two levels:

(a) *Israel as a people, a nation.* Yahweh's covenant was not meant to be an individualist one; God had established a covenant with a community, a people, and if the Hebrews proved faithful to God's word, God would fashion them into a nation. Moses' leadership skills inspired a sense of unity among the twelve Hebraic tribes and eventually they developed into one nation - Israel. Throughout Jewish history, the concepts of 'people' and 'nation' (referring to Israel) have retained a meaning that is both symbolic and concrete.

(b) *Israel as a geographical locale.* The Hebrew language is sacred to Judaism because the original revelation was given in the Hebrew tongue. This sacred association also applies to the land in which the revelation took place. Accordingly, a consciousness of the Holy Land pervades the *Torah* that the faithful Jew reads, the prayers s/he recites and rabbinical literature s/he studies.

This notion of the land as sacred began when God promised Abraham and his descendants a blessed land; the land of Israel, the borders of which were constantly changing throughout the Jewish centuries, was the site of many of the supremely memorable incidents in Jewish history. During the 2,000-year period in which the Jews were forced to live outside their homeland, they never lost a passion for the land of their birth. Little wonder, then, that the establishment of the state of Israel in 1948 was a powerfully symbolic event for Jews worldwide. For the first time since 70 C.E. when they were forcibly displaced from their national and spiritual homeland, the Jews, as a people, were able to return to the land known then as Palestine.

Judaism, then, is the faith of a community, a people, a nation grounded in historical struggle and centred in a land considered holy; a faith that calls for the preservation of the identity of the Jews as a distinct and distinguishable people.

### ***Righteousness, Service and Justice***

Some religions concern themselves with doctrine first and ethics second. Not so Judaism, the Jewish faith does not subscribe to any universal creed, catechism or body of dogma; nor, generally speaking, does it maintain a religious hierarchy or a centrally organized doctrinal authority. The test of real Jewishness resides in the realm of morality, not doctrine: *righteousness is the first requirement.*

What is of ultimate importance is how one lives one's life in the context of community and how the community cares for its members. Moreover the ethical core of Judaism can be found in the Mosaic formula for treating one's neighbour fairly, respecting her/his rights, her/his property and above all her/his person. This passion for just human relations has dominated the ethical teachings of Judaism across the millennia. The idea that all persons have rights is common, for example, to the teachings of all the prophets.

But without God, there can be no --righteousness. The Hebraic approach to God is fundamentally a moral one. Only through obedience to the divine laws, particularly as expressed in the *Torah*, can the individual or the community seek to conform to God's will; in Biblical language - "the righteous shall live by faith" (*Habakkuk 2:4*).

### ***Life Is Good***

Members of the Jewish faith do not believe in original sin or the depravity of human nature. For the believing Jew, life is good, the human person is good, the world is good... and all these things are good because God has made them: "God saw everything that he had made, and indeed, it was very good" (Genesis 1:31).

And God's goodness encompasses not just the joys of the spirit such as prayer and *Torah* study but also day-to-day realities including food, work, sex, clothing, nature and fellowship. In fact, each time that one uses and enjoys any aspect of God's creation, one has the opportunity to utter praise to God in the form of a blessing. Throughout Judaic culture there runs a double theme: people should enjoy life's goodness, and at the same time, they can add to this joy by sharing it with God in a spirit of thanksgiving; for any joy one feels is increased when it is shared.

Sin and evil are realities that must be contended with... People are endowed with infinite potential for good, but they do misuse their freedom... This can only be resolved by a vigorous discipline of individual and social reform.

Individually, one can resist sin in a number of ways: prayer, reflection, the study of *Torah*, good works, will power and association with good and wise people. Yet one of the best ways to induce inner virtue is to behave virtuously - to become good by doing good.

Socially, any movement toward repentance and reconciliation must begin with an effort on the part of the offending party to make amends with the party which has been hurt. And this important gesture of taking responsibility to right one's wrongs is a necessary prelude to God's forgiveness. By aiding the poor, for example, the community recaptures something of its lost integrity and reconciles with the Creator.

Through it all, however, there remains a constant, and that constant is a universal law of righteousness which holds sway over all persons, without exception. Each person will eventually be rewarded or punished according to past deeds. Such is the moral character of the Hebrew revelation.

*"I will give them a heart to acknowledge that I am Yahweh. They shall be my people and I will be their God, for they will return to me with all their heart."* (Jeremiah 24:7)

### ***Prayer, Observance and Ritual***

A key objective of the Jewish faith experience is the sanctification, the hallowing of every moment of daily existence. The principle behind this spiritual stance is very simple - all of creation is permeated with the sacredness of Yahweh. Accordingly, a good Jew strives to suffuse each moment with an awareness of the sacred and with moral fervour.

To achieve this spiritual ideal, practitioners of Judaism have traditionally laid great stress on ritual, observance and fidelity to the law of the *Torah* and the prescriptions of the *Talmud*.

The use of statues, pictures or any physical image is forbidden in Jewish worship. This prohibition may help to explain why Jewish tradition has come to rely so heavily on symbol and rite to connect human experience with the source of all being.

One of the distinctive features of Judaism is its great variety of rites, customs and ceremonies. These rituals address every aspect of life... Many of these rituals are deeply grounded in Jewish history and they serve to remind the faithful of those great historical events in which God's goodness and greatness was demonstrated to God's people and help to provide meaning at every significant juncture, for example, birth, maturity, marriage and death. Ritual is generally accompanied by prayer and plays a vital role in religious services and in important observances including dietary laws, the Sabbath, Holy Days and festivals.

*Observance* refers to the practice of maintaining fidelity to Jewish law and ritual. It needs to be noted here that the various groupings of religious Jews vary markedly in their degrees of observance and in their interpretation of law and ritual. Orthodox Jews, for example, steep an amazing portion of their lives in observance. But whatever the degree of observance, the goal of such practice remains the same - the hallowing of life.

The synagogue (or temple) functions as the focal point for the believing community. This place of worship is also an environment for social activity and religious education. Each synagogue is autonomous; again there is a great deal of variation in religious practice from synagogue to synagogue even within the same branch of Judaism.

But the real centre of Jewish religious life is the home which is regarded as a religious sanctuary; the family is considered to be the very fountainhead of Jewish worship.

### **Vatican-Israel Sign Pact**

On December 30, Israeli and Vatican officials signed an agreement that will lead to full diplomatic relations within several months. This 'pact' which took two years to negotiate creates a channel of communication between the Catholic and Jewish worlds and is a move to end 2,000 years of tension, misunderstanding and hatred between Jews and Roman Catholics. The pact is a platform on which to build in order to combat anti-semitism, promote freedom and peace of worship and encourage Christian pilgrimages to the Holy Land.

This fundamental agreement defends freedom of conscience and worship, the free access of pilgrims to the holy places and the church's right to run its own schools, welfare institutions and communications media. It indicates a strong statement against anti-Semitism, racism and religious intolerance. An issue not specifically mentioned is the desire of the Vatican for international guarantees - above and beyond Israeli law- to protect the cultural and religious values of the city of Jerusalem - the holy place for Christians, Muslims and Jews.

### **Jews in Canada**

The reader may be surprised to learn that the first Jewish immigrants to Canada arrived before the British; Jews were among the earliest fur traders in the 1700s. Canada's first synagogue- the Spanish-Portuguese synagogue in Montreal- was founded in 1768.

For more than two centuries, Jewish people have contributed to the development of Canadian society in a host of trades and professions, as well as in the area of culture and arts. The same Jewish community has likewise been shaped by Canadian society.

An estimated 315,000 Jews reside in Canada. Since more than two-thirds of these live in Ontario and Quebec, Central Canada has become a ripe environment for Jewish-Christian dialogue.

*For more information on Judaism, contact:*

***Canadian Jewish Congress,  
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Willowdale, ON,  
M2R 3V2;  
Phone: (416) 635-2883***

***Canadian-Jewish Dialogue of Toronto,  
44 Victoria Street, Suite 600,  
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M5C 1Y2;  
Phone: (416) 941-9356***

### ***Orthodox, Reform & Conservative & Judaism***

*Judaism, like most religions, is characterized, by the internal tension between its traditionalists and its reformists. At the root of this conflict is a tension between a Judaism that is perceived as constant and one that is perceived as evolving.*

**ORTHODOX** - Orthodox` Jews view their faith as the mainstream of a tradition that has remained steadfast and unaltered throughout their history. Theirs is a way of life that does not change regardless of the trends or difficulties encountered in the modern world. Orthodox Jews subscribe to literal interpretation of the Bible, they pray three times daily, use only Hebrew in their prayers and services, are strict observers of Jewish law and ritual and maintain separate pews for women in the synagogue.

**REFORM** - The Reform movement which began in Germany at the beginning of the 19th century maintains that in order to keep the essentials of the Judaic tradition alive and healthy, Judaism must adapt its liturgy, observances and community life to the contemporary world. Accordingly; Reform Jews are much less observant, advocate equality of the sexes, permit instrumental music in synagogue worship and allow for greater flexibility in choice of prayers (including the use of the vernacular).

**CONSERVATIVE** -This grouping tries to strike a balance between Orthodox and Reform Judaism. A largely North American phenomenon, Conservative Judaism strives to remain true to the substance, form and practices of tradition and to' the spirit of Jewish Law, all the while seeking to leave room for evolution, adaptation and growth. This amounts to a theological stance that could be described as "moderately reforming."

*Internationally, there are almost as many Orthodox Jews as Reform and Conservative combined. It should be noted that the borderlines between these branches of Judaism are not always clearly defined. Also, the terms used to denote these groupings differ in various parts of the world.*

### ***Focus On Facts***

**ORIGINS:** approximately 4,000 years ago in the ancient Middle East

**KEY FOUNDING FIGURES:** Abraham and Moses

**SACRED BOOKS:** Hebrew Bible; Talmud; Midrash

**TITLE OF DEITY:** Yahweh(YHWH) or Jehovah

**NATIONAL & SPIRITUAL HOMELAND:** Israel

**MAJOR RELIGIOUS BRANCHES:** Orthodox, Conservative & Reform

**PLACES OF WORSHIP:** Home and Synagogue (temple)

**TRADITIONAL LANGUAGE:** Hebrew

**ESTIMATED JEWISH POPULATION WORLDWIDE:** 13 Million

**SHARE OF WORLD'S POPULATION:** .28 Percent

**MAJOR LOCATIONS:** Israel, United States, Europe and Russia

**ANCESTRAL GROUPINGS:**

- ❖ Sephardim- those with Middle Eastern or North African ancestry (4%)
- ❖ Ashkenazim- those of European Ancestry (84%)
- ❖ Orientals- those of Asian Ancestry (10%)

### ***Festivals, Holy Days, and the Jewish Sabbath***

**PASSOVER** - 8-day springtime festival commemorating God's sparing of the Hebrews in Egypt when the firstborn of the Egyptians were killed. The chief festival of the Jewish year, the Passover symbolizes the Israelites' deliverance from Egyptian bondage and all forms of enslavement.

**SHAVUOT OR PENTECOST** - late spring harvest festival celebrating God's giving of the Law to Moses on Mount Sinai.

**ROSH HASHANAH** - Jewish New Year (two days, occurring in September or October).

**Yom KIPPUR (DAY of ATONEMENT)** - occurring shortly after Rosh Hashanah, this 24-hour period of prayer and fasting is the holiest day of the year. Penitence and family reconciliation are stressed.

**FEAST OF SUCCOTH (TABERNACLES)** - 8-day fall harvest festival of joy and thanksgiving.

**CHANUKAH (FESTIVAL of LIGHTS)** - 8-day December holiday of festivity and gift-giving - commemorates Israel's victory in the struggle for religious liberty against its Syrian rulers (168 B.C.E.).

**PURIM** - one-day joyous festival (late winter) celebrating Jewish deliverance from a Persian ruler (as described in the Book of Esther).

**THE SABBATH** - weekly 24-hour period occurring between sundown Friday and sundown Saturday. A family-oriented day celebrated with special foods, songs and religious practices (at home and in synagogue). Strictly observed by Orthodox Jews, it is a time of spiritual refreshment and a break from daily labour.



## THE PRAYER OF JESUS

By Mark Hathaway

As missionaries, one of the most difficult challenges we face is entering into a culture different from our own. We soon realize that language is probably the key to understanding the new culture; that language reflects the way people relate to the world around them. In a sense, language can be compared to a pane of glass through which we see things. When we learn a new language, we begin to see reality in a new way.

Jesus himself lived in a culture very different from our own, and to some extent that is revealed in the language he spoke - Aramaic, a Semitic tongue closely related to both Hebrew and Arabic. Sometimes also referred to as Syriac, Aramaic is still spoken today in a few isolated parts of Iraq and Syria, although it is gradually disappearing. It is also used as a liturgical language in several Eastern-rite Catholic and Orthodox churches.

In some sense, by entering into the Aramaic language, we look through the lens that Jesus himself used to perceive reality. As the tongue of peoples who worked the land, it employs imagery close to the earth and all growing things. It is also a language allowing for multiple possibilities to be present at the same time. For these reasons, some have observed that it is much closer to the languages of Aboriginal Peoples than to those of the modern western cultures. Indeed, it might help us to understand Jesus better to think of him as a native Middle-Eastern person.

Unfortunately, most of us (myself included) do not speak Aramaic; probably we have never even heard it spoken. A few words of it do appear in our translations of the New Testament (for instance, *talitha kum* in Mark 5:41 and *maranatha* in 1 Corinthians 16:22). More importantly, though, Aramaic texts of Jesus' words have been preserved by the Eastern churches. While scripture scholars usually maintain that the New Testament was written first in Greek, there are good reasons to believe that the Aramaic text (known as the *Peshitta*) may more accurately reflect the words which Jesus himself spoke. This is especially true in the case of the prayer we call the "Our Father", which was no doubt prayed by Aramaic-speaking Christians on a regular basis and preserved carefully in oral tradition until the time the written text emerged.

This prayer which Jesus himself taught us is at the heart of our spirituality. By reflecting on the text in Aramaic, many possible meanings come to light. The common translation we use is limited simply because it is but one of many possibilities. In Aramaic, each word can evoke an entire family of images and nuances. The following reflections on each phrase of the Aramaic prayer opens to us new dimensions of its meaning.

## REFLECTIONS ON THE ARAMAIC TEXT

By Mark Hathaway

### **Abwoon d'bwashmaya**

*("Our Father who art in heaven")*

The opening words of Jesus' prayer elicit the image of creation, of giving birth to the universe. *Abwoon* can indeed be translated as "father," but it can equally be rendered as the word for parenting (in either a physical or spiritual sense). At another level, it presents the image of the divine breath (or spirit) flowing out of oneness, crating the whole diversity of forms. *D'bwashmaya* conjures the images of light, sound and vibration spreading out and pervading all. In essence, then, "heaven" is conceived not so much as a place but as a dimension of reality that is present everywhere.

Some possible renditions of this phrase in its totality would be "O Source of the Radiance, dancing in and about all-that-is" or "O Creative Breath, ebbing and flowing through all forms." Again, these are just examples of the many possibilities that exist simultaneously in the original text (which includes as well the translation we normally pray). Still, they challenge us to be open to new ways of conceiving of both God and heaven.

### **Nethqadash shmakh**

*("Hallowed be thy name")*

- presents the image of someone bending over to clear a space where the sacred may dwell. *Shmakh* is derived from the same root as the Aramaic word for heaven; it means both name and the concrete manifestation of creative energy. The phrase in its entirety could be: "Soften the ground of our being, and hallow a space for the planting of your presence" or "Free us from all constrictions, so that the current of your life may move in us without hindrance." We are invited here to let go of all which keeps God from entering our lives, to sweep clean the chamber of our heart. Jesus' symbolic clearing of the temple resonates strongly with this image. To what extent do we have a marketplace in our own beings? What clutters the space where God desires to dwell within us?

### **Teytey malkuthakh**

*("Thy kingdom come")*

Making room for the sacred prepares us for the next step: *Malkuthakh* is a very rich word, and one central to Jesus' message. While normally translated as "kingdom", its roots are actually feminine (so "queendom" might be more accurate!) It conveys the idea of guiding principles, of that which empowers us to go forward in the face of all difficulties, and of a creative potential ready to be realized. To me, it evokes the image of the fragile blade of grass that slowly breaks apart the hardest of concrete. *Teytey* implies certain urgency in the coming, or a vision waiting to be fulfilled. The image is that of a nuptial chamber, a place of new beginnings. The phrase could be rendered, then, as "Fill us with thy creativity, so that we may be empowered to bear the fruit of your vision" or "In our depths, sow your seed with its greening-power, so that we might be midwives to they Reign." This part of the prayer calls us to walk through life with a royal dignity, ready to face difficulties with creativity and hope.

### **Nehwey tzevyanach aykanna d'bwashmaya aph b'arha**

*("Thy will be done on earth as it is in heaven")*

- can be considered the heart of Jesus' prayer. The "will" referred to here connotes a deep desire causing one's whole being to move toward a goal with the certainty that the effort will bear fruit. "Earth" (*arah*) carries a strong feeling of solidity and support; it is something that is fully materialized. Here, then, we pray that the sense of "I can" expressed in the line above be put fully into action. The phrase in its entirety could be: "Let each of our actions bear fruit in accordance with your desire" or "Moving to the heartbeat of your purpose, make us the embodiment of your compassion." In essence, we pray that all we do will be an act of co-creation with God.

### **Hawvlan lachma d'sunqanan yaomana**

*("Give us this day our daily bread")*

- asks not only for bread in the physical sense, but also for all that we need to truly thrive. In Aramaic, the word for "bread" (*lachma*) is directly related to the word for "wisdom" (*hochma*). We ask that it be given, but also that it be brought forth from the very depths of our own selves. In sum, we pray: "Endow us with the wisdom to produce and share what each being needs to grow and flourish" or "With passion and soul, let us generate from within that which is needed to sustain life this day."

### **Washboqlan khaubayn (wakhtahayn) aykanna daph khnan shbwoqan l'khayyabayn**

*("And forgive us our debts as we forgive those who are in debt to us")*

- conveys the idea of untying the knots of past mistakes. To forgive is to return things to their state of original freedom. This is something well described in the Old Testament in terms of the Jubilee year where all is returned to its original owners. We are called in this line to let go of all that holds us back from the fulfillment of God's desire: our failures, our despair, our frustrations. A good translation might be: "Untie the tangled threads of destiny which bind us, as we release others from the entanglement of past mistakes" or even "Empty us of frustrated hopes and desires, as we restore others to a renewal of vision." Certainly this part of the prayer calls us as well to forgive debts in the economic sense. As a missionary, though, I especially like the idea of letting go of frustrations and restoring a sense of vision. In a world where change sometimes seems impossible, we are challenged to constantly renew our hope and to animate those who have fallen into despair.

### **Wela tahlan l'nesyuna, ela patzan min bisha**

*("And do not put us to the test, but deliver us from evil")*

With these words we pray that we do not let ourselves be distracted from the true purpose of our lives by that which is essentially trivial; we ask that we not be seduced by superficiality and materialism. In Aramaic, "evil" (*bisha*) is conceived in terms of an action which is unripe, of a fruit that is either immature or rotten. This calls us to be sensitive to the moment at hand, to carry out the right action at the right time. Hence, we pray: "But let us not be captive to uncertainty. Nor cling to fruitless pursuits" or "Do not let us be seduced by that which would divert us from our true purpose, but illuminate the opportunities of the present moment."

**Metol dilakhie malkutha wahayla wateshbukhta l'ahlam almin, ameyn**

*("For the kingdom, the power, and the glory are yours, now and forever, amen.")*

This final line recapitulates the whole prayer. The word translated as "power" (*hayla*) is the energy that gives and sustains all life. "Glory" (*teshbukhta*) evokes the image of things returned to a state of harmony and equilibrium. The phrase could be rendered as: "For you are the ground of the fruitful vision, the birthing-power, and the fulfillment, as all is gathered and made whole once again."

Meditating on the Aramaic version of Jesus' prayer can be very challenging, precisely because it calls us to re-examine and re-think our spirituality. The images evoked call us to a very down-to-earth life of prayer. They also touch us at a profound level, stimulating us to live more simply, more authentically, and more justly. Yet, the prayer also recognizes that conversion is a continuing process, something that must be entered into on a daily basis. During this Lenten season, perhaps we can endeavor to deepen this process in a special way.

## **GRATITUDE: LIVE LONGER BE HAPPIER**

By Dr. Mercola

While it's certainly good to have an annual holiday to remind us to express gratitude, there's much to be said for the benefits of cultivating the spirit of thankfulness year-round.

People who are thankful for what they have are better able to cope with stress, have more positive emotions and are better able to reach their goals. Scientists have even noted that gratitude is associated with improved health.

As noted in a previous article on this topic published in the *Harvard Mental Health Letter*, "expressing thanks may be one of the simplest ways to feel better... The word gratitude is derived from the Latin word *gratia*, which means grace, graciousness or gratefulness (depending on the context). In some ways, gratitude encompasses all of these meanings. Gratitude is a thankful appreciation for what an individual receives, whether tangible or intangible.

With gratitude, people acknowledge the goodness in their lives. In the process, people usually recognize that the source of that goodness lies at least partially outside themselves. As a result, gratitude also helps people connect to something larger than themselves as individuals – whether to other people, nature or a higher power.

People feel and express gratitude in multiple ways. They can apply it to the past (retrieving positive memories and being thankful for elements of childhood or past blessings), the present (not taking good fortune for granted as it comes) and the future (maintaining a hopeful and optimistic attitude). Regardless of the inherent or current level of someone's gratitude, it's a quality that individuals can successfully cultivate further."

### **Gratitude – It Does a Body Good**

Dr. P. Murali Doraiswamy, head of biologic psychology at Duke University Medical Center, once stated, "If [thankfulness] were a drug, it would be the world's best-selling product with a health maintenance indication for every major organ system."

One way to harness the positive power of gratitude is to keep a gratitude journal or list where you actively write down exactly what you're grateful for each day. In one study, people who kept a gratitude journal reported exercising more and they had fewer visits to the doctor compared to those who focused on sources of aggravation.

As noted in a previous ABC News article, studies have shown that gratitude can produce a number of measurable effects on a number of systems in your body, including:

- Mood neurotransmitters (serotonin and norepinephrine)
- Inflammatory and immune systems (cytokines)
- Reproductive hormones (testosterone)
- Stress hormones (cortisol)
- Social bonding hormones (oxytocin)
- Blood pressure and cardiac and EEG rhythms
- Cognitive and pleasure related neurotransmitters (dopamine)
- Blood sugar

## Ways to cultivate gratitude

Cultivating a sense of gratitude will help you refocus your attention toward what's good and right in your life, rather than dwelling on the negatives and all the things you may feel are lacking. And, like a muscle, this mental state can be strengthened with practice. Besides keeping a daily gratitude journal, other ways to cultivate a sense of gratitude include:

**Write thank you notes:** Whether in response to a gift or kind act or simply as a show of gratitude for someone in your life, getting into the habit of writing thank-you letters can help you express gratitude in addition to simply feeling it inside.

**Count your blessings:** Once a week, reflect on events for which you are grateful and write them down. As you do, feel the sensations of happiness and thankfulness you felt at the time it happened, going over it again in your mind.

**Pray:** Expressing thanks during your prayers is another way to cultivate gratitude.

**Mindfulness meditation:** Practising “mindfulness” means you’re actively paying attention to the moment you’re in right now. A mantra is sometimes used to help maintain focus, but you can also focus on something that you’re grateful for, such as a pleasant smell, a cool breeze or a lovely memory.

...Previous research has shown that employees whose managers say “thank you” feel greater motivation at work and work harder than peers who do not hear those “magic words.” As noted in a previous blog post in Mark’s Daily Apple, ...Research has shown that being on the receiving end of a person’s gratitude can boost subjects’ sense of self-worth and/or self-efficacy. It also appears to encourage participants to further help the person who offered the gratitude but also another, unrelated person, in an unconscious ‘pay it forward’ kind of connection.”

## Cultivating an Attitude of Gratitude as Part of a Healthy Lifestyle

Starting each day by thinking of all the things you have to be thankful for is one way to put your mind on the right track. Also, remember that your future depends largely on the thoughts you think today. So each moment of every day is an opportunity to turn your thinking around, thereby helping or hindering your ability to think and feel more positively in the very next moment...

Most experts agree there are no shortcuts to happiness. Even generally happy people do not experience joy 24 hours a day. But a happy person can have a bad day and still find pleasure in the small things in life.

Be thankful for what you have. When life gives you 100 reasons to cry, remember the 1,000 reasons you have to smile. Face your past without regret; prepare for the future without fear; focus on what's good right now, in the present moment and practise gratitude. Remember to say “thank you” – to yourself, the Universe and others. It's wonderful to see a person smile and even more wonderful knowing that you are the reason behind it!

## **INTERFAITH DIALOGUE: *An Interview with Professor Ovey N. Mohammed, S.J.***

*As a result of immigration patterns in the past two or three decades, this country is becoming a mosaic of many faiths: Today, for example, there are more Sikhs than Presbyterians in Canada. What is the significance of these many non-Christian faiths for Christian mission? To shed light on this important question, we spoke to Professor Ovey N. Mohammed, a Jesuit who teaches Systematic Theology at Regis College in the Toronto School of Theology. His specialty is interfaith dialogue. Paul McKenna conducted the interview for Scarboro Missions.*

**Scarboro Missions:** *How did you become interested in interfaith dialogue?*

**Professor Mohammed:** I was born of a Hindu mother and a Muslim father and was fortunate enough to have lived in different parts of the world. These experiences combined with graduate studies in world religions have made me multicultural and multireligious and explains my interest as a- Jesuit in interfaith dialogue.

**Scarboro Missions:** *First of all what is the difference between ecumenism and interfaith dialogue?*

**Professor Mohammed:** Ecumenism refers to dialogue among persons who are Christians, as between Anglicans and Roman Catholics. Interfaith dialogue refers to dialogue between Christians and non-Christians, or between one non-Christian faith and another, as between Jews and Muslims. Christians have a common faith in Christ. Both Christians and non-Christians, with the exception of some Buddhists, have a common faith in God.

**Scarboro Missions:** *What do you see is the significance for Christians of the growing presence of other religious faiths in Canada?*

**Professor Mohammed:** Christians have to find answers to a host of questions. To name a few: How should their own faith relate to other faiths in a society that is religiously pluralistic? Should they take a stance of rivalry or cooperation with respect to non Christian religions? What are the challenges to Christian conviction in a multifaith society? When different ways of life are followed in the same city, and in the same nation, how do Christians decide what adjustments to make to their own beliefs, and what are they to insist upon as essential for the satisfactory life of the whole community? What sort of religious education should be given in schools when from now on students are going to live with people of other faiths?

**Scarboro Missions:** *Further along these lines, people such as priests and ministers involved directly in 'Christian' ministry, won't they have to face many new issues?*

**Professor Mohammed:** Yes; the pastoral issues are many. As a Christian minister, how would you deal with the following: A young couple is coming for an interview about their upcoming marriage but one of the partners is a Muslim! On the day of the wedding, would you do a reading from the Qur'an? You are approached by the head of a Hindu group who would like to use the church basement for a prayer meeting. What would be your answer? A 23-year-old woman has just been killed in an accident, but she has been deeply influenced by Buddhism. Her parents are devout Christians, and you have to speak at her funeral when many of her Buddhist friends would be there. How, would you console her parents? How would you speak of the young woman's conversion to Buddhism in the presence of her Buddhist friends? In a hospital situation, do you know how to

minister to non-Christians? - Practitioners of eastern religions are very interested in prayer. Do you know how to give a retreat to a Hindu? Pastoral issues can be multiplied over and over, and the challenges are increasing.

*"We must explore models for dealing with the unity of global consciousness and spiritual life."*

***Scarboro Missions: Is there any biblical basis for interfaith dialogue?***

***Professor Mohammed:*** Yes. There is in the Old Testament the exclusive covenant with Abraham, but it is not the only one. For God's inclusive covenant with Noah embraces all humankind and is a covenant which will never end. Moreover, this Noachic - covenant reverberates through the Psalms and the prophets. In the New Testament, Peter says that non-Christians, like Christians, receive the Holy Spirit and Paul declares that what can be known about God is plain to them, because God has shown it to them. Paul also says that there is glory and honour and peace for every one who does good, the Jew first and also the Greek, for God shows no partiality, For Paul it would seem that salvation is not based on a special revelation, since in speaking of the salvation of the Gentiles, he says that it, is not the hearers of the law who are righteous. before God, but the doers who are justified, and this is possible because what the law requires is written on their hearts, while their conscience also bears witness. When we look at the gospels, it is significant that Jesus praised the faith of the Roman centurion, the faith of the Syro-Phoenician woman, and the faith of the Canaanite woman, that is to say, the faith of non-Christians.

***Scarboro Missions: Why is interfaith dialogue a difficult issue for Christians?***

***Professor Mohammed:*** Because in the past Christians have regarded themselves as the carriers of the truth. Now they have to learn how to be equal partners in dialogue. This exposure to dialogue is threatening. What happens, for instance, when they realize, and not grudgingly but willingly so, the truth, grace and spiritual power of other faiths? How does such a recognition affect their understanding of their own Christian faith? Should they be willing to risk the conversion of themselves to an alternative faith? They have to ask themselves if there is-an inherent tension, even contradiction; between the mission of the Church and the loving respect owed by Christians to all religions and cultures of the world. Christians are aware that though -Christianity is a world religion; Christian theology and culture are Western; in fact, that Christianity has resisted learning from non-Western cultures. They know that non-Christians consider Christianity a Western religion. They are aware that Christianity and the expansion of the West went hand in hand. Now that the age of Western colonialism is over, in dialogue they have to face a barrage of accusations from non-Christians disadvantaged by them: accusations of arrogance, oppression, exploitation and even of brutalization. As representatives of a religion that has regarded itself as the apogee of moral; social, organizational and technological progress, the accusation that their so-called Christian faith was in actuality an instrument of Northern Hemispheric dominance is very disturbing.

*"Growth through dialogue is, therefore, the response to the call to a full humanity, the call to wholeness, and so to holiness; the call to participate in gods mission to men and women everywhere."*

***Scarboro Missions: How will Christianity be affected by interreligious dialogue?***



**Professor Mohammed:** As we approach the 21st century, we are entering a new phase of Christian theology in which the relation of the Church to other faiths will be new. Any statement of the Christian faith must include, if it is to serve its purpose in the world, some doctrine of other religions which is respectable, theologically convincing, spiritually satisfying and emotionally acceptable to all partners in dialogue. We must come to grips with the network of contemporary problems associated with world development. We must find the sacred not only in our own faith, but beyond it. We must explore models for dealing with the unity of global consciousness and spiritual life. We must seek to integrate into the total life of our communities new international perspectives and multicultural experiences. The perspectives of theologians of other religions are also significant. They are significant because the reality and validity of their viewpoints in many cultural contexts would help to make Christian theology, and hence all Christians, less ethnocentric and naively Western.

We must understand the major features of other traditions and try to appreciate the world views and ways of life of their participants. We must compare the different religions and see what is similar and what is different. We must develop understanding of significant religious alternatives to Christianity that challenge traditional and contemporary judgements of truth and value. Non-Christians are studying Christianity and we Christians must study and be aware of non-Christian-faiths.

**Scarboro Missions:** *What is the relationship between being a Christian missionary and interfaith dialogue?*

**Professor Mohammed:** Vatican II affirmed that the Church, sent to all peoples of every time and place, is not bound to any race or nation, nor to any particular way of life. Vatican II recognized that if the Church is to become a universally intelligible sign of salvation for all humankind, it must make itself completely at home in the different cultures of the world. In this view or model, the missionary task of the Church is one of making Christ his gospel and grace present among peoples in their own specific histories and cultures.

It is for this reason that Pope Paul VI established the Secretariat for Non-Christians in addition to the Congregation for the Evangelization of Peoples. For Pope Paul the Council's call for dialogue with other religions and the missionary task of the Church were complementary. For him real evangelization cannot take place without entering into communion with the various cultures and religions.

The Secretariat for Non-Christians reaffirmed this view in a 1984 document when it asserted that mission without dialogue goes against the demands of a true humanity and against the teaching of the gospel.

In other words since Vatican II, missionaries are called upon to leave behind the Western expression of Christianity when they enter the non-Western world. They are called upon to speak the good news of Christ through different religious symbols in vastly diverse cultural contexts. Indeed, if missionaries are to be successful today, they must encourage culturally different expressions and celebrations, of the faith.

*"...the missionary task of the church is one of making Christ, his gospel and grace present among peoples in their own specific histories and cultures."*

***Scarboro Missions: In a pluralistic culture such as ours, can we also define secularism, humanism, materialism, and so on, as faiths? If so, what is the significance for Christian ministry of dialogue with these faiths?***

***Professor Mohammed:*** The short answer to the first question is yes. As for the second question, it is ironic but true that many Christians also subscribe to these faiths. Many would say that this phenomenon is an expression of Christianity come of age, while others would explain it as the kind of impoverished Christianity that we have in Canada. Reginald Bibby (Fragmented Gods), for example, would take this latter view. If Bibby is right that Canadian Christians are both Christian and humanist, or whatever, then the significance of this may well be an urgent call for the Church to reflect on what it is doing in its ministries. By merely projecting these faiths onto others, saying that we should dialogue with these others, rather than call those who call themselves Christian to the authenticity of their faith, Christian ministers would merely be denying that they share some responsibility for the situation.

***Scarboro Missions: Can interfaith dialogue make a contribution to the issues of peace, social justice and the building of a world community?***

***Professor Mohammed:*** Yes, for all the world religions affirm that concern for the poor and dispossessed is central to salvation. In Hinduism, according to Bhagavad Gita, when action is performed in view of the welfare of humanity based on a pure love of God, action and the love of God are one. In contemporary Buddhism, even Theravada monks do not isolate themselves from society. Their practice includes social action in such international and domestic issues as war and peace, ecology, human rights, and economic redistribution of the world's wealth and resources. In Judaism, much of the legislation of the Torah is directed against inhumanity and injustice. Moreover, the great Jewish prophets understood the will of God and obedience to God in ethical terms. In Islam, active response to human suffering is part of the definition of religion. In fact, the giving of alms is one of the five pillars of Islam. And in Christianity, it is not those who say "Lord, Lord" who will be saved. The saved are those who feed the hungry, give drink to the thirsty, clothe the naked and visit those in prison.

In short, within the struggle for peace, social justice and the establishment of a world community, the salvation theories of the world religions all suggest an openness to interreligious sharing and praxis.

*"Not only can people from different religions pray together, they can also teach each other how to pray better."*

***Scarboro Missions: Do you feel it is important for Christians to work closely with people of other faiths?***

***Professor Mohammed:*** The Canadian commitment to a pluralistic society is unquestionable, yet Muslims, Hindus and others are a minority who experience discrimination. At very least they feel isolated and vulnerable. Christians, in contrast, being the majority, are at home and therefore able to play the part of host. The task of the host is to make guests feel comfortable, not to challenge their lifestyle and religious orientation. Moreover, if Christians fail to make serious efforts to ensure that the same freedom they enjoy is extended to others they cannot hope that it will long be extended to

themselves. Freedom is indivisible, and belief in the future will always be held in the context of a mixed society.

***Scarboro Missions: Can people from different religions pray together?***

***Professor Mohammed:*** It is quite common for Christians, Hindus and Buddhists to pray together and for Catholics and Muslims to take part in devotions to Mary. The practice of common prayer is increasing between Christians and Jews. In fact in Toronto itself many non-Christians attend Christian services at Easter and Christmas. Not only can people from different religions pray together, they can also teach each other how to pray better. It was a Hindu who taught John Main (a Benedictine who founded a Christian meditation centre in Montreal) how to pray, and a Hindu who directed Thomas Merton to his vocation.

***Scarboro Missions: Can you comment on the joys, rewards, benefits for Christians who choose to struggle with the interfaith issue?***

***Professor Mohammed:*** Interfaith dialogue is an opportunity for Christians to discover in an authentic way what Christianity really is. When they have outgrown their alarm, they shall find it exhilarating, though genuinely challenging. Through dialogue they would begin to experience their sense of connectedness with human diversity. In an attempt to connect with other belief systems, they would come to the realization that all people are God's children. Through dialogue they would get a totally new consciousness of themselves. They would realize that all people are part of a global community. They would come to know that "we" and "they" are one. Growth through dialogue is, therefore, the response to the call to a full humanity, the call to wholeness, and so to holiness; the call to participate in God's mission to men and women everywhere.

**Milestones in Modern Jewish-Christian Relations**  
Compiled by Sr. Lucy Thorson, NDS and Murray Watson

*“... you, a wild olive shoot, were grafted in ... to share the rich root of the olive tree ... remember that it is not you that support the root, but the root that supports you.”*  
(Romans 11:17-18)

Since the Second World War, the Catholic Church has been involved in a deliberate process of rethinking its relationship to Judaism and the Jewish people. Especially in the wake of the Second Vatican Council, Catholic-Jewish relations have improved tremendously on local, national and international levels.

As several Jewish and Catholic leaders have noted, there have probably been more positive encounters between Jews and Catholics in the last sixty years than in the previous fifteen hundred. These years have been a time of renewal, hope and growing cooperation between these two faiths evidenced by the multitude of Catholic-Jewish dialogue groups, organizations and institutions that have emerged throughout the world since Vatican II.

The following listing of events provides a taste of how relations between Catholics and Jews have been changing and developing in recent decades – and this is a journey that has only just begun.

**1947    Ten Points of Seelisberg**

An international conference of Jews, Protestants and Catholics, gathered in Switzerland to confront the reality of anti-Semitism and the Holocaust, issues a series of ten principles to guide Christian teaching and preaching when referring to Jews and Judaism.

**1959    Good Friday Prayer**

Pope John XXIII modifies the intercessory prayer for the Jews in the Church's Good Friday liturgy by suppressing the term “perfidious (faithless, unbelieving) Jews.” Over the years, the prayer continues to undergo revision to bring it more in keeping with the renewal in Church teaching about the Jews and Judaism.

**1960    Pope John XXIII and Jules Isaac**

Jules Isaac, a noted French Jewish historian, presents Pope John XXIII with historical documentation on Christian anti-Judaism and attitudes which contributed to the Holocaust.

**1965    Nostra Aetate**

Called by Pope John XXIII, the Second Vatican Council (1962-65) issues *Nostra Aetate* (The Declaration on the Relationship of the Church to Non-Christian Religions.) *Nostra Aetate* No. 4 addresses the issue of Christian attitudes towards the Jewish people. This document marks the end of a long era in the history of Catholic – Jewish relations and the beginning of a new age of dialogue between the two ancient communities.

**1974    New Vatican Commission**

What was formerly the Office for Catholic- Jewish Relations – created in 1966 and attached to the Secretariat for the Promotion of Christian Unity – is renamed the Holy See's Commission for Religious Relations with the Jews.

**1974 “Guidelines and Suggestions for Implementing the Conciliar Declaration *Nostra Aetate* (No. 4)”**

This Vatican document proposes some concrete suggestions born of experience to help to promote in the life of the Church the attitudes towards the Jewish people articulated in the 1965 declaration *Nostra Aetate* No.4. In particular, this document encourages Christians to “acquire a better knowledge of the basic components of the religious tradition of Judaism and to learn by what essential traits the Jews define themselves in light of their own religious experience.”

**1978 Karol Wojtyla elected Pope**

From the beginning of his twenty-six year pontificate, the newly elected Pope-John Paul II-sets out to build a new relationship between the Church and the Jewish people.

**1980 Pope John Paul II – A Covenant Never Revoked**

Addressing the Jewish community in Mainz, West Germany, John Paul II insists on the eternal validity of God’s covenant with the Jews, a theme repeated in subsequent Church teachings.

**1985 “Notes on the Correct Way to Present Jews and Judaism in Preaching and Catechesis in the Roman Catholic Church”**

This Vatican document provides a helpful reference for those who teach and preach about Jews and Judaism and wish to do so in accord with the current teaching of the Church.

**1986 Pope John Paul II Visits Rome Synagogue**

John Paul II becomes the first Pope in history to visit Rome’s chief synagogue. In his speech he reiterates the Second Vatican Council’s condemnation of all discrimination toward the Jews and states: “The Jewish religion is not ‘extrinsic’ to us, but in a certain way is ‘intrinsic’ to our own religion. With Judaism therefore we have a relationship which we do not have with any other religion. You are our dearly beloved brothers and, in a certain way, it could be said that you are our elder brothers.”

**1993 Israel – Vatican Accord**

Israel and the Vatican establish full diplomatic ties, easing decades of diplomatic tensions between the two states.

**1997 Vatican Symposium “Roots of Anti – Judaism in the Christian Milieu”**

Addressing the symposium, John Paul II says, “In the Christian world ... erroneous and unjust interpretations of the New Testament regarding the Jewish people ... have circulated too long engendering feelings of hostility toward this people.”

**1998 “We Remember: A Reflection on the Shoah”**

In a long-awaited document on the Holocaust, the Church expresses repentance for those Christians who failed to oppose the Nazi persecution of the Jews.

**2000 Visit of Pope John Paul II to Israel**

Following a Lenten liturgy in which he prayed for God’s forgiveness “for those who have caused these children [the Jews] to suffer” Pope John Paul II undertakes a historic visit to Israel, during which he visits Judaism’s holiest site, the Western Wall, and places in the Wall a copy of his Lenten prayer.

### **2000-2002    Historic scholarly documents**

In 2000, an interdenominational group of Jewish scholars issues *Dabru Emet*, a consensus document offering eight suggestions about how Jews and Christians might better relate to one another. In 2002, the Christian Scholars Group on Christian-Jewish Relations publishes its response to *Dabru Emet*, entitled “A Sacred Obligation”.

### **2002    “The Jewish People and Their Sacred Scriptures in the Christian Bible”**

The Pontifical Biblical Commission publishes a thorough study of the relationship between the New Testament and the Hebrew Scriptures. The document notes that Christians have much to learn from Jewish interpretation of the Bible and confronts the problem of anti-Jewish passages in the New Testament.

### **2002    Bilateral Commission of the Israeli Chief Rabbinate and the Holy See**

As a result of Pope John Paul’s visit to the State of Israel in 2000, the Chief Rabbinate of Israel and the Holy See established a joint commission which has continued to meet annually, to address topics of shared concern, and to strengthen the relationship between the Vatican and the religious leadership of Israel. Together they have explored the role of Scripture in each faith’s central teachings, the sanctity of human life, freedom of conscience, religious education and other significant matters.

### **2005    Joseph Ratzinger elected Pope**

As a cardinal, Pope Benedict had been a close collaborator with Pope John Paul II in many of his historic interfaith initiatives and writings. In his homily for the Mass inaugurating his papacy, the new Pope specifically mentioned the Jews among those to whom he extended greetings: “With great affection I also greet ... you, my brothers and sisters of the Jewish people, to whom we are joined by a great shared spiritual heritage, one rooted in God’s irrevocable promises”. His first official correspondence as Pope was a letter of congratulations to the Chief Rabbi-emeritus of Rome’s Great Synagogue, Dr. Elio Toaff, on the occasion of his 90th birthday.

### **2005-2010    Pope Benedict visits to three synagogues**

In August 2005, as part of his pilgrimage to Germany for World Youth Day, the Pope visited the synagogue of Cologne, where he said: “We must come to know one another much more and much better. Consequently, I would encourage sincere and trustful dialogue between Jews and Christians ... Our rich common heritage and our fraternal and more trusting relations call upon us to join in giving an ever more harmonious witness”. On April 28, 2008, Pope Benedict was the guest of Rabbi Arthur Schneier and the congregation of Park East Synagogue. In his remarks, the Pope said: “I find it moving to recall that Jesus, as a young boy, heard the words of Scripture and prayed in a place such as this,” and he encouraged everyone present “to continue building bridges of friendship”. In January 2010, Pope Benedict marked Italy’s annual “Day for Judaism” by visiting the main synagogue of Rome, repeating the historic visit first made by his predecessor. There, he invited Jews and Christians to come together to proclaim the religious and ethical teachings they share: “Reawakening in our society openness to the transcendent dimension, witnessing to the one God, is a precious service which Jews and Christians can offer together ... Bearing witness together to the supreme value of life against all selfishness, is an important contribution to a new world where justice and peace reign ...”.

### **2005 Papal recommitment to the vision of *Nostra Aetate***

On the occasion of the fortieth anniversary of *Nostra Aetate*'s promulgation, Pope Benedict wrote: "The Jewish-Christian dialogue must continue to enrich and deepen the bonds of friendship which have developed, while preaching and catechesis must be committed to ensuring that our mutual relations are presented in the light of the principles set forth by the Council".

### **2007 Pope quotes Jewish rabbi-scholar in his own book about Jesus**

In April, Pope Benedict published the first volume in a trilogy, "Jesus of Nazareth". In it, he quotes extensively from a 1993 book by Rabbi Jacob Neusner, a distinguished scholar of Judaism, called *A Rabbi Talks With Jesus*.

### **2009 Visit of Pope Benedict XVI to Israel and the Palestinian Territories**

From May 8 to 15, Pope Benedict visited the Holy Land, meeting with religious and political leaders in both Israel and the Palestinian Territories, visiting major Jewish sites and expressing the solidarity of the Catholic Church with the peoples of that region.

### **2009 International Council of Christians and Jews issues "A Time For Recommitment" (The Twelve Points of Berlin)**

More than sixty years after the ICCJ published its seminal "Ten Points of Seelisberg," the "Twelve Points of Berlin" is issued in July, as an attempt to address key topics in Jewish-Christian relations in the light of the considerable progress in this dialogue, and to provide guiding principles for the future.

### **2011 25th anniversary of Pope John Paul II's Assisi Day of Prayer**

On October 25, Pope Benedict reprised his predecessor's historic interreligious gathering in Assisi, by inviting the world's religious leaders to come together again, and to pray for peace in the world. Three hundred religious representatives accepted his invitation. In speaking of the shared religious aspiration of peace, Pope Benedict said: "We will continue to be united in this journey, in dialogue, in the daily building of peace and in our commitment to a better world, a world in which every man and woman and every people can live in accordance with their own legitimate aspirations".

### **2013 Historic Papal Transition**

Pope Benedict XVI resigns the papacy on February 28. On March 13, Cardinal Jorge Mario Bergoglio is elected as Pope Francis. One of the new Pope's first acts is to send a message to Rome's Jewish community, informing them of his election, and inviting their presence for his installation Mass.

It was quickly revealed that Pope Francis had a longstanding and warm relationship with Argentina's Jewish community, and had published a book of his conversations with Rabbi Abraham Skorka, a close friend and colleague [in English: *On Heaven and Earth: Pope Francis on Faith, Family, and the Church in the Twenty-First Century*, 2013].

In April, Pope Francis accepts the invitation of visiting Israeli President Shimon Peres to come to Israel.

### **2014 Papal visit to the Holy Land**

From May 24 to 26, Pope Francis pays his first papal visit to the Holy Land, visiting Jordan, Israel and the Palestinian Territories, accompanied by his good friend Rabbi Abraham Skorka and Omar Abboud, a leader of the Muslim community in Argentina. The Pope's visit was intended to promote

a message of peace, reconciliation and interfaith dialogue. It also specifically marked the fiftieth anniversary of the historic visit of Pope Paul VI to Israel, when that Pope met Athenagoras, the Ecumenical Patriarch of Constantinople.

Pope Francis accepts the invitation of the Israeli government to visit the Holy Land. From May 24 to 26, the Pope visits key Biblical and historical sites in Jordan, Israel and the Palestinian Territories, meets with Jewish religious and political leaders, and with Ecumenical Patriarch Bartholomew.



## **THE GOLDEN RULE**

Hurt not others in ways that you yourself would find hurtful. –Buddhism

What is hateful to you,  
Do not to your fellow man.  
That is the entire Law;  
All the rest is commentary. –Judaism

Do unto others as you would have them do unto you. –Christianity

No one of you is a believer  
Until he desires for his brother  
That which he desires  
For himself. –Islam

Blessed is he who preferreth his brother before himself. –Baha'i Faith

## BAHA'I FAITH

Lay not on any soul a load that you would not wish to be laid upon you, and desire not for anyone the things you would not desire for yourself  
*Baha'u'llah, Gleanings*



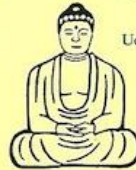
## HINDUISM

This is the sum of duty: do not do to others what would cause pain if done to you  
*Mahabharata 5:1517*



## BUDDHISM

Treat not others in ways that you yourself would find hurtful  
*The Buddha, Udana-Varga 5:18*



## CONFUCIANISM

One word which sums up the basis of all good conduct... loving-kindness. Do not do to others what you do not want done to yourself  
*Confucius, Analects 15:23*



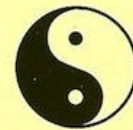
## ISLAM

Not one of you truly believes until you wish for others what you wish for yourself  
*The Prophet Muhammad, Hadith*



## TAOISM

Regard your neighbour's gain as your own gain, and your neighbour's loss as your own loss  
*Lao Tzu, T'ai Shang Kan Ying P'ien, 213-218*



## JUDAISM

What is hateful to you, do not do to your neighbour. This is the whole Torah; all the rest is commentary  
*Hillel, Talmud, Shabbat 31a*



## SIKHISM

I am a stranger to no one; and no one is a stranger to me. Indeed, I am a friend to all  
*Guru Granth Sahib, p. 1299*



## JAINISM

One should treat all creatures in the world as one would like to be treated  
*Mahavira, Suttrakritanga*



## ZOROASTRIANISM

Do not do unto others whatever is injurious to yourself  
*Shayast-na-Shayast 13:29*



## NATIVE SPIRITUALITY

We are as much alive as we keep the earth alive  
*Chief Dan George*



## UNITARIANISM

We affirm and promote respect for the interdependent web of all existence of which we are a part  
*Unitarian principle*



## CHRISTIANITY

In everything, do to others as you would have them do to you; for this is the law and the prophets  
*Jesus, Matthew 7:12*



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## **THE GOLDEN RULE IN MATTHEW, LUKE, AND JOHN**

Jeffrey Wattles for Scarboro Missions, 14 October 2012

### **Matthew 7:7-13**

**7** “Ask, and it will be given you; search, and you will find; knock, and the door will be opened for you. **8** For everyone who asks receives, and everyone who searches finds, and for everyone who knocks, the door will be opened.

**9** Is there anyone among you who, if your child asks for bread, will give a stone? **10** Or if the child asks for a fish, will give a snake? **11** If you then, who are evil, know how to give good gifts to your children, how much more will your Father in heaven give good things to those who ask him!

**12** “In everything do to others as you would have them do to you; for this is the law and the prophets. The Narrow Gate

**13** “Enter through the narrow gate; for the gate is wide and the road is easy[a] that leads to destruction, and there are many who take it.

### **Luke 6: 27-39**

**27** “But I say to you that listen, Love your enemies, do good to those who hate you, **28** bless those who curse you, pray for those who abuse you. **29** If anyone strikes you on the cheek, offer the other also; and from anyone who takes away your coat do not withhold even your shirt. **30** Give to everyone who begs from you; and if anyone takes away your goods, do not ask for them again.

**31** Do to others as you would have them do to you.

**32** “If you love those who love you, what credit is that to you? For even sinners love those who love them. **33** If you do good to those who do good to you, what credit is that to you? For even sinners do the same. **34** If you lend to those from whom you hope to receive, what credit is that to you? Even sinners lend to sinners, to receive as much again. **35** But love your enemies, do good, and lend, expecting nothing in return.[a] Your reward will be great, and you will be children of the Most High; for he is kind to the ungrateful and the wicked. **36** Be merciful, just as your Father is merciful.

Judging Others

**37** “Do not judge, and you will not be judged; do not condemn, and you will not be condemned. Forgive, and you will be forgiven; **38** give, and it will be given to you. A good measure, pressed down, shaken together, running over, will be put into your lap; for the measure you give will be the measure you get back.” **39** He also told them a parable: “Can a blind person guide a blind person? Will not both fall into a pit?

### **John 15**

**15** “I am the true vine, and my Father is the vinegrower. **2** He removes every branch in me that bears no fruit. Every branch that bears fruit he prunes[a] to make it bear more fruit. **3** You have already been cleansed[b] by the word that I have spoken to you. **4** Abide in me as I abide in you. Just as the branch cannot bear fruit by itself unless it abides in the vine, neither can you unless you abide in me. **5** I am the vine, you are the branches. Those who abide in me and I in them bear much fruit, because apart from me you can do nothing. **6** Whoever does not abide in me is thrown away like a branch and withers; such branches are gathered, thrown into the fire, and burned. **7** If you abide in me, and my words abide in you, ask for whatever you wish, and it will be done for you. **8** My Father is glorified by this, that you bear much fruit and become[c] my disciples. **9** As the Father has loved me, so I have loved you; abide in my love. **10** If you keep my commandments, you will abide in my love, just as I

have kept my Father's commandments and abide in his love. **11** I have said these things to you so that my joy may be in you, and that your joy may be complete.

**12** "This is my commandment, that you love one another as I have loved you. **13** No one has greater love than this, to lay down one's life for one's friends. **14** You are my friends if you do what I command you. **15** I do not call you servants[d] any longer, because the servant[e] does not know what the master is doing; but I have called you friends, because I have made known to you everything that I have heard from my Father. **16** You did not choose me but I chose you. And I appointed you to go and bear fruit, fruit that will last, so that the Father will give you whatever you ask him in my name. **17** I am giving you these commands so that you may love one another.

The World's Hatred

**18** "If the world hates you, be aware that it hated me before it hated you. **19** If you belonged to the world,[f] the world would love you as its own. Because you do not belong to the world, but I have chosen you out of the world—therefore the world hates you. **20** Remember the word that I said to you, 'Servants[g] are not greater than their master.' If they persecuted me, they will persecute you; if they kept my word, they will keep yours also. **21** But they will do all these things to you on account of my name, because they do not know him who sent me. **22** If I had not come and spoken to them, they would not have sin; but now they have no excuse for their sin. **23** Whoever hates me hates my Father also. **24** If I had not done among them the works that no one else did, they would not have sin. But now they have seen and hated both me and my Father. **25** It was to fulfill the word that is written in their law, 'They hated me without a cause.'

**26** "When the Advocate[h] comes, whom I will send to you from the Father, the Spirit of truth who comes from the Father, he will testify on my behalf. **27** You also are to testify because you have been with me from the beginning.

## OPENING OURSELVES TO GOD

By Paul McKenna

*"By dialogue we let God be present in our midst, for as we open ourselves to one another, we open ourselves to God." Pope John Paul II*

### Who Is My Neighbour?

Each of the world's religions has a lot to say in response to the universal question: Who Is My Neighbour? Last May, in a Sikh temple in Scarborough, Ontario, 200 people representing nine world faiths gathered to address this very question.

The event was co-sponsored by the Gursikh Sabha Sikh Temple and by Scarboro Missions. It was the fifth interfaith event sponsored by Scarboro Missions whose commitment to inter-faith dialogue is inspired by the Second Vatican Council. This 'Ecumenical Council' sparked a new openness to Jews, Buddhists, Muslims, Hindus, Aborigines, and others. As a result, the Church has come to recognize and respect the presence of grace, truth, and holiness in other religions.

As guests entered the Sikh house of worship, they were invited to remove their shoes and put on head coverings. Both of these Sikh customs are a way of showing respect for God while in the temple.

Seated on the floor, the audience then listened to a panel of speakers representing the following faiths: Aboriginal, Baha'i, Buddhist, Christian, Hindu, Jain, Islam, Sikh, and Zoroastrian.

Each panelist discussed the concept of 'neighbour' from the perspective of her or his religion.

John Robinson, an Ojibwa from Sault Ste. Marie, lamented the lack of caring in modern society: "In the old tradition," he said, "everything was shared in a tribe. Today, that tradition of sharing the hunt is lost."

A number of speakers stressed that every person is a child of God. Others maintained that every living creature is worthy of love and respect.

Prakash Mody, representing the ancient Jain religion of India, stated that his religion forbids all forms of violence including the killing of animals. All beings, Jains believe, are entitled to unconditional respect.

Marlon Lo of the Chandrakirti Buddhist Centre agreed. "Every living creature," he said, "is deserving of my love and compassion. Love is the wish for others to be happy, and compassion is the wish to free others from suffering."

For Buddhists, compassion is a possibility for everyone and can be cultivated through meditation.

"Whoever is in need, for any reason, is our neighbour," said Louise Malnachuk. Louise is a Catholic and a Scarboro lay missionary who has served over 10 years in China. Louise is presently coordinating the lay program at Scarboro Missions.

After the nine panelists spoke, the audience divided into small groups to further explore the issue of 'Who Is My Neighbour.'

Participants next made their way to the worship section of the temple to join the Sikh community in evening prayer. This colorful and powerful worship service-including prayers, singing and



percussion instruments-was complemented by a brief talk on Sikh worship by a member of the community.

The day ended in the temple dining room, where everyone was asked to sit on the floor in rows facing one another. Here they enjoyed a traditional Sikh meal together.

"We sit like this because it's like the family getting together. When you eat together you understand each other," said Piara Singh Minhas, director of the religious program at the temple. Indeed, it was a powerful day! Nine world religions, meeting together, dialoguing together, praying together, breaking bread together.

One cannot but be reminded of the prophetic words of John Paul II: "By dialogue we let God be present in our midst, for as we open ourselves to one another, we open ourselves to God."

### **Religion and the Media**

Recently, Scarboro Missions sponsored a one day conference on the relationship between religion and the media.

A multi-faith audience of 80 people listened to speakers and panelists representing six religions. These faith representatives were asked to describe how their religions are portrayed in the media. From the beginning it was obvious that the issue of media sparks an intense and passionate reaction in every religious tradition.

Barrie Zwicker, a media critic with Vision TV, reminded the audience that almost every group in society-including virtually every religious group-feels misrepresented in the media. This point became more obvious as the day progressed. Members of several faiths expressed pain and anger about how they are depicted in the media. The discussion also focused on the international realm as conference participants wrestled with the reality of inter-religious conflict around the globe, and media reporting on such.

Yet within this forum of vastly differing opinions, one point of consensus did emerge: the media needs to develop a more informed, truthful and positive approach in its reporting on religion. At the end of the day, a Buddhist nun led a meditation amounting to a beautiful challenge springing from the Buddhist spirit of compassion. Participants were being asked to demonstrate unconditional love towards all beings. In this closing reflection there was a lesson for everyone: not only do we need to challenge television, radio, and newspapers when they misrepresent our own religion, but we also need to challenge the media when it misrepresents other faith traditions.

### **A Multi-Faith Adventure for Young People**

A few years ago, a United Nations study indicated that Toronto is the most multi-religious and multi-cultural city on the planet.

Torontonians, like their fellow citizens in many other parts of the country, are now dealing with the gift and challenge of multiculturalism. This gift and challenge also extends to Toronto's youth.

Scarboro Missions is committed to supporting young people in their multicultural journey. Last November Scarboro Missions invited students from Neil McNeil Catholic High School to spend a day in conversation with representatives of seven world religions.

The interfaith guests included a Muslim, an Aboriginal, a Quaker, a Baha'i, a Jain, a Brahma Kumaris, and a Scarboro priest, Fr. Roger Brennan, who practices Zen Buddhist sitting meditation.

The students worked in small groups. Each group was led by a member of a world faith who shared the beliefs, practices and rituals of their tradition with the students. The student groups rotated throughout the day so that each student had an opportunity to dialogue with three religions.

The Aboriginal speaker displayed numerous symbols and ritual objects from her tradition. She also invited the students to join in a Native purification ritual known as the smudge or sweetgrass ceremony.

The Muslim representative outlined the history of Islam and helped the students focus on some of the differences between Christianity and Islam. For example, while Christians see Jesus as Saviour and Messiah, the followers of Islam (Muslims) view him as one of the great prophets. Among high school students today, there is a great interest in meditation. This probably explains the very positive reaction the young people had to the Buddhist and Brahma Kumaris groups-both of these traditions put a big emphasis on the discipline of meditation.

Nonviolence is a central moral value in both the Quaker and Jain religions. Students learned why Quakers refuse to go to war or to support war in any way; that all Jains are vegetarians because they do not believe that humans have the right to kill animals. For Jains, the ethic of "reverence for all life" includes both humans and non-humans.

Baha'is are very concerned about the oneness of God, the oneness of the human family and the unity of all religions. This Baha'i vision of unity came to fruition in the final session of the day when the world faith representatives and all the students formed a sacred circle. Here the students had an opportunity to share what they learned during the day, a day in which everyone was changed.

## **Teaching World Religions**

For many years, Scarboro Missions has been supporting teachers and students in education for social justice. In recent years, Scarboro Missions has also been functioning as an interfaith resource for schools.

Last December, 45 religion teachers attended a day-long workshop at the Mission Centre. The Scarboro-sponsored event, entitled "Teaching World Religions," featured the following workshops:

- Teaching Hinduism
- An interfaith and comparative religions approach to teaching world religions
- Conflict, forgiveness, and reconciliation in the world religions class
- Teaching and celebrating Diwali (key Hindu festival)

Participants found the conference very helpful. For them, such a gathering is a rare opportunity-in Canada there is no institution which trains educators in multi-faith literacy.

## **THE GOLDEN RULE: An Ethics of the Golden Rule**

By Jeffrey Wattles

Here, then, is a distillation of the main ideas of this study. The golden rule is, from the first, intuitively accessible, easy to understand; it implicitly communicates confidence that the agent can find the right way. The rule tends to function as a simplified summary of the advocate's moral tradition, and it most commonly expresses a commitment to treating others with consideration and fairness, predicated on the recognition that others are like oneself.

The golden rule is offered to those among whom a minimal sincerity may be presupposed-the hearer will not manipulate the rule in defense of patently immoral conduct. The golden rule is not best interpreted as an isolated principle in a value vacuum, to be examined as a candidate for the role of sole normative axiom in a formalized ethical theory. Nevertheless, the rule is a principle in a full sense. Even before it is formulated, its logic operates in the human mind. Once formulated, it shows itself to be contagious and quickly rises to prominence. It functions as a distillation of the wisdom of human experience and of scriptural tradition. It serves the needs of educated and uneducated people alike, and stimulates philosophers to codify its meanings in new formulations. Given the equal, basic worth of each individual, the rule implies a requirement of consistency; as Clarke put it, "Whatever I judge reasonable or unreasonable for another to do for me; that, by the same judgement, I declare reasonable or unreasonable, that I in the like case should do for him." In addition, this principle of a philosophy of living carries implications for social, economic, and political realms.

Much of the meaning of the rule can be put into practice without any religious commitment, since it is a nontheologic principle that neither mentions God nor is necessarily identified with the scriptures or doctrines of any one religion. The rule is an expression of human kinship, the most fundamental truth underlying morality. From a religious perspective, the fundamental truth underlying morality. From a religious perspective, the golden rule is the principle of the practice of the family of God, and it means relating with other people as a brother or sister. At the limit, it involves conduct patterned on a divine paradigm, extending to others the same attitude of service that one would welcome as the recipient of someone else's divinely parental love in the same kind of situation.

The rule cannot be captured in a static interpretation for it engages the thoughtful doer in a process of growth. To follow it to the end is to move from egoism to sympathy, to sharpen moral intuition by reason, and to find fulfillment beyond duty-conscious rule following in spontaneous, loving service. In the process of identifying maturely with others, adopting the other's perspective imaginatively may be helpful, along with every other technique of understanding and cooperating with others. Thus the unity of the rule, amid its wide diversity, is its life symbol of this process of growth.

Whoever practices the golden rule opens himself or herself to a process of change. Letting go of self to identify with a single other individual, or with a third-person perspective on a complex situation, or with a divine paradigm, one allows a subtle and gradual transformation to proceed, a transformation with bright hope for the individual and the planet. The rule begins by setting forth the way the self wants to be treated as a standard of conduct; but by placing the other on a par with the self, the rule engages one in approximating a higher perspective from which the kinship of humanity is evident. To pursue this higher perspective is to risk encountering the divine and the realization that every step along the forward is illumined by the Creator.



Idealistic striving tends to generate a consciousness of levels of achievement. Talk to levels connotes the conflict required to encounter something different and finally to realize its superiority. Only at the end of a personal struggle can one speak authentically in smooth tones about integration or synthesis. It is safe to be conscious of levels when the levels are understood as phases of the realization of human kinship. The spiritual level is, in part, a way to facilitate and conduct the emotional and intellectual levels of relating. When we are spiritually engaged, love can pervade our emotional reactions to such an extent that we are able to elaborate, more or less spontaneously, an intelligent and wise affection for every person we meet. Thus emotion becomes an indicator of the degree to which the spirit pervades the entire personality. Growth is not a product we construct by adding progress on one level to progress on another level; rather, growth results unconsciously as the personality engages wholeheartedly in experience. Thus it would not improve things to replace the simple expression of the golden rule by a formulation specifying levels of realization.

Confronting the problems of modern civilization, superficial thinking looks for a panacea. A simple word of wisdom, however, cannot help with a complex problem unless it implicitly expresses a life that comes from being connected with a universal network of truths. The more deeply the golden rule is grasped, the less it seems an easy answer. But those who learn to practice it fully, conjoining material sympathy with moral reasons under the guidance of spiritual love, will point the way toward a brighter future.

“Do to others as you want others to do to you” is part of our planet’s common language, shared by persons with differing but overlapping conceptions of morality. Only a principle so flexible can serve as a moral ladder for all humanity.

**\*\*Excerpted from *The Golden Rule* by Jeffrey Wattles\*\***

## SCARBORO MISSIONS: Interfaith Resources at Scarboro Missions

We have lots of interesting interfaith resources on our website. These can be downloaded free of charge.

On our home page, click under the category of “**Interfaith Dialogue**”. There you will find valuable materials under the following categories:

- What We Do
- Global Dialogue
- Events
- Teaching Models
- Learning Resources
- Principles & Guidelines for Interfaith Dialogue
- Guidelines for designing a Multi-Faith Prayer Service
- Do-It-Yourself Workshop for Spiritual Caregivers
- Multi-Faith Litany of Thanksgiving
- Interfaith Curriculum for Schools
- Guidelines for Arranging Group Visits to Houses of Worship
- The Golden Rule Across the World’s Religion

On our home page, click under the category of “**Golden Rule**”. There you will find the following sections:

- 13 Sacred Texts
- Guidelines for a Do-It-Yourself Golden Rule Workshop
- Golden Rule Meditation Exercises
- Interactive Golden Rule Movie
- Interfaith Commentaries on the Golden Rule
- The Golden Rule Poster in the News
- What People Are Saying About the Golden Rule Poster
- The Golden Rule and Ecology
- The Golden Rule and the Global Ethic
- Discovering the “Gold” In The Golden Rule
- The Golden Rule & Business Ethics
- Golden Rule Curriculum

# MERCY:

## Jewish, Christian & Muslim Perspectives

**Pope Francis** encourages that this *JUBILEE YEAR OF MERCY* be a time of ongoing **DIALOGUE** for all of us so that we might know and understand one another better and work to bring a better world for all.

***Tuesday March 8, 2016: 7:00 to 9:00 pm***

### **Christian perspective on Mercy**

**Dr. Murray Watson** - *Roman Catholic professor of Biblical Studies and Interreligious Dialogue, Teacher at Huron University College (Western University), Centre of Biblical Formation in Jerusalem, Consultant to Scarboro Interfaith Dept.*

***Tuesday March 15, 2016: 7:00 - 9:00 pm***

### **Jewish perspective on Mercy**

**Rabbi Ed Elkin** - *Originally from Long Island, New York, has served as spiritual leader of First Narayever Jewish Congregation in downtown Toronto since 2000.*

***Tuesday March 22, 2016: 7:00 - 9:00 pm***

### **Muslim perspective on Mercy**

**Dr. Hamid Slimi** - *Canadian Imam and scholar, a community developer and a religious leader of Islam in Canada. Current Chair and senior lecturer of the Canadian Centre for Deen Studies (Muslim Theological Seminary). Former Chair of the Canadian Council of Imams.*



Sr. Lucy Thorson, nds  
*Moderator*



Dr. Murray Watson



Rabbi Ed Elkin



Dr. Hamid Slimi

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