

## 2014 CIOFS Program for Ongoing Formation

### Theme VII: St. Louis and the Encounter of Other Religions<sup>1</sup>



“Tell your lord the Sultan of Tunis, on my behalf, that I so ardently desire the salvation of his soul that I would spend the rest of my life in the Saracen prison without even see the light of day as long as your king should receive baptism in all sincerity with his people.” (*St. Louis to the Tenvoy from the Sultan of Tunis*).

“The Most High knows it, He who ignores nothing; if all this visible world was mine, I would give it entirely in exchange for the salvation of souls.” (*St. Louis to the Sultan of Babylon during his captivity in Egypt*).

#### HISTORICAL PERSPECTIVE: "SAINT LOUIS, THE LAST CRUSADER KING"

In the thirteenth century, the crusade was designed primarily as an act of penance and a pilgrimage to the Christian kingdoms of the East that were seen as threatened.

It was during his two crusades that St. Louis encountered Islam. These crusades were intended to bring salvation to Muslims by their conversion to Christ. After his capture in Egypt, St. Louis, refusing to abjure his faith despite the threats, earned the admiration of Muslims for his courage and righteousness. Although, for his part, he rejected Islam, he learned to respect Muslims.



#### PASTORAL PERSPECTIVE: "THE CHALLENGE OF DIALOGUE AND THE ANNOUNCEMENT"

Saint Louis had esteem for the Saracens and wanted with all his heart that they may be saved. It is important to know and understand ourselves. The Second Vatican Council gives the principles of interfaith dialogue: since Jesus Christ died for all, salvation is offered to all; every man is associated to the mystery of Christ and the Holy Spirit works in the heart of all.

Three invitations are directed to us:

1. Do not be afraid to go to meet Muslims.
2. Do not be afraid to speak to them about Jesus.
3. Listen to them because they have a deep sense of the greatness of God and of prayer.

<sup>1</sup> Source <http://www.catholique78.fr/8-themes-approfondir-0010200>. Theme adapted through the kind authorization of the diocese of Versailles. T. by Françoise Malboeuf, OFS, ed. by Fr. Amando Trujillo Cano, TOR.

## HISTORICAL PERSPECTIVE: « SAINT LOUIS, PROTECTOR OF THE JEWS »

In the anti-Jewish context of the thirteenth Century Christianity, Louis IX contrasts sharply by his position. He never took radical measures against the Jews such as the expulsion from his kingdom. For on the contrary, he worked to integrate them for reasons both religious and political.



He was blamed for having imposed on the Jews the wearing of a star symbol, green or yellow, sown on their clothing. In reality the initiative for this measure, that was

to be « a protection for Christians », dates back to Pope Innocent III, during the Fourth Council of Latran (1215). Louis IX did not decide on the application until 1269, probably in precaution before his departure for Tunis, as did many other princes leaving for the Crusade, but we know nothing of the true application of this measure.

They also reproached Louis IX a policy of conversion of the Jews to Christianity. In reality the great regulations of 1235 and 1254 asked them to renounce the practice of usury and to earn their livelihood from other activities, such as agriculture, commerce, and arts and crafts. If they refused, they could always leave the kingdom of France. This policy had the effect of getting many Jews out of their ghettos. Even though many preferred leaving, it wanted to be a policy for improving their lot and not a policy of forced conversion as it was often said.

## PASTORAL PERSPECTIVE: « JEWISH ROOTS IN CHRISTIAN FAITH »

Saint Louis did not have an anti-Semitic behavior. Our view, eight centuries later, is marked and distorted by the terrible event of Nazism, which makes us unjustly place in parallel the decision of Louis IX to impose the wearing by the Jews of the badge with the obligation of those living under the Third Reich to wear the yellow star.



Christian faith to its Jewish roots.

The Second Vatican Council invites us to turn a totally new look on « our elder brothers » and on our Judeo-Christian relationships. The § 4 of the decree *Nostra aetate* shows that these relationships are part of the mystery of the Church, and therefore of the mystery of our baptism or, more simply, of our « being Christian ».

The New Testament cannot be understood without the Old, however there remains a large task to do concerning the relation to our « interior Judaism », to open our

## SAINT LOUIS TO TODAY

*Here are some questions to facilitate discussion.*

### Being present in the world

Pope Francis invites us to not be afraid. With measure, he dares us in fraternity to look at these fears that inhabit us. How can we overcome the fear of the other?

### In the footsteps of Christ

How can the manner in which Jesus greets pagan men and women or people of other religions, help us to find the right attitude in our interfaith meetings?



By making our memory work, can we quote a few passages where in the Old Testament it seems to prepare the coming of Christ and where the New Testament is better understood thanks to the Old (and to Jewish traditions still being carried on in present day Jewish communities)?

### Spiritual life

What incidence does the fact that rubbing shoulders with men and women of other religions have on my way of living as a Christian? What aspects of the Muslim religious practice can force our respect?

Pope John-Paul II loved to call the Jews « our elder brothers in faith ». How do we understand this designation? When have we had the occasion to admire their way of living their faith?



### Testimony Meeting

As Christians, we are invited to speak with believers of other religions, but also to tell them of the Good News. How can we attest to our faith? What are the words that can give testimony to hope?

If I had to speak about my Christian faith with a friend, a neighbour, a Jewish colleague, who is also used to reading the Law and the Prophets,

what would I say to him or her?

### Formation

*Nostra Aetate* is a specific document from the Second Vatican Council that speaks of the relationships of the Church with non-Christian religions. Have I read this document? What major ideas have I drawn from it?

A whole part of the decree *Nostra Aetate* of the Second Vatican Council speaks of the relationship of the Church with the Jews. Am I aware of Jesus's Jewish identity? Do I know how to report on the particular relationship of Christianity with Judaism, intrinsically different from the relationship with other religions?

## LIVING THE SECOND VATICAN COUNCIL

### *Dogmatic Constitution on the Church Lumen Gentium, 16*



Finally, those who have not yet received the Gospel are related in various ways to the people of God. In the first place we must recall the people to whom the testament and the promises were given and from whom Christ was born according to the flesh.(Cf. Rom. 9:4-5) On account of their fathers this people

remains most dear to God, for God does not repent of the gifts He makes nor of the calls He issues.(Cf. Rom. 11:28-29) But the plan of salvation also includes those who acknowledge the Creator. In the first place amongst these there are the Muslims, who, professing to hold the faith of Abraham, along with us adore the one and merciful God, who on the last day will judge mankind. Nor is God far distant from those who in shadows and images seek the unknown God, for it is He who gives to all men life and breath and all things,(Cf. Acts 17:25-28.) and as Saviour wills that all men be saved.(Cf. 1 Tim. 2:4) Those also can attain to salvation who through no fault of their own do not know the Gospel of Christ or His Church, yet sincerely seek God and moved by grace strive by their deeds to do His will as it is known to them through the dictates of conscience. Nor does Divine Providence deny the helps necessary for salvation to those who, without blame on their part, have not yet arrived at an explicit knowledge of God and with His grace strive to live a good life. Whatever good or truth is found amongst them is looked upon by the Church as a preparation for the Gospel. She knows that it is given by Him who enlightens all men so that they may finally have life. But often men, deceived by the Evil One, have become vain in their reasonings and have exchanged the truth of God for a lie, serving the creature rather than the Creator.(Cf Rom. 1:21, 25.) Or some there are who, living and dying in this world without God, are exposed to final despair. Wherefore to promote the glory of God and procure the salvation of all of these, and mindful of the command of the Lord, "Preach the Gospel to every creature",(Mk. 16:16) the Church fosters the missions with care and attention.

### **Declaration on the relation of the Church to Non-Christian religions, « Nostra Aetate » § 4**

“As the sacred synod searches into the mystery of the Church, it remembers the bond that spiritually ties the people of the New Covenant to Abraham's stock.

Thus the Church of Christ acknowledges that, according to God's saving design, the beginnings of her faith and her election are found already among the Patriarchs, Moses and the prophets. She professes that all who believe in Christ-Abraham's sons according to faith (Cf. Gal. 3:7)-are included in the same Patriarch's call, and likewise that the salvation of the Church is mysteriously foreshadowed by the chosen people's exodus from the land of bondage. The Church, therefore, cannot forget that she received the revelation of the Old Testament through the people with whom God in His inexpressible mercy concluded the Ancient Covenant. Nor can she forget that she draws sustenance from the root of that well-cultivated olive tree onto which have been grafted the wild shoots, the Gentiles.(Cf. Rom. 11:17-24) Indeed, the Church believes that by His cross Christ, Our Peace, reconciled Jews and Gentiles. making both one in Himself. (Cf. Eph. 2:14-16)

[...] Furthermore, in her rejection of every persecution against any man, the Church, mindful of the patrimony she shares with the Jews and moved not by political reasons but by the Gospel's spiritual love, decries hatred, persecutions, displays of anti-Semitism, directed against Jews at any time and by anyone.



Besides, as the Church has always held and holds now, Christ underwent His passion and death freely, because of the sins of men and out of infinite love, in order that all may reach salvation. It is, therefore, the burden of the Church's preaching to proclaim the cross of Christ as the sign of God's all-embracing love and as the fountain from which every grace flows”.

### **LIVING THE GOSPEL (Lk 9, 51-56)**

*He resolutely determined to journey to Jerusalem*



“When the days for his being taken up were fulfilled, he resolutely determined to journey to Jerusalem, and he sent messengers ahead of him. On the way they entered a Samaritan village to prepare for his reception there, but they would not welcome him because the destination of his journey was Jerusalem. When the disciples James and John saw this they asked, “Lord, do you want us to call down fire from heaven to consume them?” Jesus turned and rebuked them, and they journeyed to another village”.