

Peace by Piece: 50 Years of Reconciliation Between Jews and Catholics
23rd Annual Joseph Cardinal Bernardin Jerusalem Lecture

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Introduction

Thank you, your Eminence, for your introduction and for your kind and entirely unexpected invitation to deliver the 23rd Annual Joseph Cardinal Bernardin Jerusalem Lecture. I am most honored to meet you and to be here tonight. My thanks go also to your director of Ecumenical and Interreligious Affairs, Professor Daniel Olsen, Rabbi Michael Siegel and the Anshe Emet congregation for hosting us tonight, and all the members of the planning committee, some of whom are dear friends as well as treasured colleagues in the dialogue. I am more than a little overwhelmed to be the first woman to deliver this lecture and to find myself stepping into a tradition that has featured so many moral and intellectual superstars of Jewish-Catholic dialogue. The past roster of speakers also includes my former teachers Professors Bernard McGinn and Jon Levenson. And so, I have had to ask myself, with a nod to Alexander Pope, am I the fool who rushes in where angels fear to tread?

Yet, I must admit that it is a joy to be back in Chicago, a city near and dear to my heart and full of friends and colleagues. As a graduate student at the University of Chicago, I supported myself for a couple of years as the “resident Gentile” at the Hillel House of 5715 South Woodlawn Avenue where I lived in the basement and worked for Rabbi Daniel Leifer, may his name be for a blessing. I learned so much during my time at Hillel, including that snow on Shabbat meant long Friday nights and early Saturday mornings for my shovel and me!

Upon marrying, I lived with my husband across the parking lot from the church where he served as pastoral associate for outreach at Old Saint Joseph's Church of 1107 North Orleans, then pastored by Benedictine Father Sebastian Lewis. It was there in 1987 that I found myself a half arm's length away from Cardinal Bernardin as we waited to enter the church from the side door within the rectory. The occasion was the 125th anniversary of the founding of the final iteration of Old Saint Joseph's. As we waited, a tiny five-year-old Jarvis Dunn, the youngest son of Verca Dunn, a stalwart leader of the Saint Joseph's community, suddenly darted out of nowhere. Catching us all off guard, he ran straight at the cardinal's crozier and seized it with two hands demanding to know "what is this thing?" Little Jarvis nearly sacked the cardinal as he pulled and pushed on the crozier. Several of us lunged to steady the Cardinal but he caught himself and regained his balance as he took back control of his shepherd's staff. I do not recall what Cardinal Bernardin said to little Jarvis. I do remember his calm demeanor, sonorous voice, and gentle response to a curious and exuberant toddler. He made light of the situation, working to make everyone around him feel comfortable. It was an expression of his "fundamental goodness"—a description Eugene Kennedy applied repeatedly to Cardinal Bernardin in his book, *My Brother Joseph: The Spirit of a Cardinal and the Story of a Friendship*.¹

My first encounter with Cardinal Bernardin, however, predated my life in Chicago. I was a college student, considering a life's vocation as a theologian. Following the advice of a trusted Jesuit advisor, I attended a lecture that he thought would be quite important; he did not say more than that. The place was Fordham University. As I sat in a jam-packed, standing-room-only ballroom, I noticed the palpable and electric excitement charging the room. Cardinal Bernardin came in and began to deliver his speech. I tried to follow everything as best I could—I was just an inexperienced student beginning to study theology and ecclesiology—but I knew something

historic was happening in that hour. I have been forever grateful for my Jesuit friend's suggestion for I was present for the unveiling of the Cardinal's famous Consistent Ethic of Life or seamless garment speech—and I was in awe. We know that Cardinal Bernardin devoted his life to bridging division, even launching the Catholic Common Ground Initiative just before his death. He was, to quote Kennedy again, “a bishop so practiced in the art of reconciliation that it seemed as natural to him as breathing.”² And that is exactly what brings us here tonight: reconciliation and dialogue.

Tonight's Topic and Plan

Your Jerusalem lecture is one model of how Jews and Catholics, through patient and careful dialogue over recent decades, have built a mosaic of understanding, one painstaking piece after another after another, in order to achieve reconciliation and pursue peace between our communities. Perhaps it is not too much to say that in this process, our communities hope to be a model to the wider world for working toward the eschatological vision of the reign of God, for pursuing *tikkun olam*.³ I have been asked to speak tonight about a Vatican document called “*The Gifts and the Calling of God are Irrevocable*” (Rom 11:29): *A Reflection on Theological Questions Pertaining to Catholic-Jewish Relations on the Occasion of the 50th Anniversary of “Nostra aetate”* (no.4). This title is rather imposing. Perhaps it is best if we explore the document in this fashion. First, I will spend a bit of time looking at the title and the context of this document and learning from that exercise. Following these thoughts, I will explain in brief the structure of the document, then I will move into enumerating some strengths and weaknesses to understand the document from those perspectives, and finally I will introduce a few major themes. I will begin by working backwards, starting with the end of the title: the 50th anniversary of Nostra Aetate #4.

Title and Context

Title:

Many of you here tonight are familiar with this Latin phrase *Nostra Aetate*, meaning “in our time.” For those who may be new to the topic, it is the shorthand title for the Vatican II document *Declaration on the Relation of the Church to non-Christian Religions* issued by the Vatican Council on October 28, 1965, having been passed by an overwhelming majority of the bishops: 2221 votes in favor to 88 negative votes. Pope John XXIII wanted the Second Vatican Council to speak about the relationship between Catholics and Jews. The first draft of *Nostra Aetate* was entitled, in fact, “Decree on the Jews” (*Decretum de Iudaeis*, 1961).⁴ The path from this first draft to the final document is a topic for its own lecture.⁵ Suffice it to say that those developments resulted in a direct statement about the relationship between the Catholic Church and Jews and Judaism becoming section four of *Nostra Aetate*, a document that ultimately involved other religions.⁶ To commemorate the golden jubilee of *Nostra Aetate* number 4, the Vatican’s Commission for Religious Relations with the Jews issued, on December 10, 2015, “Gifts and Calling”—our topic this evening.

The genre of Vatican documents is notoriously difficult to categorize or define. Since the Roman Catholic Church is such a highly centralized institution, questions invariably get raised about the level of authority accorded to statements from any person or any particular office. Continuing to work backward through the title of our document, we find a hint about genre and authority in the middle part of the title, which reads as follows: “a reflection on theological questions pertaining to Catholic-Jewish relations.” Vatican offices have very defined roles. The Commission for Religious Relations with the Jews speaks on theological and religious issues and its work must be focused on those areas. The Commission thought the golden anniversary

marked an apt time to pursue theological dialogues with a new intentionality and specificity. In terms of genre and authority, therefore, what we read is exactly what it is: a theological reflection by the staff of the Commission working aloud and in public, so to speak. It is not, by comparison, a text voted on by a synod of bishops.

The first part of the title, as the title itself notes, is a quotation from the New Testament text, Saint Paul's Letter to the Romans chapter 11. I think this is very significant. In chapter eleven, Paul continues his attempt to articulate God's plan of salvation for both Israelites and Gentile Christians. He opens the chapter asking, "Has God rejected his people? Of course not! For I too am an Israelite . . . God has not rejected his people whom he foreknew" (Rom 11: 1-2). Paul concludes his reflection on the Israelites, his own people as he notes, teaching that "with respect to election, they are beloved because of the patriarchs. For the gifts and call of God are irrevocable" (Rom 11: 28-29). The Commission for Religious Relations with the Jews chose to give its jubilee document a title drawn from a section of the New Testament that *affirms the love and fidelity of God to Israel*.

But not only that. The title explicitly evokes an important passage from *Nostra Aetate*. The fourth paragraph of *Nostra Aetate* section 4 paraphrases Saint Paul as follows: "Nevertheless, God holds the Jews most dear for the sake of their Fathers; He does not repent of the gifts He makes or of the calls He issues—such is the witness of the Apostle." The footnote to this sentence is to Romans 11:29. Since only eight paragraphs constitute *Nostra Aetate*'s teaching on Judaism, it could be said that this sentence is the center of its teaching, coming as it does at the end of the fourth paragraph. While I do not want to place too much weight on this observation (especially given the many drafts that preceded the final version of *Nostra Aetate*), it is interesting to consider that this restatement of Romans 11:29 comes after two instances of

Nostra Aetate acknowledging the covenant of God with God’s chosen people. In effect, the first four paragraphs provide the theological foundation for the recommendations and teaching in the next four paragraphs, including *Nostra Aetate*’s rejection of deicide and any and all forms of antisemitism and discrimination, its emphasis on Jesus’ freely chosen death to save the world from sin, and the encouragement toward mutual understanding and respect as the fruit of study and dialogue. We can read the use of the title phrase “Gifts and Calling” as a clear endorsement, fifty years later, of *Nostra Aetate*.

Authorship and Context:

Let us take a moment and put “Gifts and Calling” in context. Who wrote it? It is the fourth document issued by the Commission for Religious Relations with the Jews, a Vatican office that was formed by Pope Paul VI in 1974 as a subdivision of the Pontifical Council for Promoting Christian Unity. The Commission issued *Guidelines for Implementing Nostra Aetate in 1974*, *Guidelines on the Correct Way to Present Jews and Judaism in Preaching and Catechesis* in 1985, and *We Remember: A Reflection on the Shoah* in 1998. Since nowadays there is pressure to speak of data-driven decisions even in the humanities, I did a little word study, which, I hasten to add, is only as accurate as Microsoft Word’s select and word count functions. *Nostra Aetate 4* is 626 words, *Guidelines* is 2,912, *Notes* is 4,775, *We Remember* is 4,166 inclusive of Cardinal Cassidy’s note and Pope John Paul’s accompanying letter (so the actual document is shorter), and *Gifts and Calling* is 10,181 words. I did not include footnotes in the word count. *Gifts and Calling* is only roughly 2,000 words fewer than the total word count of the four documents that preceded it. It is about the length of a standard, peer-reviewed article.

I draw attention to this document’s length because it is integral to an anniversary document to remember and to provide a context for the importance of the anniversary. “Gifts and

Calling” devotes a full thirteen of its forty-nine paragraphs to recalling the history of the past fifty years. Retrospection and resting on past achievement is never enough, however. The past, the present, and the future are always intertwined. The authors of the document state in the preface that they write “looking back with gratitude on all that has been achieved over the last decades in the Jewish-Catholic relationship, providing at the same time a new stimulus for the future.” “Gratitude” is an important word in the preface. It points to the friendship that has developed between the two communities. In fact, the body of the document uses the words “friend,” “friendship,” and “friendly” eight times. Friendship between Jews and Catholics seems to be an implicit, if not explicit, goal of the document’s view of dialogue.

Structure

I move now to structure. The document has a preface and seven sections; it is signed by the president, vice-president, and secretary of the Commission for Religious Relations with the Jews—all ordained Catholic men. As is customary with Vatican documents, each paragraph is numbered.

The first section, “A brief history of the impact of *Nostra Aetate* 4 over the last 50 years,” is the longest section—it is 26% of the document. It recounts the documents of the commission, “personal encounters and face-to-face dialogues,” the formation of official dialogues such as those through the International Catholic-Jewish Liaison Committee and with the Chief Rabbinate of Israel, and the existence of non-institutional dialogues. This section breaks no new ground and is familiar to anyone who has followed the dialogue. But it does provide the context for the Commission’s work and the historical foundation for the anniversary reflection. It concludes that “Christian and Jews are irrevocably inter-dependent, and that the dialogue between the two is not a matter of choice but of duty as far as theology is concerned” (§13).

Sections 2 to 6 provide the theological heart of “Gifts and Calling” while the concluding seventh section wraps up an ambitious document with a statement of goals for the dialogue. I would like to consider for a moment section 2, which asserts the “special theological status of Jewish-Catholic dialogue.” The document grounds its position on the fact of shared scripture, a theological understanding of “authentic revelation,” and the Jewish identity of Jesus. This claim is being challenged by scholars as too narrow. Fr. John Pawlikowski, sitting here tonight, has written an article titled “The Uniqueness of the Christian-Jewish Dialogue: A Yes and a No.” In it he argues that, while distinctive features of the dialogue must be maintained, “the Christian-Jewish dialogue cannot be isolated from the wider interreligious context. And if we are to be successful in integrating it into dialogues outside the North Atlantic area then we must modify overstated claims about its uniqueness”. Thus, Fr. Pawlikowski critiques “Gifts and Calling” for an “overly exclusive approach to the Christian-Jewish relationship.”⁷

The topics for the remaining sections, which I will list but not summarize, include revelation as Word of God in Judaism and Christianity, the relationship between Old and New Testament and Old and New Covenant, the question of the Christian notion of the universality of salvation and God’s unrevoked covenant with Israel, and the Church’s mandate to evangelize in relation to Judaism. Each of these topics is worthy of its own lecture. The scope of the inquiry is broad and the topics are challenging and complex, yet the document does not exhaust the range of topics in the dialogue.

Strengths and Weaknesses

In introducing a document as complex as “Gifts and Calling,” I find it is helpful to examine the text from the point of view of strengths and weaknesses. It is important to note for the record that my thinking about “Gifts and Calling” has been enriched by, among other things,

my attendance at two scholarly symposia. The first was “A Sacred Calling, A Pivotal Moment: A Consultation on the Newest Statements about the Christian-Jewish Relationship” hosted by the Institute for Jewish-Catholic Relations at Saint Joseph’s University, Philadelphia in February 2016. The second was a meeting of Catholic and Jewish theologians in May 2016 co-hosted by the Woolf Center at Cambridge University and the Commission for Religious Relations with the Jews. The open-access and peer-reviewed journal *Studies in Jewish-Christian Relations* has published, in its 2017 volume, a special section of articles on “Gifts and Calling” generated by participation in the Saint Joseph’s symposium.⁸ I will refer to some of these articles tonight. If you want to delve more deeply into various aspects of the document, I recommend that you explore this issue of the journal.

When reading texts, I have benefitted from two wise insights. My beloved doctoral advisor from the University of Chicago, Professor Sister Anne E. Carr, BVM, taught her students to begin with what the text actually says; she cautioned us to be sure to represent the text accurately before jumping into critique or what *we* might think the author *should* have said; she called this a hermeneutic of compassion. Secondly, veterans of the dialogue have said that they will argue over and debate a text only if it is actually a worthwhile work; critique and argument are not signs of dismissal but of constructive and appreciative engagement. In the spirit of compassionate critique, I offer some observations about the strengths and weaknesses of the document, drawing on the writing and the consultations that have occurred since “Gifts and Calling” was issued.

Strengths

1. The document exists. It is an earnest and honest attempt to, as it states, “be a starting point for further theological thought with a view to enriching and intensifying the

theological dimension of Jewish—Catholic dialogue” (Preface). This is not a facile statement of the obvious. “Gifts and Calling” is the only statement issued by an appropriate Vatican office commemorating the fiftieth anniversary of any one particular document from Vatican II.⁹ To be sure, from 2012–2015, there were more conferences, messages, scholarly articles, and popular reflections than you could count about the Council’s anniversary. But the fact that the Commission expended time and energy publishing a thoughtful document on its authority indicates the seriousness with which it takes *Nostra Aetate*, the Jewish-Catholic dialogue as well as the institutional and personal relationships that go with it, and its ongoing commitment to the future of the dialogue.

2. “Gifts” acknowledges the long and negative asymmetrical relation between Jews and Christians and directly recognizes the tragedy and trauma of the Shoah (§1). This direct recognition was missing in *Nostra Aetate*, a fact noted at many anniversary discussions. Even though it could be said that the bishops were making a moral judgment in light of the Shoah when they overwhelmingly voted in favor for *Nostra Aetate*, the document itself does not explicitly address the Shoah.¹⁰ (That “An Address to the Churches,” a Protestant document on Jewish-Christian relations issued nearly two decades earlier, did confront the Shoah, and that the Eichmann trial occurred during the preparation for the Council throw this omission into sharper relief.)¹¹ In “Gifts and Calling,” as with *We Remember* from 1998, however, the authors use the word *Shoah* and not “Holocaust.” This is an important sign of respect for the Jewish community and for the victims of the Shoah. The word appears eight times in five numbered paragraphs (§§1, 6, 8, 40, 47; several uses are clustered in §6).

3. The text cites and/or engages post-biblical Jewish sources. Some examples would be references from Pirkei Avot (§24), Genesis Rabbah (§26), and Sotah (§48). The use of Jewish sources can be understood as part of the document's concerted attempt to honor the integrity of each tradition and to understand the beliefs of one's dialogue partners in their terms, a fundamental premise of dialogue.
4. The Commission consulted with Jewish scholars and leaders in the dialogue in the course of writing the document. The press conference in December 2015 that promulgated the document included the Commission's consultants: Dr. Edward Kessler, Woolf Institute, Cambridge, England and Rabbi David Rosen, AJC's Jerusalem-based Director of International Interreligious Affairs. Allowing input into the drafting of a document coming from the Vatican should be seen as an important sign of progress, trust, and even friendship. I would add that at the end of August 2017, a document titled "Between Jerusalem and Rome" was issued jointly by the Rabbinical Council of America, the Conference of European Rabbis, and the Chief Rabbinate of Israel. The authors of this document consulted with Cardinal Kurt Koch, president of the Commission for Religious Relations with the Jews and with Dr. Andreas Verhülndonk of the German Bishops' Conference. Perhaps we have entered a new day of intentional consultation, a time of thinking together about our relationship and of allowing the theological perspective of the religious other to redound to our mutual benefit.
5. Audience: the text is addressed to both religious communities while recognizing that it is written from a Catholic point of view. The bi-lateral audience, along with the use of Jewish consultants and sources, demonstrates that the Commission recognizes that

theological dialogue has to happen in the presence of the religious other. Only then is self-critique possible.

6. The document is unambiguous in its statement that God's covenant with God's people Israel is not revoked. Some version of this declaration appears ten times: once each in the preface and sections 33 and 34; it then appears seven times in part 5 (see the subtitle and §§35, 37, 38, and 39). At one symposium, a Jewish colleague remarked that he could not say enough how significant it was to sit in a Catholic university and read that the covenant is not revoked; this scholar thought in this regard that the document's assertion that the two communities had become "reliable partners and even good friends" (§2) was equally significant.

Weaknesses

Sometimes strengths have a weak flip side. Some of the listed strengths will reappear as weaknesses.

1. It must be stated clearly that many Jewish and Catholic scholars agree that the lack of any treatment of a theology of the land of Israel and/or some statement about the importance of the State of Israel constitute serious lacunae in the document.¹² Catholic theologians must include these topics in the future of Jewish-Catholic dialogue or we will not be able to understand our Jewish dialogue partners on their own terms, as previous documents have directed.¹³ "Gifts and Calling" generally attempts this positive understanding but fails to do so with respect to a theology of the land. By contrast, here in Chicago, our Presbyterian colleagues in the Presbytery of Chicago (PCUSA) issued the statement "*...in our time...*" *A statement on relations between the Presbytery of Chicago and the Jewish community in metropolitan Chicago* in recognition of the golden anniversary of

Nostra Aetate.¹⁴ This document provides an excellent model for addressing theology of land and state issues, acknowledging the issue at the head of the document and devoting an entire section to it. I would recognize the Reverend Doctor Robert C. Cathey, who is with us tonight, as a principal author of the document.

2. The use of Jewish sources and terms has been critiqued as inadequate or unclear. While I list the effort to use such sources as a strength, the same effort can become a weakness if the sources or terms are used incorrectly, no matter how unintentionally. In this vein, Dr. Ruth Langer, while writing positively and appreciatively of how “Gifts and Calling” exemplifies progress made in Catholic-Jewish relations, points out that in the central sections four to six, “one finds comments that most seriously point to the need for still deeper understanding of Jews and Judaism, especially the Jewish concept of covenant.”¹⁵ I have heard a number of Jewish scholars say that they cannot yet recognize themselves in the document and so Catholic theologians are called to a greater responsibility to understand Jewish self-understanding and to a greater precision when attempting to use Jewish sources and concepts.
3. Lack of significant consultation. While I listed the effort to consult and to think through issues with Jewish colleagues in the dialogue as a strength, some have remarked that the effort was too limited and came too late in the process of writing.
4. Problems of Voice and Definition: while “Gifts and Calling” is addressed to both communities, it is written in a Catholic theological voice. Though this makes sense for a Vatican document, the intra-family language can pose difficulties for dialogue. It could be called Catholic self-talk in that it is a wide-ranging reflection about the road the Church has followed to get to this point in its relationship with its Jewish friends. The

description of that road does not necessarily use a language that is helpful for our Jewish dialogue partners. Additionally, many terms are used that are not well defined, if defined at all, making interpretation tricky even for the specialist. Clear definition is necessary as two communities attempt to understand each other. Dr. Philip Cunningham addresses this issue in an article cleverly titled “Gifts and Calling: Coming to *Terms* with Jews as Covenantal Partners.”¹⁶ He studies the Catholic use of the words “salvation,” “promise and fulfillment,” “Christ,” and a set of related terms (evangelization, mission, witness, dialogue). Others have also noted problems with some of these terms. Yet despite the difficulties with terminology, Cunningham observes that “Gifts and Calling” is “arguably the most substantive and multilayered Church statement on Jewish-Christian relations composed by any ecclesiastical body since the Second World War. It is that sophistication that is at once both the document’s great strength and chief weakness.”¹⁷

5. Problems of Composition: adding to the question of voice is the question of composition. Many hands are involved before an official document is issued and “Gifts and Calling” is no exception. There are other Vatican offices in addition to the Commission for Religious Relations with the Jews that had to review the work, make recommendations, and approve it before publication. This process can affect content and clarity. Further, according to Dr. Cunningham, the document quotes or paraphrases forty texts coming from eleven sources without giving any of them specific attribution.¹⁸ In short there are a variety of theological voices that inform the document and such a plurality might give the appearance of “everything and the kitchen sink.” Thus, some suggest that we approach the document as self-reflective phenomenological theology and not systematic or doctrinal theology.

6. Questions of Authority: The preface to the document seems to downplay the level of authority and the importance of the document when it states, “The text is not a magisterial document or doctrinal teaching of the Catholic Church.” On the other hand, it *is* “a reflection prepared by the Commission for Religious Relations with the Jews on current theological questions that have developed since the Second Vatican Council” and it is signed by the Cardinal President of the Commission, its vice-president, and its secretary. The assertion of the disclaimer about the doctrinal status of the document may be necessary for inner-ecclesiastical reasons. In addition, the authors may have wanted to emphasize that we are at a time of strength in the dialogue when our two communities can think together over difficult theological questions. Perhaps emphasizing the idea of reflection was a way to stimulate creative thinking. Perhaps the authors did not want to give the appearance of having spoken the last word. Nonetheless, providing a negative statement of what the document is not was at minimum a curious move. “Gifts and Calling” is now a document of the Commission and is part of a body of literature from the Commission that interprets, clarifies, implements, and extends the teaching of *Nostra Aetate*. Further, it would seem that all previous magisterial or doctrinal statements cited in the document retain their original authority.

Four Thematic Tensions

Evangelization and Mission

In such a rich document full of theological questions and possibilities, the popular press reported widely on the following sentence: “In concrete terms this means that the Catholic Church neither conducts nor supports any specific institutional mission work directed towards Jews” (§40). This statement is from section six, titled “The Church’s Mandate to evangelize in

relation to Judaism.” From a text of some 10,000 words, these 21 words became the focal point for an excited press corps, but for some, this was not a ground-breaking statement. Various documents and statements from the recent past express the same idea, as Cunningham has carefully documented.¹⁹ The Fundamental Agreement between the Holy See and the State of Israel stated in 1993 that “the Holy See, recalling the Declaration on Religious Freedom of the Second Vatican Ecumenical Council, *Dignitatis humanae*, affirms the Catholic Church's commitment to uphold the human right to freedom of religion and conscience, as set forth in the Universal Declaration of Human Rights and in other international instruments to which it is a party. The Holy See wishes to affirm as well the Catholic Church's respect for other religions and their followers as solemnly stated by the Second Vatican Ecumenical Council in its Declaration on the Relation of the Church to Non-Christian Religions, *Nostra aetate*” (§2).²⁰ In 2001, Cardinal Walter Kasper wrote, “Thus evangelization, if understood in its proper and theological meaning, does not imply any attempt of proselytism whatsoever.”²¹ In 2010, Kasper wrote, “there is no organized Catholic missionary activity towards Jews,” in the foreword to the book *Christ Jesus and the Jewish People Today*²² and in 2011, Cardinal Koch wrote that the Catholic Church “neither has nor supports any specific institutional mission work directed towards Jews.”²³ More examples could be adduced.

The clear tension, however, is between the statement against *institutional* mission and a lingering doubt that the door is left open to *individual* efforts at converting our Jewish friends to Christianity. This tension in section six arises from the document's use of a one covenant model and its use of a set of undefined terms. I have time only to comment on the latter. This brief three paragraph section uses the words “evangelize,” “mission,” “witness,” and “proclamation” while assuming their technical definitions within Catholic theology but not sharing those explicit

definitions. Though the document recognizes that the topic is “a very delicate and sensitive matter” because it “involves the very existence of the Jewish people” (§40), the lack of definition opens the door to ambiguity and fear, given a dismal history of Christian triumphalism and efforts at forced conversion. *Dialogue and Proclamation*, a 1991 document from the Pontifical Council for Interreligious Dialogue issued for the 25th anniversary of *Nostra aetate*, attempts to place a number of terms relating to evangelization in a broader context that has much more to do with the many activities of the Church and the life of faith for individual Christians than it does with former notions of converting someone to another religion. Cunningham believes that “Gifts and Calling” “takes for granted” the broad understanding of these terms.²⁴ Given the many statements from popes, cardinals, and theologians in the past twenty years or so that cohere with the statement against institutional mission in “Gifts and Calling” and given that the document is eager to solidify and extend the friendship that has developed, I tend to agree with Cunningham that the authors intended the broad use of the sensitive terms “evangelize,” “witness,” “mission,” and “proclamation”. Because of undefined technical words that have been flashpoints in past history, however, the tension remains between the clear statement that there is no institutional mission toward the Jewish people and the suspicion that the responsibility of the Christian may be to invite Jews to Christianity. The future theological reflection that “Gifts and Calling” seeks to stimulate must find a way to state without ambiguity its case against “mission”.

Unrevoked Covenant and Universal Salvation through Christ

Perhaps the central tension of the document is between the stated conviction that the covenant is not revoked (which I noted earlier as one of the six strengths) and a Catholic theology of universal salvation in Christ Jesus. It is with this tension that we see most clearly the earnest desire of the authors of the document to pay homage to the vision of *Nostra Aetate*, honor

and respect the integrity of the religious convictions of their Jewish dialogue partners, push the dialogue into significant theological discussion, and maintain traditional Catholic language about salvation. The document thus pulses with this tension. It is present implicitly in the sections on revelation, the relation between the old and new testaments and covenants, and the mandate to evangelize.

The tension is the explicit topic of section five, whose heading is “The universality of salvation in Jesus Christ and God’s unrevoked covenant with Israel.” This section depends on how words such as “salvation” and “covenant” are deployed and understood, as well as on a one-covenant theology (such as that explored, before he became pope, by Joseph Cardinal Ratzinger in his book *Many Religions—One Covenant: Israel, the Church and the World*).²⁵ “Salvation” and “covenant” are words that require more definition and specificity because we must understand the meaning of those words in each tradition as best we can before we can make Christian theological claims. How do our Jewish dialogue partners understand “salvation,” “universality,” and “covenant”? How do Catholics understand these terms? Unless we can articulate both the similarities (if there are any) and the real distinctions, Catholic theological claims may fall short of respecting Jewish self-understanding. I would venture that respecting the self-understanding is a real goal of the document. Therefore, it is virtually impossible to resolve this tension in a brief five paragraph section. The simultaneity of the assertions of an unrevoked covenant on the one hand and of universal salvation in Christ on the other is addressed through recourse to Saint Paul’s teaching in Romans 11:29 that “the gifts and call of God are irrevocable.” The document states, “from the Christian confession that there can be only one path to salvation, however, it does not in any way follow that the Jews are excluded from God’s salvation because they do not believe in Jesus Christ as the Messiah of Israel and the Son of God. Such a claim would find no

support in the soteriological understanding of Saint Paul...” (§36). And so, this key tension for Catholics remains. Much more work needs to be done, I think, before we can even decide if the tension ought to be resolved. “Gifts and Calling” seems to understand this when it claims: “That the Jews are participants in God’s salvation is theologically unquestionable, but how that can be possible without confessing Christ explicitly, is and remains an unfathomable divine mystery” (§36).

Fulfillment and Salvation

The authors of “Gifts and Calling” intend to cultivate an authentic relationship and presume a firm foundation for so doing, even while acknowledging the reality that this is a relatively recent foundation in a chequered and ancient relationship. How can a relationship of friends—presumably understood as equals-in-relation—be defined theologically? Further, how can that relationship be nurtured if the parties harbor any sense of their own superiority in the relationship? The document seems to want to define the Catholic-Jewish relationship as one of equals, but the use of fulfillment language throughout calls into question whether it really envisions such a relationship. Fulfillment language has a whiff of superiority attached to it.²⁶

A tension exists in the document between two leitmotifs: the first is that the Jewish people are in a unique and salvific relation to God, and the second is that the Christian “new covenant” fulfills the promises of the “old covenant.” Paragraph 27 is a good example of the tension: “The permanent elective fidelity of God expressed in earlier covenants is never repudiated (cf. Rom 9:4; 11:1-2). The New Covenant does not revoke the earlier covenants, but it brings them to fulfillment. Through the Christ event Christians have understood that all that had gone before was to be interpreted anew.” This perspective *might* be acceptable from a Catholic theological perspective, but how does my Jewish friend interpret these lines, and how does she

feel when reading them? As we have seen tonight, problems of definition complicate the reception of this document. What does “salvation” mean for each community? What does “fulfillment” mean? The thematic tension between fulfillment and salvation arises from the sincere intention and the strenuous effort to write a theology that wholeheartedly supports the Catholic positive theology of Judaism that has emerged since *Nostra Aetate* while at the same time not relinquishing core Catholic tenets of belief. Answers concerning how to achieve both goals may take many forms, such as Peter Phan’s suggestion that some formulations may in fact need to be relinquished.²⁷ William Madges suggests that though “Gifts and Calling” has some problems with fulfillment language, the document itself “contains resources for avoiding supersessionism and creating a more positive estimation of post-biblical Judaism.”²⁸

Friendship and Complementarity

My final thoughts tonight befit my role as the first woman to speak in this series. When I first read the document, I was impressed by its consistent concern to acknowledge the real relationships that have developed between our two communities. As I have already noted, some form of the word “friend” appears throughout the document eight times and various uses of “mutual/mutuality” also appear eight times. But something else struck me immediately that I could not shake. My feminist hermeneutic was captured by the use of the word “complementarity.” It is a powerful word with many connotations and the usage conjured up asymmetrical relations that do not support genuine friendship. I find a tension existing between claims for mutuality and friendship on the one hand, and the use of the word “complementarity” on the other. The tension is compounded by the use of fulfillment language.

The word is, in fact, used only twice (§§13 and 31) but the usage echoes loudly through the document especially for those for whom complementarity implies essentialized identities that

need to be fulfilled by someone or something else. “Complementarity” appears in “Gifts and Calling” in the context of quoting from Pope Francis’s 2013 apostolic exhortation, *Evangelii Gaudium* or *The Joy of the Gospel*, wherein he is describing how Jews and Christians can benefit from each other’s reading of “the Hebrew Scriptures” (§249). But both times the quotation or paraphrase is not given with enough context from the original exhortation to demonstrate both Francis’s affirmation of the ongoing relationship between God and Israel and his teaching that the Church is “enriched” by Judaism. The lack of context strips away the elements of mutuality that are inherent to genuine friendship.

Complementarity, in feminist perspective, almost always reinscribes an unequal power dynamic. One side of the relationship, the “weaker” or “lesser” party is fixed in a particular essence and needs to be completed by the other side. Further, it is not always clear if the more powerful party in the relationship is fruitfully changed by relationship with the other. Given the historical asymmetry in the Jewish-Christian relationship, Christian theology that purports to heal wounds cannot risk using imagery that implies that Judaism needs to be completed by Christianity. Without the full context of Francis’s usage of “complementarity” and with fulfillment language still unclarified, the use of “complementarity” appears to me as a red flag.

According to Saint Pope John Paul’s June 1995 Letter to Women at the UN Beijing Conference, complementarity is ontological.²⁹ As a matter of ontology, we must pay careful attention to how “complementarity” is deployed and guard against its use to create an imbalance in a relationship or denigrate an identity. Any interpretation of “Gifts and Calling” in terms of complementarity must be clear that Catholics and Jews in our time walk God’s paths together as true equals. Only then can we speak honestly of authentic friendship.

Conclusion

“Gifts and Calling” is a remarkable, if flawed, document. It attempts to address extremely complex theological questions that go to the heart of Catholic and Jewish religious identities. Though the document is long in comparison to other Commission documents, many dialogues, symposia, articles, and books will be required to make progress on the issues it raises. As we have seen, compressing so many complicated ideas into a single document can raise many questions and concerns. Scholars have already vigorously wrestled with the document in a variety of fora over the past fourteen months since it was issued. Such theological debate about these issues is certainly a goal of its authors.

The premise of the document that our two communities have grown in trust and have become “reliable partners and even good friends” (§2) is most pertinent for us tonight. Your work in Chicago—the work of many groups—to build bridges of understanding and cooperation between Catholics and Jews embodies the four forms of dialogue, understood within Catholic theology, as the dialogue of life, the dialogue of action, the dialogue of theological exchange, and the dialogue of religious experience.³⁰ The annual Cardinal Bernardin Jerusalem Lecture is just one form of your work. Your constancy in Chicago in a wide variety of interreligious efforts is necessary in our holy but hurting world.

Please allow me to thank you for the privilege of studying with you tonight, and in the spirit of these dialogues, let me leave you with the words of Cardinal Bernardin: *I must also find joy in my friends—those who love me and support me. But it is a two-way street: I must also love and support them. Friendship cannot be sustained without continual presence and communication.*³¹

¹ Eugene Kennedy, *My Brother Joseph: The Spirit of a Cardinal and the Story of a Friendship*, (New York: St. Martin's Press, 1997) 80. The Cardinal's "goodness" is a theme Kennedy weaves throughout the book using various descriptions. Some examples include 76, 81, 107, and 141.

² Kennedy, 24.

³ Jesuit scholar of Hindu-Christian dialogue, Francis X. Clooney has suggested that the Jewish-Christian dialogue can serve as a model for other interreligious dialogues. See Angela Kim Harkins, "Christianity and Judaism/Interreligious Studies," *CTSA Proceedings* 64 (2009): 142-143.

⁴ To study the different drafts visit <http://ccjr.us/dialogika-resources/documents-and-statements/roman-catholic/second-vatican-council/na-drafts>.

⁵ For one brief account of some of this history see my "Heir or Orphan? Theological Evolution and Devolution before and after *Nostra Aetate*" in William Madges, ed., *Vatican II: Forty Years Later*, (Maryknoll, New York: Orbis Books, 2005), 308-339. For an in-depth, magisterial study of the history of Vatican Council II, see the multi-volume study edited in English by Giuseppe Alberigo and Joseph A. Komonchak, *The History of Vatican II*, (Maryknoll, NY: Orbis Books).

⁶ For an analysis of how *Nostra Aetate* can be read as two different documents see Reid Locklin, "One Text, Two Declarations: Theological Trajectories from *Nostra Aetate*," *Theological Studies* 78:1 (2017): 49-71. Note that "Gifts and Calling" §19 comments on the different status of *Nostra Aetate* §4 from the other sections.

⁷ John Pawlikowski, "The Uniqueness of the Christian-Jewish Dialogue: A Yes and a No," *Studies in Christian-Jewish Relations* 12:1 (2017): 1-14; <https://doi.org/10.6017/scjr.v12i1.9799>.

⁸ See <https://ejournals.bc.edu/ojs/index.php/scjr/issue/view/973>.

⁹ I consulted with three experts on Vatican II all of whom confirmed my insight. One of them, Massimo Faggioli Professor of Historical Theology at Villanova University wrote to me explaining that "in 2012, [Benedict XVI] decided that the Synod on evangelization and other initiatives were going to be the celebration of the anniversary of Vatican II, so the dicasteries did not engage in reminding the Church of Vatican II." Personal email correspondence 2/19/18.

¹⁰ See John Connelly, *From Enemy to Brother: The Revolution in Catholic Teaching on the Jews, 1933-1965*, (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2012) for an incisive study of the road to the bishops' adoption of *Nostra Aetate* 4.

¹¹ “An Address to the Churches” (The Ten Points of Seelisberg) <http://www.ccejr.us/dialogika-resources/documents-and-statements/ecumenical-christian/567-seelisberg>.

¹² For an example, see David Rosen “Reflections from Israel” <http://ccjr.us/dialogika-resources/documents-and-statements/analysis/crrj-2015dec10/1365-rosen-2015dec10>. Rabbi Rosen delivered this address at the press conference that announced “Gifts and Calling.”

¹³ “On the practical level in particular, Christians must therefore strive to acquire a better knowledge of the basic components of the religious tradition of Judaism; they must strive to learn by what essential traits Jews define themselves in the light of their own religious experience,” *Guidelines and Suggestions for Implementing the Conciliar Declaration Nostra Aetate, No. 4*, preamble;

http://www.vatican.va/roman_curia/pontifical_councils/chrstuni/relations-jews-docs/rc_pc_chrstuni_doc_19741201_nostra-aetate_en.html.

¹⁴ “...in our time...” *A statement on relations between the Presbytery of Chicago and the Jewish community in metropolitan Chicago*, <http://www.ccejr.us/dialogika-resources/documents-and-statements/protestant-churches/na/presbyterian/1355-pc-usa-chicago-2015nov21>; this statement was approved by the Presbytery of Chicago on November 21, 2015.

¹⁵ Ruth Langer, “‘Gifts and Calling’: The Fruits of Coming to Know Living Jews,” *Studies in Christian-Jewish Relations* 12:1 (2017): 9; <https://doi.org/10.6017/scjr.v12i1.9797>.

¹⁶ Philip A. Cunningham, “Gifts and Calling: Coming to Terms with Jews as Covenantal Partners,” *Studies in Christian-Jewish Relations* 12:1 (2017): 1-18; <https://doi.org/10.6017/scjr.v12i1.9796>. I added the emphasis in the title.

¹⁷ *Ibid*, 1.

¹⁸ See Philip A. Cunningham, “The Sources behind “*The Gifts and the Calling of God Are Irrevocable*” (Rom 11:29): A Reflection on Theological Questions Pertaining to Catholic-Jewish Relations on the Occasion of the 50th Anniversary of *Nostra Aetate* (No. 4),” *Studies in Christian-Jewish Relations* 12:1 (2017): 1-39; <https://doi.org/10.6017/scjr.v12i1.9792>. This article is a fully annotated version of the document that includes extensive footnotes guiding the reader through the background sources and voices of the document. Pages 35-39 list the forty sources I note above.

¹⁹ For ease of reference, the examples that follow in this paragraph and that are cited in notes 18-20 are taken from Cunningham “The Sources Behind” (with the exception of the *Fundamental Agreement* whose relevance to this point was pointed out to me by Fr. Norbert Hofmann). Please see Cunningham for a complete discussion of the textual background for the complex set of terms involved in section six of “Gifts and Calling.”

²⁰ Fundamental Agreement between the Holy See and the State of Israel,

http://www.vatican.va/roman_curia/secretariat_state/archivio/documents/rc_seg-st_19931230_santa-sede-israele_en.html .

²¹ Cardinal Walter Kasper, “Dominus Iesus,” address delivered at the 17th meeting of the International Catholic-Jewish Liaison Committee, New York, May 1, 2001. <http://www.ccsr.us/dialogika-resources/documents-and-statements/roman-catholic/kasper/641-kasper01may1-1>.

²² Cardinal Walter Kasper, “Foreword,” in Philip A. Cunningham, Joseph Sievers, Mary C. Boys, Hans Hermann Henrix, and Jesper Svartvik, eds., *Christ Jesus and the Jewish People Today. New Explorations of Theological Interrelationships*, (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 2011), X-XVIII.

²³ Cardinal Kurt Koch, “Theological Questions and Perspectives in Jewish-Catholic Dialogue,” address delivered to the Council of Centers on Jewish-Christian Relations, Seton Hall University, South Orange, October 30, 2011. See <http://www.ccsr.us/dialogika-resources/documents-and-statements/roman-catholic/kurt-cardinal-koch/987-koch2011oct30>.

²⁴ Cunningham, “The Sources Behind,” 10.

²⁵ Joseph Ratzinger, *Many Religions—One Covenant: Israel, the Church and the World*, trans. Graham Harrison (San Francisco, CA: Ignatius Press, 1999).

²⁶ This paragraph and the first sentence of the next paragraph are adapted with the editor’s permission from my “Fulfillment and Complementarity: Reflections on Relationship in ‘Gifts and Calling,’” *Studies in Christian-Jewish Relations* 12:1 (2017): 1-12, <https://doi.org/10.6017/scjr.v12i1.9800>. The fourth thematic tension below also includes some adaptations and/or reprinted material from this source.

²⁷ See Peter Phan, “Jesus as the Universal Savior in the Light of God’s Eternal Covenant with the Jewish People: A Roman Catholic Perspective,” in Mary C. Boys, ed., *Seeing Judaism Anew: Christianity’s Sacred Obligation*, (Lanham, MD: Rowman and Littlefield, 2005), 127-137.

²⁸ William Madges, “Covenant, Universal Mission, and Fulfillment,” *Studies in Christian-Jewish Relations* 12:1 (2017): 1-13; the quotation is at 2; <https://doi.org/10.6017/scjr.v12i1.9798>.

²⁹ Saint Pope John Paul II, “Letter of Pope John Paul II to Women,” §7, June 29, 1995 at https://w2.vatican.va/content/john-paul-ii/en/letters/1995/documents/hf_jp-ii_let_29061995_women.html

³⁰ Pontifical Council for Interreligious Dialogue, *Dialogue and Proclamation: Reflections and Orientations on Interreligious Dialogue and the Proclamation of the Gospel of Jesus Christ*, (§42)1991, http://www.vatican.va/roman_curia/pontifical_councils/interelg/documents/rc_pc_interelg_doc_19051991_dialogue-and-proclamatio_en.html

³¹ Kennedy, inside cover art from the personal journals of Joseph Cardinal Bernardin.