

Pope is a bridge-builder with Jews

By Father Richard P. McBrien
Syndicated columnist

Throughout his pontificate, but especially over the past eight years, Pope John Paul II has been building bridges of reconciliation and mutual respect to the worldwide Jewish community.

A major turning point came with his formal visit on April 13, 1986, to Rome's main synagogue, the first of its kind by a reigning pope. That visit's extraordinary nature cannot be appreciated apart from a sense of papal history.

Pope Leo VII (936-39) encouraged his papal legate for all Germany, Archbishop Frederick of Mainz, to expel Jews who refused to be baptized.

Pope Innocent III (1198-1216) decreed through the Fourth Lateran Council that Jews should be required to wear a distinctive dress (anticipating the yellow Star of David the Nazis required them to wear).

Pope Callistus III (1455-58) revived the harsh anti-Jewish legislation that banned all social contacts between Catholics and Jews.

Pope Paul II (1464-71) forced Jews to contribute to the funding of extravagant carnivals that he so loved.

Pope Paul IV (1555-59), on the suspicion that Jews were aiding Protestants, established ghettos in Rome and that papal state, confined Jews to them, and compelled them to wear distinctive headgear.

Pope St. Pius V (1566-72) was particularly severe toward Jews. Although he permitted some Jews, for commer-



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cial purposes, to continue to live in the ghettos of Rome and Ancona, he expelled all others from the papal state.

Pope Leo XII (1823-29), who was elected with the support of conservative cardinals distressed by his predecessor's too-moderate policies, again restricted Jews to ghettos after a period of lax enforcement.

Pope Pius XII (1939-58) remains the subject of intense controversy regarding his policies toward Jews during World War II. Many Catholics have defended him on the grounds that he was in a difficult diplomatic bind, trying to protect the Eternal City from German bombs. They insist that he did all that he could in granting asylum to numerous Jews within the Vatican's walls.

But many others, Catholics and

Jews alike, give him failing marks for not using his enormous moral authority to protest the Nazi genocide against Jews.

To be sure, there were a few popes in pre-modern times whose records were more positive concerning Jews.

Pope Clement VI (1342-52) defended Jews when they were blamed for the Black Death (scapegoating of Jews has a long and shameful history).

And Pope Martin V (1417-31) displayed unusual moderation in his policy toward Jews, denouncing violent anti-Jewish preaching and forbidding compulsory baptism of Jewish children under 12. The fact that the pope himself had to call a halt to such practices indicates how widespread they must have been.

Closer to our own time, Pope Pius XI (1922-39) made a definitive break with the Nazis in 1937, condemning Nazism as thoroughly anti-Christian.

And, of course, there is the special, luminous case of Pope John XXIII (1958-63) who, as a papal delegate in Greece and Turkey during World War II, saved countless Jewish lives through diplomatic sleights-of-hand, and later as pope removed words offensive to Jews from the Good Friday liturgy, and greeted a visiting delegation of American Jews with the words, "I am Joseph, your brother."

Pope Paul VI (1963-78) carried forward the Second Vatican Council that John XXIII had launched, and approved its landmark Declaration on the Relationship of the Church to Non-Christian Religions, better

known by its Latin title, "Nostra Aetate." That document spoke of the Jewish people as still beloved by God, emphasized our common roots with them, and denounced all forms of anti-Semitism.

But when Pope John Paul II, in 1986, processed into the Rome synagogue located in the very ghetto established by Pope Paul IV in 1555, with Rome's Chief Rabbi, Elio Toaff, at his side, that was indeed, as Rabbi Toaff said later, a "gesture destined to go down in history" and a "true turning point in the policy of the Church." And although John Paul II's allusion to earlier popes is not included in the official text of his address at the synagogue (such omissions occur all too frequently), he did refer on that occasion to the less-than-laudable behavior of some of his predecessors on the papal throne. He was perhaps thinking of Callistus III, Paul II, Paul IV, Pius V, and Leo XII.

In an extraordinary interview published in the April 3, 1994 issue of *Parade* magazine, Pope John Paul II recalled his days as a young man in war-torn Poland and his feelings of revulsion and helplessness at the sight of Jews being rounded up by Nazis for deportation to the death-camps.

After the war, whenever he had the opportunity, he spoke about it everywhere. And when he met representatives of the Jewish community in Warsaw as pope in 1987, he told them that they "must bear witness to what happened to their people."

And so should we all.

Let us do the best that we can, I say

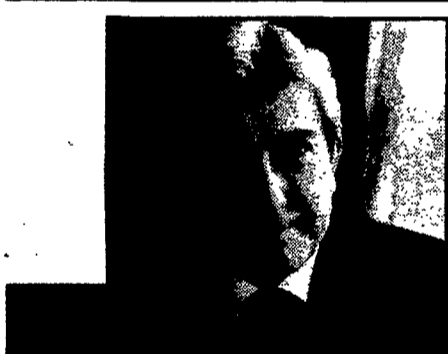
By Gregory F. Augustine Pierce
Syndicated columnist

One of my hobbies is prowling around garage sales and second-hand and low-priced antique stores. On a recent foray, I discovered a treasure that I want to share with you.

It was a first edition of a book titled, *Let Us Do the Best That We Can* by Madison Cawein, with illustrations by Helen West Heller. I had never heard of the author or the book, which was written in 1915. But what it says about work is wonderful:

Let us to the best that we can, I say,
And whistle the cares of the world away:

Let us do our best, with willing hands,
For that is all that Life demands.



AITH AND WORK

The *Way* we do it, not *What* we do,
Is the thing that counts when our
work is through,

For labor is part of the world's old
plan

And there's nothing like work to
make a man.

So into the ranks! Let us earn our
pay,

And do the bet that we can, I say ...

Have we done the best that we can? I
ask:

Have we done our best with our dai-
ly task?

Or Spring delays to bring the rose:
Some flower will bloom where we
toiled and tilled,

To repay our love for the roses
killed.

For there's never a garden, what-
ever the soil,

That never responds to love and toil.
For the frown of failure is but a
mask.

Have we done the best that we can?
I ask.

Let us do the best that we can, I say,
And have done with the failures of
yesterday:

Let us do our work, whatever it is:
Let us do our work, or hit or miss:
And the world will take from our
hearts its tone

And echo the song that's in our own:
For happiness lies in the work we do,
Whatever it be, or old or new:

And whatever the work, whatever
the way,

Let us do the best that we can, I say.

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St. Joseph's Church
35 Gebhardt Road, Penfield
Saturday, May 21, 1994 7:30-9:00 PM

Join hundreds of fellow believers from the Greater Rochester area as we come together to prepare our hearts for what God will be doing on June 25 as we plan for the Global March For Jesus "A Day to Change the World."

- See Videos of last year's March
- Discover how to get your church involved.
- Worship and praise (including songs from the March tape).
- Intercessory prayer for our city.

If you marched last year you already know how thrilling it was. If you missed it, start getting involved for this year's March.
Child care will not be provided, but children are welcome.
For more information, call the March for Jesus line at
482-5160

A chance for all to take part in a time of Praise and Worship, to prepare for the upcoming March For Jesus on June 25, "A Day to Change the World."