

FOREWORD TO BENEDICT XVI'S "GRACE AND VOCATION WITHOUT REMORSE"

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The Second Vatican Council's *Declaration on the Relationship of the Church to Non-Christian Religions*, "*Nostra aetate*," the fourth article of which is dedicated to Judaism, was approved with a near-moral unanimity by the Council Fathers and promulgated by Bl. Pope Paul VI on November 28, 1965. The Council *peritus* Joseph Ratzinger judged that, above all, the fourth article opened "a new page in the book of reciprocal relations" between the Church and Israel.¹ On the occasion of the 50th anniversary of the promulgation of *Nostra aetate*, the Vatican Commission for Religious Relations with the Jews published a new document entitled "The Gifts and the Calling of God Are Irrevocable" (Rom 11:29). This document was presented to the public with the aim of being "a starting point for further theological thought with a view to enriching and intensifying the theological dimension of Jewish-Catholic dialogue."

Pope Emeritus Benedict XVI graciously accepted this invitation and wrote extensive "Comments on the Treatise *De Iudaeis*." These comments were admittedly not intended for pub-

1. Joseph Ratzinger, *Theological Highlights of Vatican II*, 254.

lication. When I was allowed to visit him again last fall, Pope Emeritus Benedict XVI presented these comments to me for my personal use as President of the Vatican Commission. After studying the text in detail, I came to the conclusion that the theological reflections they contained should be incorporated in future discussions between the Church and Israel. That is why I asked Pope Emeritus Benedict XVI to publish his text in *Communio*. I am grateful that I was able to convince him to give his consent. Pope Emeritus Benedict XVI's reflections are an important response to the Vatican Commission's invitation to engage in a deepened theological dialogue between the Catholic Church and Judaism—a dialogue that Joseph Ratzinger/Pope Benedict XVI has always taken to heart. I am convinced that the present contribution will enrich the Jewish-Catholic conversation.—
Translated by Nicholas J. Healy Jr. □

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