

### 3-Minute Catechesis: Nostra Aetate – In Our Time

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“In our time, when day by day mankind is being drawn closer together, and the ties between different peoples are becoming stronger, the Church examines more closely her relationship to non-Christian religions. In her task of promoting unity and love among men, indeed among nations, she considers above all in this declaration what men have in common and what draws them to fellowship.”

This is the opening paragraph of Nostra Aetate, the official Latin title of “In Our Time,” one of the documents issued by the Second Vatican Council in October of 1965. This declaration changed Catholic thinking by stating that the Jews were not responsible for the death of Jesus, and that they were God's Chosen People. It urged us to focus on what we have in common with those of different religions, including Jews and Muslims.

At the World Jewish Congress in 2005, Cardinal Angelo Scola said that Jews and Catholics are siblings who share a covenant with God: "The God of Abraham, Isaac and Jacob - like the God of Jesus Christ - is the living God who maintains close ... relations with his people."

Every year in March, an Albuquerque-based group called the Jewish-Christian Dialogue hosts an interfaith gathering that includes Jewish and Catholic presenters, as well as those of other faiths and denominations, like Muslims and Protestants. As we listen to each other and share our faith, the experience opens our eyes to shared religious traditions, and opens our hearts to love and respect for each other.

What can we learn by entering into respectful dialogue with those of different religions? Perhaps the most surprising thing we can learn is how alike we really are in our beliefs and faith expressions! Educating ourselves about other religions can help us better understand our own Catholic traditions and improve our ability to articulate what we believe and why. In a world growing increasingly smaller because of the internet and cell phones, tweets and texts, we need to further our understanding of our brothers and sisters following a different path to God.

Jesus wanted unity among all his disciples. He prayed, in John's Gospel, that “they may all be one, as you, Father, are in me and I in you.” Catholics are called to pray for healing of all divisions, and work toward the day when all of God’s people gather around His table in unity and love.