

Historical note

Society of the Atonement

In 1898, the Spirit of God inspired Sister Lurana White and Father Paul Wattson to establish a religious community to be called the *Society of the Atonement*.

The Founders had the vision of a religious congregation dedicated to the unity of Christians and to reconciliation in the spirit of St. Francis of Assisi. Since the Founders were Episcopalians, the roots of the Society were implanted in that ecclesial communion until 1909, the year in which the Friars and Sisters of the Atonement entered into full communion with the Catholic Church. This was the first time that a corporate reunion with Rome took place since the Reformation.

Among the various activities of the Society of the Atonement, special mention needs to be made of the Week of Prayer for Christian Unity begun by Fr. Paul in 1908 and celebrated today throughout the world.

From the humble beginnings in an abandoned church, St. John's-in-the-Wilderness, in an area called Graymoor (New York), the Society of the Atonement has dedicated its efforts for the unity of the Church and reconciliation in several countries: the United States, Canada, Japan, England, Ireland, Brazil and Italy.

Yearly conferences honoring the memory of Fr. Paul Wattson were begun in 1974 at The Catholic University of America, Washington, DC, then, in 1980, at the University of San Francisco. To these were added in 1995, the *Paul Wattson Lectures* at the Atlantic School of Theology, Halifax and in 1996 at the Toronto School of Theology. The *Paul Wattson Lectures* are given by international experts in the field of ecumenism and interreligious dialogue.

In 2013 the cause for the canonization of Fr. Paul of Graymoor was introduced in the Archdiocese of New York.

Since 1998, the Centro Pro Unione organizes lectures each year in December to honor Fr. Paul Wattson and Mother Lurana White, co-founders of the Society of the Atonement. Earlier lecturers were Enzo Bianchi, Sarah Anne Coakley, Archbishop Bruno Forte, Anna Marie Aagaard, Robert Taft, SJ, Dame Mary Tanner, Angelo Maffei, Msgr. Eleuterio Francesco Fortino, Gillian Kingston, Timothy Radcliff, OP, Dr. Jane Williams, Archbishop Michael Fitzgerald, M. Afr., Turid Karlsen Seim, Kurt Cardinal Koch, Hervé Legrand, OP, William Henn, OFM Cap, Walter Cardinal Kasper and Petros Vassiliadis.



Conferences 2016



The **Centro Pro Unione** invites you to the **Nineteenth annual conference in honor of the**

19th

**Servant of God
Father
PAUL WATTSON
and
Mother
LURANA WHITE**

**founders of the Society
of the Atonement**



**Speaker
Rabbi Jack Bemporad
on the theme
Between Past and Future:
The Achievements and Challenges
since Vatican II**



**Thursday, 15 December 2016
6:00 p.m.**

**Via Santa Maria dell'Anima, 30, 1st floor
00186 Rome**

Visit Atonement Friars' Website · www.atonementfriars.org

Speaker

Rabbi Jack Bemporad



Rabbi Bemporad is the director of the nonprofit Center for Interreligious Understanding (CIU), which he founded in 1992. Its aim is to bring people of all religious faiths together to promote open dialogue, mutual respect, and theological understanding of the common foundations shared by the world's religions. Concurrently, he is also Director of the John Paul II Center and Professor of Interreligious Studies, both at the Pontifical University of St. Thomas Aquinas (Angelicum), in Rome. He also serves as Senior Rabbinic Scholar at the Chavurah Beth Shalom

synagogue, Alpine, NJ.

Fleeing the fascist takeover in Italy prior to WWII, Bemporad and his family traveled to the U.S. when he was five years old. Thus, having personally suffered as the result of persecution and prejudice, he has dedicated his career to improving relations among Christians, Muslims, and Jews worldwide. He is one of the rare Jewish leaders to have had a personal audience with Pope John XXIII, numerous personal audiences with Pope John Paul II, and was one of three rabbis to have blessed him shortly before his death.

Highlights of Professional and Educational Posts:

From 1966-72, Rabbi Bemporad served as Chairman of the Interreligious Affairs Committee of the Synagogue Council of America, where he represented Orthodox, Conservative, and Reform rabbinical and lay bodies at the National Conference of Catholic Bishops, the National Council of Churches, the Vatican, the World Council of Churches, and the national and international branches of the Lutheran, Presbyterian, Episcopal, and Baptist churches. In addition, he was chief rabbi of Temple Emanu-El in Dallas from 1972-83, and concurrently served as Professor of Philosophy at Southern Methodist University during those years. He taught philosophy at Hebrew Union College in New York as well, from 1960-65 and from 1965-72 was Director of Worship and Adult Education for the Reform Movement, based in New York. He has been teaching as a Professor of Interreligious Students at the Vatican's Angelicum University in Rome since 1998.

Education:

Rabbi Bemporad received a B.A. Summa Cum Laude in philosophy from Tulane University, his M.A. in philosophy at Hebrew Union College, is a member of Phi Beta Kappa, and was the first rabbi ever to receive a Fulbright Scholarship. Ordained as a Rabbi in 1959, he received an honorary Doctor of Divinity from Hebrew Union College in 1984.

Career Highlights:

Among his noteworthy accomplishments, Rabbi Bemporad led a group of Imams and Muslim religious teachers from the Middle East and developing world on a transformative study tour of Dachau and Auschwitz, the second such history making trip the CIU has sponsored. Both this tour as well as the first, (with American Imams and religious leaders) resulted in a landmark public declaration by the Muslim leadership, condemning any attempts to deny the reality of the Holocaust and to "... declare such denials or any justification of this tragedy as against the Islamic code of ethics," as well as decrying any form of anti-Semitism.

Rabbi Bemporad has headed two other groundbreaking initiatives, the first

of which was the CIU-sponsored Sharia/Halakhah Conference, a highly successful and acclaimed discussion in New York on interpretation of Sharia and Halakhah. Attended by top Imams, Rabbis, and scholars, it is believed to be the first of its kind in modern times. The second, the "Sacred Spaces Conference," examined peaceful ways in which major world religions share access to holy places and shrines. His talk at the European Commission's conference, "Protection of Sacred Places of the Mediterranean," later, in Brussels, was published in their book, *Between Cultural Diversity and Common Heritage*.

Rabbi Bemporad also became the first rabbi in history to address an officially sanctioned Ukrainian event when he spoke at the inauguration of the Libertas Center for Interconfessional and Interreligious Dialogue in Lviv, Ukraine, which was founded by one of his former students, Dr. Taras Dzyubansky. More recently, in the face of the violence and escalating tensions in Ukraine, Rabbi Bemporad and Dr. Dzyubansky hosted a CIU-funded conference in Lviv, exploring pathways for peace.

In addition to heading programs that build bridges among faiths, Rabbi Bemporad continues to speak, both in the U.S. and abroad. Among recent talks he has given, he moderated the panel at a U.S. State Department sponsored discussion in Rome this October, "The Continued Importance of Interreligious Engagement in Combating Intolerance," and in December discussed medieval Jewish philosophy at the University of Rome, with a focus on Maimonides. In addition to discussing various aspects of Vatican II at Providence College, RI, he also gave the Jummah (sermon) at the Masjid Al-Quran (mosque) in Dallas on December 4th. Continuously over the past eleven years, he has been a speaker at the bi-annual think-tank sponsored by PRIO (Peace Research Institute, Oslo).

Awards and Recognition:

For his efforts to foster interreligious understanding, the Dallas based organization, Connecting our Faiths, an umbrella interfaith group, gave a dinner in Rabbi Bemporad's honor on December 5th 2015. He also received the Faith in Action Award from the International Center for Religion and Diplomacy (ICRD), as well as the Luminosa Award of the Focolare Movement and the Raoul Wallenberg Humanitarian Leadership Award of the Center for Holocaust and Genocide Studies. He has been honored with The Pave the Way Foundation's "Inter-Religious Dialogue" Award, Sri Chinmoy's "Lifting Up the World with a Oneness-Heart" Award, (Hindu) and The Peace and Tolerance Award from the (Muslim) Interfaith Dialog Center, now the Peace Islands Institute. He was also honored by the Friends of John Paul II Foundation. In 2012 Rabbi Bemporad was made an honorary monk when he spoke at the inauguration of His Holiness, Master Seonsa Jinje, Supreme Patriarch of Korean Buddhists, the only rabbi in Korean history ever to speak at such an inauguration.


Most Significant Publications:

Rabbi Bemporad is the author and editor of numerous books and over 40 published articles, including *Our Age: The Historic New Era of Christian-Jewish Understanding*, published by New City Press, He also edited *The Inner Journey: Views from the Jewish Tradition* by Morning Light Press, and *Good and Evil After Auschwitz: Ethical Implications for Today*, KTAV Publishing House, and authored the chapter on "Norms of War in Judaism" for *World Religions and Norms of War*, published by the United Nations University Press. Most recently, he contributed a memoir of the philosopher Hans Jonas in *Giacobbe e l'Angelo* (Jacob and the Angel), published in Rome in 2012.



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