



Rabbi Jack Bemporad

Rabbi Bemporad is the director of the nonprofit Center for Interreligious Understanding (CIU), which he founded in 1992 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. The Rabbi is recognized internationally for his diplomatic skill and leadership in matters of religious understanding and reconciliation. A key liaison between the Vatican and the world Jewish community, he is one of the rare Jewish leaders to have had numerous personal audiences with Pope John Paul II.

In August 2010, Bemporad led a history-making delegation of eight leading American Imams and Muslim leaders on an eye-opening tour of the Dachau and Auschwitz concentration camps. The deeply emotional experience resulted

in a landmark open declaration issued by the Muslim leadership stating, “We condemn any attempts to deny this historical reality and declare such denials or any justification of this tragedy as against the Islamic code of ethics,” and decrying any form of anti-Semitism.

In 2011, Rabbi Bemporad headed two groundbreaking initiatives. In October, the CIU-sponsored Sharia/Halakha Conference, believed to be the first of its kind, was a highly successful and acclaimed discussion in New York on interpretation of Sharia and Halakha attended by top Imams, Rabbis and scholars. The Sacred Spaces Conference, held in Rome in December, examined the sharing of sacred spaces among world religions and was attended by both religious and scholarly secular representatives of all major world religions. Both were so successful that encore conferences are planned for the future.

In August 2012, Rabbi Bemporad was the keynote speaker at the Chautauqua Interfaith Lecture series at Chautauqua Institution, the historic adult education center founded in 1874 in Western New York.

Among his many other accomplishments at the Vatican’s request, Rabbi Bemporad gave the address on Jewish-Christian relations on behalf of the world Jewish community at the celebration of the 25th Anniversary of Vatican II. He was the primary writer of the Prague Agreement as well, the first time in history that the Vatican asked forgiveness of the Jewish people for past acts of anti-Semitism.

Rabbi Bemporad is the author of numerous books and articles, including *Our Age: The Historic New Era of Christian-Jewish Understanding*, published by New City Press. Most recently, he edited *The Inner Journey: Views from the Jewish Tradition* by Morning Light Press and contributed the chapter on “Norms of War in Judaism” for *World Religions and Norms of War*, published by the United Nations University Press.

He has also 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.

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 a Fulbright Scholar at the University of Rome. Ordained as a Rabbi in 1959, he received an honorary Doctor of Divinity from Hebrew Union College in 1984. Bemporad has taught philosophy and religion at Southern Methodist University, the Vatican's Angelicum University in Rome, the New School for Social Research and the University of Pennsylvania, and continues to lecture extensively in colleges, universities and synagogues throughout the U.S.

For his efforts to foster interreligious understanding, Bemporad has received the prestigious Luminosa Award of the Focolare Movement and the Raoul Wallenberg Humanitarian Leadership Award of the Center for Holocaust and Genocide Studies. He has also 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, and The Peace and Tolerance Award from the (Muslim) Interfaith Dialog Center. He was also honored by the Friends of John Paul II Foundation