



The Holy See

ADDRESS OF HIS HOLINESS POPE FRANCIS TO THE DELEGATION OF THE SIMON WIESENTHAL CENTER

*Clementine Hall
Thursday, 24 October 2013*

Dear Friends,

I welcome this Delegation from the Simon Wiesenthal Center, an international Jewish organization for the defense of human rights. I am aware that this meeting had been planned some time ago by my predecessor Benedict XVI, whom you asked to visit and who remains in our affectionate thoughts and prayers.

These meetings are a concrete sign of the respect and esteem which you have for the Bishops of Rome, for which I am grateful. They are likewise an expression of the appreciation of the Pope for the task to which you have dedicated yourselves: to combat every form of racism, intolerance and anti-Semitism, to keep alive the memory of the Shoah, and to promote mutual understanding through education and commitment to the good of society.

In these last few weeks, I have reaffirmed on more than one occasion the Church's condemnation of all forms of anti-Semitism. Today I wish to emphasize that the problem of intolerance must be confronted in all its forms: wherever any minority is persecuted and marginalized because of its religious convictions or ethnic identity, the wellbeing of society as a whole is endangered and each one of us must feel affected. With particular sadness I think of the sufferings, the marginalization and the very real persecutions which not a few Christians are undergoing in various countries. Let us combine our efforts in promoting a culture of encounter, respect, understanding and mutual forgiveness.

For the building of such a culture, I would like to highlight especially the importance of education, not only as the transmission of facts, but as the handing on of a living witness. This presupposes

the establishment of a communion of life, a covenant with the coming generations, which is always open to truth. To the young, we must be able to convey not only a knowledge of the history of Jewish-Catholic dialogue about past difficulties, but also an awareness of the progress made in recent decades. Above all we must be able to transmit a passion for meeting and coming to know others, promoting an active and responsible involvement of our young people. It is here that commitment to the service of society and to those most in need acquires a special value. I encourage you to continue to pass on to the young the importance of working together to reject walls and build bridges between our cultures and our faith traditions. May we go forward with trust, courage and hope! Shalom!