

Warsaw, April 4-7, 2016

It is the first time that the International Catholic-Jewish Liason Committee (ICJLC) takes place in Warsaw. The subject of this 23rd meeting which took place on April 4-7 2016 was: **“The other in the Jewish and Catholic traditions: The refugees in today’s world.”** Cardinal Kurt Koch, president of the Holy See Commission for the religious relations with the Jews invited the Vatican and the Polish Catholic delegation. We were twenty five Catholics: eleven from the Vatican and fourteen from Poland. I was the only woman in the Catholic delegation. The Jewish group was more numerous and luckily there were three Jewish women representatives. We worked in the huge hotel “*Marriot*” down town.

The first outing was festive. After the welcoming words and the introductions delivered by Cardinal Kurt Koch and M. Martin Budd, the ILC co-presidents, there was a ceremony to deliver the medal of “Just among the Nations”, posthumously, to three Polish Catholics. It was an idea of the Chief Rabbi of Poland, Rabbi Michael Schudrich, to open the meeting with that ceremony. The Israel ambassador in Poland, Mrs. Anna Azari offered the diplomas. One of the “Just among the Nations” was a sister, Celina Kedwierska, from the Congregation of the Franciscan Sisters of Mary’s family, a congregation well known by Sion in Poland. The ceremony was opened to the public, representatives from different religious and civil authorities of the country and the city were present, several archbishops, bishops and priests: archbishop H. Muszynski – a friend of our community, bishop M. Cislo, responsible of the Polish Episcopal Committee for the dialogue with the Judaism and many other priests and lay people engaged in dialogue in Poland and in the world.



We worked hard during four days but the work was done in confidence and mutual respect. I had the impression that it was not only work but the joy to be together. As M. Martin Budd said at the beginning “We continue to celebrate the 50 years of “*Nostra Aetate*” and we want to celebrate it for the next 50 years”.

In the morning each religious group began the day with the prayer at the Synagogue of Nożyków or in the chapel of the Polish Episcopate down town. From 9h30 to 22h00 we continue to work. The discussions began in the big assembly and continued afterwards in small groups. We discussed hard issues of today:

1. “You will not oppress the foreigner”, the attitude to the other, a Catholic and Jewish approach.
2. The anti-Semitism and the persecution of Christians today.
3. The refugees’ crisis.
4. The Catholic and Jewish communities in Poland today.

5. The problems of religious freedom.



On April 6th we went to the Nazi Death Camp of Treblinka. It is a place, nearly empty, where the buildings have been totally demolished to erase any trace of the crimes committed by the German soldiers a year before the end of the war. It is there where Janusz Korczak and his children have been gazed.



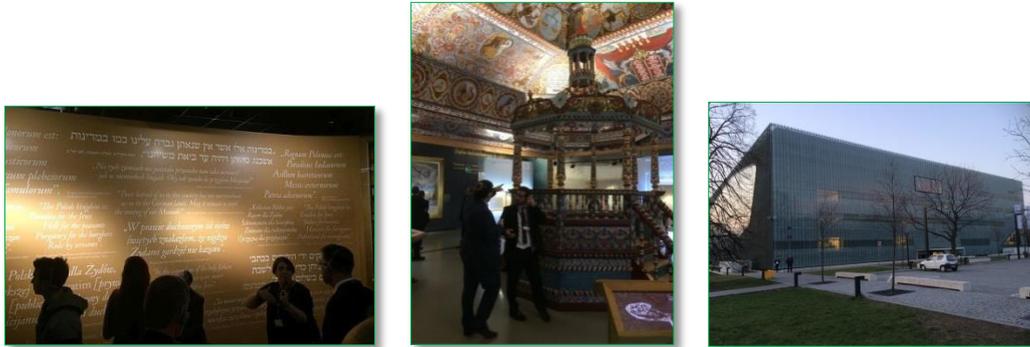
Today it is a camp full of stones. Each one has with an inscription: the name of a Jewish community destroyed there. We experienced at that place a hard moment of emotion, a deep prayer, prayer of our faith in God: “*Ani Ma’amim*”, sung by the two rabbis David Rosen and David J. Michaels and followed by a commitment not to ever forget this tragedy of the Shoah and to work for peace.



Back to Warsaw we were invited by the sisters of St. Albert to learn about their work in social service. The sisters take care of old and sick people, and of those in terminal stage in a big house donated by the city.

In the afternoon we visited the Polish Jewish museum, POLIN. The aim of this institution is to restore the memory of 1000 years of Jewish and Polish common history. The name POLIN,

in Hebrew POLAND, was chosen according to an ancient legend saying that the Jews chased from other countries arrived to Poland, and there, the forest began to sing “polin”, which in Hebrew means “it is here where you will rest”.



What I would like to hold back from our discussions, is a positive image of a refugee recalled by rabbi Michael Schudrich: in the book of Genesis (14,13) where the name “refugee” appears for the first time. Through an experience of our father Abraham, we learn that the refugee is not only an obstacle but it is someone who also helps us.

I was very happy to be able to meet some Catholic and Jewish friends engaged in inter religious dialogue whom I have known in some of the ICCJ meetings in Australia, in Krakow and in Aix en Provence and who are also friends of many of our sisters en Sion.

To know more about this meeting, you can consult de ILC Committee Declaration which follows this letter.

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