

# National Jewish Public Affairs Council

Thank you, Mr. Mel Shralow, for your gracious words of introduction. I shall tell Rabbi Zaiman of your kindness. Also, I want to acknowledge the goodness of Larry Rudin for personally extending the invitation for me to speak today. Rabbi Zaiman and Larry were part of a traveling dialogue to Jerusalem, Israel and some of the Territory under the Palestinian Authority two years ago. We shared in visits to each other's holy places, in briefings from local authorities and in growth in mutual understanding of what is important to each one of us.

We Catholics attended synagogue services on the Sabbath and on the Feast of Purim. Our Jewish friends assisted at our daily celebration of the Eucharist, at which we exchanged a sign of peace, of shalom. In all we spent about an equal amount of time visiting each other's significant shrines and services.

At Capernaum in Galilee an especially poignant moment came when we met on the site of the second century synagogue. Dr. Eugene Fisher, of our Bishops' staff in Washington, recalled that it was here, nearly two millennia earlier, that Jesus had taught in the synagogue of that day. Our coming meant that successors of the Apostles were in peaceful dialogue with successors of the scribes and Pharisees who were interlocutors of Jesus.

That region is much in the news always. I wish to say a word about most recent developments in the light of local, Maryland history. Our state had its roots in the only colony settled from England under Catholic leadership. The colonists came in 1634 with the understanding that, under the Calverts, Catholics and others could freely practice their religious faith according to the dictates of the individual conscience. In Acts of Toleration enacted in 1639 and in 1649 we have the first instance in the English-speaking world of the beginning of protected religious freedom as we know it. It was not perfect, because it embraced only the people then in the colony, who were Christians. But it did honor the faith of the Protestants who comprised a significant percentage of the early settlers. In the aftermath of the Glorious Revolution (1688) the English crown replaced the Calverts and sent Royal

Governors to enforce in Maryland the English penal laws against Catholics. All the Catholic churches in the colony were razed to the ground, and Mass could not be celebrated publicly. Priests could not hold property and often were arrested for little cause, and the Catholic laity could not hold public office or vote in elections. They paid double taxes. Thus, when the American Revolution came along, the Catholic leadership in Maryland gave strong support to the movement. Father John Carroll, who was to become the first bishop in our country, and his cousin Charles Carroll of Carrollton, joined Benjamin Franklin and Samuel Chase as emissaries of the Continental Congress to Canada. They tried in vain to persuade the predominantly Catholic Province of Quebec to join in the quest for independence from England.

Charles Carroll of Carrollton signed the Declaration of Independence with a large, boldly written signature to assert as strongly as possible his commitment to the cause. Back in Maryland Charles Carroll, educated as an attorney in England but forbidden to practice law because of his faith, was invited to draft the State Constitution of Maryland. He wrote what stands to this day as perhaps the most forceful assertion of religious freedom in any legal document anywhere. And he ardently promoted the adoption of the First Amendment of the U. S. Constitution.

Although Catholics, like the Jewish immigrants after them, continued to suffer many disabilities and encounter much prejudice, the protection afforded by the Constitution helped our people, as it helped yours, to flourish religiously in ways unique in the world. When my distinguished predecessor, Cardinal James Gibbons, went to Rome in 1887 to receive the Cardinal's red hat, he spoke wi