

Pope meets with Jewish leaders, emphasizes Catholics' bond with them

WASHINGTON (CNS) — During a special meeting with Jewish representatives, Pope Benedict XVI emphasized the special bond Catholics and Jews share and reaffirmed the church's 40-year commitment to dialogue with the Jews.

Noting a "shared hope for peace in the world," Pope Benedict also asked for God's mercy to "inspire all those responsible for the future of" the Middle East "to new efforts, and especially to new attitudes and a new purification of hearts."

At Washington's Pope John Paul II Cultural Center, where he had just met with interreligious leaders, Pope Benedict offered greetings to the Jewish leaders April 17 as they prepared to celebrate Passover, which begins at sunset April 19.

"At this time of your most solemn celebration, I feel particularly close, precisely because of what 'Nostra Aetate' calls Christians to remember always:" that the church received the Old Testament from the Jewish people, the pope said. The Second Vatican Council's Declaration on the Relationship of the Church to Non-Christian Religions, "Nostra Aetate," established the foundation for dialogue between Christians and Jews.

"Christians and Jews share" the hope of redemption, the pope said, adding that "we are in fact, as the prophets say, 'prisoners of hope.'"

The pope said the bond that Jews and Christians share "permits us Christians to celebrate alongside you, though in our own way, the Passover of Christ's death and

resurrection, which we see as inseparable from your own, for Jesus himself said: 'Salvation is from the Jews.'"