

Vatican official to issue statement on Good Friday prayer

VATICAN CITY - Jewish leaders have been assured that the Vatican secretary of state will issue a statement in March saying that the pope's revised prayer for Good Friday for the Tridentine rite is not a call for Catholics to try to convert Jews.

Rabbi David Rosen, chairman of the International Jewish Committee on Interreligious Consultations, said March 13 the statement would "allow the vast majority of Jews involved in dialogues with Catholics to re-engage as before."

Representatives of the Chief Rabbinate of Israel had been scheduled to be in Rome March 9-12 for their regularly scheduled dialogue with the Vatican. However, the rabbis asked for a clarification from the Vatican about the prayer and postponed their trip.

Pope Benedict XVI's revision of the Good Friday prayer applies only to the liturgy celebrated according to the 1962 Roman Missal, or Tridentine rite.

The new prayer removed 1962 language referring to the "blindness" of the Jews, but it prays that Jews will recognize Jesus, the savior, and that "all Israel may be saved."

Rabbi Rosen, who was at the Vatican to plan the upcoming meeting of the International Catholic-Jewish Liaison Committee, said he took the opportunity to discuss concerns about the prayer with Cardinal Walter Kasper, president of the Pontifical Commission for Religious Relations With the Jews.

He said the cardinal confirmed that Cardinal Tarcisio Bertone, Vatican secretary of state, "will issue a statement formally confirming his own assurances to us that the text is only eschatological, that the church is opposed to all proselytism, that the church respects the Jewish people and it recognizes the eternal validity of God's covenant with the Jewish people."

Such a statement, Rabbi Rosen said, would clarify that the pope's text is a prayer that all will be saved at the end of time "and it contains no call for a Christian

attempt to convert the Jews in the here and now.”

The rabbi said, “It seems to be a satisfactory solution.”

The Vatican said Cardinal Kasper met privately with Pope Benedict March 14, but it provided no details of their discussion.