

The symphony on the Suffering of the Innocents: interview with Rabbi David Rosen

Below is the English translation of the January 12, 2012 Vatican Radio interview. You can read the original in Italian at <http://www.radiovaticana.org/IT1/articolo.asp?c=552953>.



The echo of the symphonic-catechetical celebrations on the Suffering of the Innocents composed by Kiko Arguello is still heard in the Holy Land; he is one of the initiators of the Neo-catechumenal Way. One of the two musical executions was held in Jerusalem.

Participating in the event, there was also Rabbi David Rosen, former Chief Rabbi of Ireland and Councilor of the Chief Rabbinate of Israel for Foreign Inter-religious Affairs with the Holy Sea. Deborah

Donnini asked him how these events are important to the Judeo-Christian dialogue and to please underline what unites us.

- A. – First of all, encounters among people of good will are important, and when they are encounters among people of faith they are even more important. When we do not use only the cognitive aspect, but also the musical aspect, these events gain an even greater importance. The specific importance of this event is that this concert has been an example of fantastic solidarity; it has expressed a profound understanding of the historical suffering of the Jewish people. From this point of view it helps us to overcome the wounds of the past. But it has done something even more delicate: it has introduced the Jewish listeners to Christian categories of thought and faith. When this creates a mutual spirit of respect, just as has been done, then it becomes an important aspect from the educative point of view. This initiative allows us to respect what unites us and also to appreciate what makes us individuals.

Q. – Deep down, the suffering of the innocents unites all human beings. In the speech before the symphony, Kiko Arguello referred also to the suffering of the Jews because of the Holocaust...

A. – The uniqueness of this concert was the deep understanding and also solidarity with the suffering of the Jewish people. For the Jews, suffering reaches its peak and at the same time its depth, in the abyss of the Shoah.

Q. – Today Christianity is more and more re-discovering its Jewish roots and its relationship with its elder brothers. Do you think that in this sense the pilgrimages of the pontiffs to the Holy Land were important?

A. – The Pilgrimage of Pope John Paul II in the year 2000 was not only a historical event, but it has had a great impact within the Israeli society and with the Holy Land in general. The impression of Christianity for most Jews is still coming from a quite tragic past. The impact that the head of the Church has brought, which has restored a relationship showing his love and respect for the Jewish people has been of great importance, because today people do not read a lot, but they watch many images. This was created in his visit to the Synagogue of Rome in 1986. When the images went throughout the world, everyone believed that there was a new relationship. The fact that Pope Benedict XVI has confirmed these initiatives, gives them an almost institutional status, within the fabric of the Church. In a more specific way I am referring to the two important initiatives: the visit to the Synagogue of Rome and the pilgrimage, the visit, to the State of Israel, in the Holy Land.

Q. – Today, how can Jews and Christians concretely collaborate to be a blessing for the whole world?

A. – First of all I would say that dialogue and reciprocal understanding are concrete actions. The more we understand one another, the less do we run the risk of badly representing each other. To reciprocally understand each other is not enough: it is fantastic, it is beautiful, if we can take common initiatives as far as specific projects goes. There are concrete examples in which charitable organizations both Christian and Jewish already work together. This is happening in places like Africa or Latin America. One of the initiatives that were born as a result of the visit of John Paul II here in the Holy Land was to establish a bilateral commission between the Chief Rabbinate and the Catholic Church. In the course of the last ten years we have been working precisely in identifying the places, in the scientific and faith-related fields where we should work together.