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Opening of the Exhibit
A Blessing to One Another: Pope John Paul II and the Jewish People

Sponsored by Avila University - at Union Station
Comments and Prayer
February 3, 2009

It is a joy for me to be able to participate in the inauguration of this exhibit on Pope John Paul II and the Jewish People. I am particularly proud of Avila University for their leadership in this project. I know that I speak for Dr. Ron Slepitzka, Abbot Gregory Polan, and many others in the Catholic community in saying *thank you* for the opportunity to express our esteem for the leaders and members of the Jewish community. We hope to learn, from the example of the late Holy Father, a way for our faith-filled living Traditions to grow in friendship and collaboration.

Last week I had occasion to be in Rome with Pope Benedict XVI, the co-worker and successor of Pope John Paul, and one who has frequently expressed his esteem for “our Brothers and Sisters who received the First Covenant,” In his General Audience of January 28, the Pope recalled his 2006 trip to Auschwitz where he had reflected on the tragedy of the “millions of Jews were cruelly massacred: innocent victims,” as the Pope acknowledged, “of blind racial and religious hatred.”

“May the Shoah,” the Pope said last week, “be for everyone an admonition against oblivion, negation and reductionism.” ... May such violence “never again humiliate man’s dignity.”

I also wish to express my solidarity with Rabbi Alan Cohen and all our Jewish people, and my prayer that this Union Station exhibit – at the center of our Kansas City metropolitan area - will help many to learn about the goodness we share, and how we may be more and more “A Blessing to One Another.”

Let us pray,

God of our Fathers,
You have chosen Abraham and his descendants
to bring your name to the nations.

The power of life and love that comes from You
changes hearts and turns minds to peace.
We join with the psalmist in proclaiming,
“How good and how pleasant it is when brothers live in unity!”
Tonight we come together as sons and daughters of Abraham in this effort of peace.
Bless all who will view this exhibit.

Give us understanding that puts an end to strife,
mercy that quenches hatred,
and forgiveness that overcomes vengeance.
Bring to fruition the good work begun by Your servant, Pope John Paul II,
and fortify us with Your abundant blessings: life forevermore!

Amen.

