



## Thanksgiving Ceremony

6 March, 2014

for

### **THE RESTORATION OF THE TYBURN MEGILLAH**

#### Order of Service

1. Introduction: Mother M. Xavier OSB  
Mother General
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PowerPoint Presentation  
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3. The Importance of Esther to Tyburn Mother M. Xavier OSB
4. Official handing back the Megillah to Tyburn  
*with short chant from the Megillah by Mordechai Pinchas Sofer STa" M*
5. Prayer of Thanksgiving by Tyburn Nuns
6. Importance of Interfaith Dialogue - Ian Bloom  
A Statement

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**Commemorative Booklet** (66 pages with colour photos) of the Thanksgiving ceremony is available on request. Please write to:

Mother General, Tyburn Convent, 8 Hyde Park Place, London W2 2LJ

or [Contact Us](#)

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# THE TYBURN MEGILLAH

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## I. Introduction



### Brief Account of the History of the Tyburn Megillah

*This little ceremony of the restoration and handing back to Tyburn Convent of the TYBURN MEGILLAH today is imprinted with the quality of Christian-Jewish relations set in motion by Pope John Paul II's speech. So, let us look at some of the events and elements that have brought us all together here today.*

- 1. Some years ago we came into contact with one Jordan B. Cherrick and his wife Lorraine. Both are practising attorneys in the USA, and are Jews who have also engaged in Jewish-Christian dialogue for some years past. So it was natural that our relationship took the same path, especially as the husband was a great devotee of Pope John Paul II and also a close friend of George Weigel who delivered the Tyburn Lecture about that time.*

*Jordan Cherrick constantly asked the prayers of our community for his friends in need and took to asking for Mass to be said for those who died. We received many Jewish religious books and other Jewish artefacts also. A few years ago in this way we received a gift of what we now call THE TYBURN MEGILLAH and then shortly after, the Chagall etching of ESTHER – on display here today.*

- 2. The Megillah had been bought as being of religious and historical value, and we treasured it right from the beginning. It was apparent that it was in need of considerable restoration and not only of damage that it had suffered during the three centuries or so of its lifetime, but also the Hebrew letters and words in various parts of the fifteen columns of the total Megillah had either faded or were partly illegible.*



3. *How do you find a scribe willing to repair and restore a Megillah in possession of Catholic nuns in London? We made several attempts to find a willing and competent scribe. Not one was willing, even though reputable and competent. In the end we were given a contact by a good Jewish friend, and promises were made but not fulfilled. So, finally, in desperation we contacted our Jewish friend in the USA and he, with typical Jewish tenacity located the scribe who has laboured zealously and competently over this repair and restoration. We leave you to judge for yourselves by the results, just how dedicated and competent he has been. It has been an extraordinary adventure following his work, but even more remarkable discovering how he has recorded his unusual scribal labour in a delightfully informative book – RESTORING THE TYBURN MEGILLAH It is well worth a read, especially if you have a curiosity bump about distinctions between holy and holey, sew and sew, fast and feast, why dirt is bad, doing what is right and writing over, things that spell trouble, and kings that go missing! Etc.*
4. *The dialogue - interreligious and historical and scribal - we engaged in along the months was unusual. Mordechai explained all that he discovered and learnt about this old Megillah. This plunged us into a new kind of interreligious dialogue as we found a new world of regulations and techniques that every scribe has to obey and follow if he is to fulfil his task of Scripture. The painstaking effort he made to determine the date and place the Megillah had been produced was like putting a jigsaw puzzle*

together. He made judgements about the kind of parchment used, the method of stitching the different sections together, the style of Hebrew lettering by comparing this Megillah with other similar texts until he finally arrived at the conclusion that it was probably written in the 1700s, and “because of the transition to blind stitching probably the late 1700s, early 1800s.” This actually tallied with the opinion of the donor who bought it at an auction when it had been represented as being Italian from the 1700s.



*“Esther prayed for help to the  
Lord God of Israel,  
for she had no helper but the Lord.”*

- Benedictus Antiphon, Thursday, 14<sup>th</sup> March, 2014 (1<sup>st</sup> week of Lent)



## **Welcome Address**

*by Mother M. Xavier OSB, Mother General*

It is my pleasure – a deep religious pleasure - to welcome you all here today to share in what is perhaps a unique event, a celebration by the Catholic Nuns of the Restoration of their 18<sup>th</sup> Century Jewish Scroll, the Megillah of the Book of Esther which we call The Tyburn Megillah. So, how do I address you all who have come here today? Looking around, my gaze meets faces of many races, many religions, many different walks of life, men and women of different ages. But above all, I see your gaze focussed on a 3 centuries old parchment covered with closely written Hebrew letters. On this day and in this place it is a rare biblical artefact symbolising ever-deepening Catholic-Jewish relations.

Therefore there is only one way I can address and welcome you all. That is to say – welcome with all my heart, my dear brothers and sisters – for we are one blood family in our worship of and belief in the One, Only True God – Who was, Who is, and Who will always be, the God of Abraham, the God of Isaac and the God of Jacob. So let us all unite in prayer in the words of Psalm 117 –

*Alleluia!*

*O praise the Lord all you nations,*

*Acclaim Him all you peoples!*

*Strong is His loving-kindness for us,*

*He is faithful for-ever.*

*Alleluia!*

## II. Restoring the Tyburn Megillah (PowerPoint Presentation)



*Mordechai Pinchas, Sofer STa”M*



*As well as being a marketing communications professional, Marc Michaels is also a practicing Jewish scribe (Sofer STa”M). This involves writing, and restoration work on, sacred texts written on parchment with a feather quill. Marc studied under the late Vivian Solomon z'l for five years and has an M.A. in Jewish studies from the Leo Baeck Rabbinical College.*

*His scribal website is at [www.sofer.co.uk](http://www.sofer.co.uk).*

### ***Restoring the Tyburn Megillah***

Paperback <http://www.lulu.com/shop/marc-michaels/restoring-the-tyburn-megillah/paperback/product-21479470.html>

or the ebook

<http://www.lulu.com/shop/marc-michaels/restoring-the-tyburn-megillah/ebook/product-21479494.html>

### III. The Importance of Esther to Tyburn

I just want to say a few words about the importance of the book of Esther for us as Catholic Nuns. Obviously this biblical Book in the Catholic Bible is a little bit different because as Mordechai was pointing out the text has some additions but that's not any modern person's fault, that's the fault of the seventy two people who translated the book of Esther and included it in the Septuagint.

I would like to say quite seriously that this meeting or this celebration here today actually probably was given its first initiative in a very strong way by Pope John Paul II at the Angelicum Colloquium on 19<sup>th</sup> April 1985. At that meeting he said certain things that moved any ecumenical relations and dialogue out of a sort of theory into real life. What you are seeing here today is actually real life. This is clear by the way you all reacted to Mordechai. Also the fact that he took so long to repair and amend this Megillah was because he really liked lingering over it, conversing with the Nuns. All this shows that there is something more than just an academic theological exercise, do you understand? We are getting to know each other as real people.

Well, what Pope John Paul II said on that day during that Christian-Jewish relations Colloquium, was that *Jewish Christian relations are never an academic exercise. They are, on the contrary, part of the very fabric of our religious commitment and our respective vocations as Christians and Jews. And this is expressed very clearly in the Second Vatican Council Document Nostrae Aetate in par. 4 where it says that the Church, the Catholic Church or the Christian Church, received the revelation of the Old Testament, the Jewish or the Hebrew Bible through the people with whom God in His inexpressible mercy deigned to establish the ancient covenant. And it draws sustenance, that is to say, the Church draws sustenance from the root of the good Olive tree into which have been grafted the wild olive branches of the Gentiles* and that's us - we're late comers to something good that God has started and you can't change this. By just sitting around and having technical/theological argument you often beat around the bush and don't get down to the root of the matter.

To commemorate this anniversary, he says *we all have to become still more conscious of all these dimensions and to translate them into practice everywhere. And this easily becomes a point of departure, not only to ever deeper relations between Jews and Christians in many fields but also to what man or mankind or humankind needs the most in the present world – a sense of God as a loving Father.*

So it's a movement that goes beyond just some kind of relation between two religions, do you understand? And that's why I think this kind of meeting we are having today is very important. It is easy to see by the way you respond or nod your heads or make movements or smile or even laugh that there's something deeper going on here. That is why I chose that text in my words of welcome, that we are here because we all believe really, truly, in the God of Abraham, Isaac and Jacob. He is the God we all believe in and that's where it all comes from, and it's going further; we haven't seen where it's going yet, that's to be revealed later.

Why do we at Tyburn Convent treasure the Esther Megillah? One reason is as Mordechai has said, on account of the hanging tree. When I read his book I was very touched about something he put in it because it showed that he really went and read the sources and took them to heart. We have done something in this room, in this crypt here today because of what he wrote in his book. He describes some of the martyrs coming to Tyburn under Queen Elizabeth I and along the way from Holborn and along and around the Tyburn Tree the Catholics decorated it. They put herbs and flowers strewn all around the place so that the tree wouldn't look so awful just as a gallows. So we decided that today for this meeting we would do what the Catholics in those days did for their fellows when they laid down their lives. It is a very lovely thing to do and it helps you to see life and hope which go beyond this world. In fact one of our English poets, William Blake, calls the gate of Tyburn the gate to life. And I used his saying about Tyburn to describe what our life is about; it is a gateway that even the devil cannot get into because he is barred from it. But other people can get to heaven through it and it is still like that today. The hanging tree was not just a symbol of a persecution and death, that's what I'm saying, it is a symbol and the Christians and Catholics made it so, a symbol of a gateway to life everlasting in heaven, the kingdom of heaven.



When you listen to the prayers of the people when they were on that scaffold and dying they used prayers that actually were very similar in some ways to what the apocryphal prayer of Esther is about. They're really asking God for mercy and to heal and to separate the good from the bad properly.

The other thing about the Tyburn Gallows that Mordechai very touchingly put in and you might hear when our friend, Ian talks about what he has to say very simply and plainly that there has been through centuries, a lot of contention about who Jesus is, and I've got a book upstairs now which calls Jesus the Jewish Rabbi and people keep rambling around this. Mordechai didn't have any scruples in writing about the last man to be hanged at Tyburn Gallows Tree here. This man wasn't a saint, he wasn't a particularly good man, he was a highway man. Mordechai tells us he studied it and wrote it in his book for any Jew to read. His name is John Uston, executed at Tyburn in 1783. He was a terribly violent and wicked highway man and so he deserved to be handed over to the law of the country to be hanged, drawn and quartered at Tyburn. Mordechai tells us that this is probably at the same time that this Megillah is being written in Italy but he also gives the words, the last words of that wicked man. These words are *Jesus, have mercy on my soul, Christ forgive me all my sins* - he had no problem of just stating this is what a Catholic would say when he dies and he didn't make a ripple about it, and no excuse for it, and no contention about it. So I thank you for that, Mordechai.

The other thing is that we are nearing Purim next week and one of the first sayings I learnt from Esther from my childhood was before Purim or there is no Purim without the fast of Esther so that is two sides of it. You cannot have the feast without the fast. You have to have something to feast about and it is the fast in the book of Esther that pinned down God's miraculous intervention and drew it down. So that's two sides of human life; they're not particular to the Jews, they're not particular to Christians, they are actually particular to the whole of humanity. We all have a conscience, if we have done something wrong we have to make amends or we can try to help others to make amends before we could be at peace with one another

or with ourselves. And the peace begins in our own hearts to go out to others.

One of the things that I was reading in preparation for this was everyone says purim means casting lots and they cast a lot for this and cast a lot for that. But one of the things that I read was that Esther cast her lot for God. And that's all we all have to do basically.

The other thing is the Catholic liturgy has quite a lot about Esther in it. The thing that amazes me is not only we have the Lenten Esther next week just about when you are to celebrate Purim in the religion of the Jews but in actual fact, we have a whole week of reading Esther's entire book in the autumn every year, as well. This takes place in the Liturgy of the Hours or the Divine Office, when we always take a second reading from a Christian author which illustrates or interprets the first Reading from Scripture. And in that week of reading the Book of Esther we have ten readings that we can take as a second reading after it. All these link Esther to Mary the Mother of Jesus and Jesus was we say the Saviour; but Esther is called the redeemer of the people.

Therefore the Mother of Jesus is given a special relationship to the symbolism or the meaning of the mission of Esther. These 10 Readings are taken in our liturgy from the Byzantine hymn; one of the most famous hymns about Mary is called the Akathistos hymn. We read this side by side with Esther and we look at these two persons and say yes, it was God speaking to us through them and He has given us the message of salvation in a beautiful language.

The other time when we read Esther in our liturgy is whenever there is a terrible catastrophe or disaster on a political or social level when there is no hope for a cure. So Esther has remained very powerful in Catholic and Christian religion, devotion and spirituality as a symbol and image and a model of powerful intercession with God to change the course of human events from bad to good. And I think that anybody of the Jewish People should be very proud of that. Esther's power doesn't die. In fact one of the expressions that is used in the Purim liturgy says that from Esther comes an unending flow of that wisdom of God coming down from God for healing

and redemption. So her life and her model remain as long as humanity remains. From this you can see that our Catholic liturgy is constantly going back to the scriptures.

I don't know if Sister Esther is here would she like to come and say what Esther means to her.

**Mother M. Esther:** *“Esther is my Name. Esther is my inspiration. Esther's powerful prayer of self-abandonment as she took the risk of her life to save her people, the Jews, - ‘if I perish, I perish’ – so in my life too, I place myself and my prayer entirely in the hands of God, I beg HIM to give me the grace to accept His answer. Esther's generosity is very inspiring to help me live in the monastery being faithful to the daily tasks of serving the community like the Jews united in prayer and fasting for their salvation through Esther, to keep faith alive, as a living witness of the Church for the salvation of the world. I firmly trust that Our Lord is preparing a place for us in His kingdom in heaven.”*

The story of Esther for us too is a reminder of the horror of genocide in our own historical times, the holocaust, Cambodia, Rwanda and others and the Ukraine today and in Syria also. So the need for Esther's example is ever present in our minds whether we are Christians or Jews or just plain ordinary human beings without much hope in anything else. Esther is a memorial sign, a memorial point, a living point of confidence that God can change human events for the better and he can do it even by doing miracles.

And the final thing I would like to say is a word which the donor of the Megillah, Tyburn Megillah, wrote to us few weeks ago from America. He said: *The meticulous renovations of the scroll of Esther are amazing. What a wonderful act of glorification of God's name and His holy prophet Esther whose spirituality soars to heaven and who was God's messenger to save His people. Of course, she belongs to you and the proper restoration of this ancient scroll will surely bring many blessings to the Nuns of Tyburn. It is an act of pre-Messianic kindness that is unparalleled in my experience. And we thank him for this Godly message.*

## IV. Prayer of Thanksgiving by Tyburn Nuns

1. The first Jewish King, Saul, desecrated the word of the Everlasting, HOLY ONE and therefore his offspring, Haman flourished to become a thorn, and perished.

~~R.~~ Give thanks to the holy ONE, for HE is good, for His Mercy lasts forever.

2. The Holy ONE raised up Esther from concealment to be a redeemer of His People when they had despaired of being redeemed.

~~R.~~ Give thanks to the holy ONE, for HE is good, for His Mercy lasts forever.

3. Holy Esther led Israel to pray, fast and repent by wearing sackcloth and appeasing the Holy ONE Who desires repentance.

~~R.~~ Give thanks to the holy ONE, for HE is good, for His Mercy lasts forever.

4. Esther came to the king with eyes raised to God, not knowing that the Holy ONE Himself had even then intervened swiftly granting her abundant sovereignty.

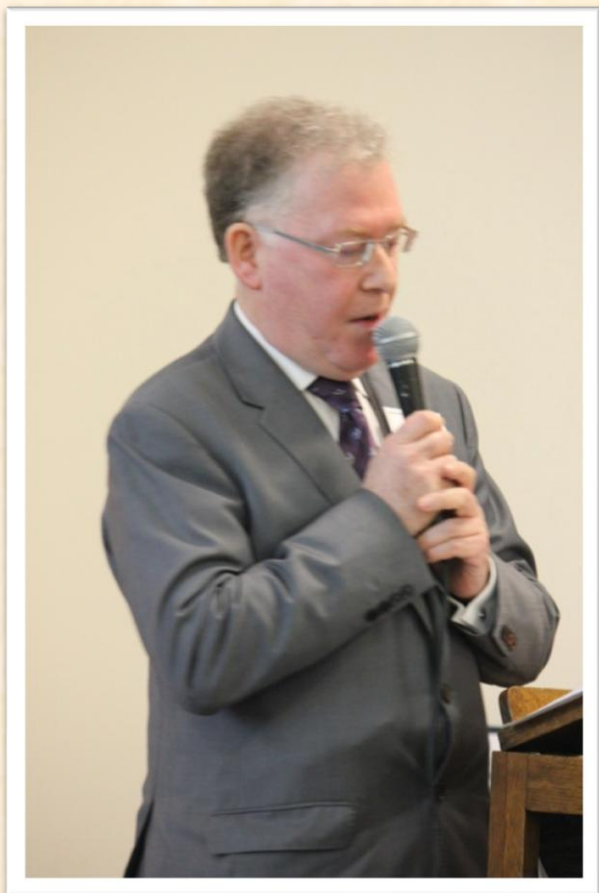
~~R.~~ Give thanks to the holy ONE, for HE is good, for His Mercy lasts forever.

5. Esther was granted grace from the godly Patriarchs; the Holy ONE prepared her as a symbol that the temple would yet be built and she wove the garment of freedom for those to be redeemed by God.

~~R.~~ Give thanks to the holy ONE, for HE is good, for His Mercy lasts forever.

**Let us pray:** We thank YOU, all Merciful Father and Holy God, for the blessings bestowed on us through the one we call the Rose of Jacob and the shining Morning Star, our noble Queen Esther. We give you thanks that her Megillah has now been restored to us by the skilled hands of your devoted Scribe, Mordechai as we draw near the days of PURIM. We give you thanks also that we may continue to hear the voice and teaching of Esther herself proclaiming YOUR Power through this holy MEGILLAH flowing with springs of wisdom. Blessed be Your Holy NAME forever and ever. AMEN.

## V. Importance of Interfaith Dialogue



**Ian Bloom** who describes himself as plain and simple, was born, brought up and educated in North London. He studied History and Economics at the University of York, where he was Sports Editor of the University newspaper. After graduating, he turned down, with some reluctance, an offer to study for a PhD in social history and began a career in book publishing and journalism. At Hutchinson, he worked with authors as varied as Frederick Forsyth, Arthur Koestler, Barbara Cartland and Ruth Rendell. Aged 21, he became the youngest ever freelance book reviewer and feature writer for the *Jewish Chronicle*, and wrote for them throughout the 1970's.

*After a few years, he switched to law. Although he became a commercial and corporate lawyer from the mid-1980's until his early retirement two years ago, he specialised, throughout his legal career, in a wide range of media law matters - for example television and film contracts, libel, publishing and intellectual property disputes. He co-wrote a book on copyright law three years ago and now shares a publisher with Harry Potter!*

*Apart from Tyburn Convent, he has, over the years, advised York Minster, Salisbury Cathedral, Winchester Cathedral and St Albans Cathedral (to date, no synagogues or mosques).*

*He is now a non-practising solicitor, a kind of legal consigliere, working when called upon as a business advisor to various media companies, speaking regularly on LBC Radio and sometimes Sky News on a variety of media law topics, helping, as best he can, with a growing collection of grandchildren partly as penance for never having the time to assist his remarkable wife bring up their three children 30 years ago, wondering whether it is too late to make the Ryder Cup Team this September and finding all manner of excuses to defer starting the research for his next book.*

## **The Importance of Jewish:Christian Interfaith Dialogue**

**A talk given by IAN BLOOM at the presentation of the Megillah of Esther at Tyburn Convent on 6th March 2014**

At break-time in a Manchester playground some 60 years ago, a group of Christian schoolboys surrounded a smaller group of Jewish classmates and prevented them from escaping. Soon, they had the Jewish lads where they wanted them - backed up against a wall and trapped by a numerically superior semi-circle.

The spokesman for the Christian boys soon gave their reason for this behaviour: *You killed Jesus, you did.* There was a murmur of assent from the semi-circle. The Jewish boys conferred. *No, we didn't,* said one of them. *Yes you did,* insisted the spokesman, with increasing confidence. And he repeated the deadly charge. *You killed Jesus.* Just as things were about to turn ugly, the Jewish boy who had denied the allegation, spoke again. *No,* he said in an urgent tone that demanded he be listened to. *No. It weren't us.* Then he waved his arm in the direction of what he hoped was north-east. *It were those Jewish lads in Leeds what done it.* His side nodded their urgent agreement. Thankfully, the Christian spokesman was more certain that he hated kids from Leeds, on general principles -they were Yorkies - than he disliked Simon and David and Jonathan in his own class. *OK,* he said, satisfied with this explanation. *Tell 'em we'll get 'em when we see 'em.*

I'm pretty sure that this scene, or variants of it, was played out many times across many school playgrounds in Britain throughout the last hundred years or so. The particular incident was told to me in the 1980's by one of the Christian gang. He is now a distinguished Emeritus Professor of History. Looking back, it symbolises, to me, the level of Jewish/Christian dialogue until quite recently.

That things have changed, slowly, perhaps unevenly, is, I think, primarily because brave leaders in both religions took steps to engage in interfaith discussion rather than allow mutual misunderstandings and ancient prejudices to continue unchallenged. Although, there is much that is

common to both religions - a belief in God, and the Ten Commandments - there is also much that keeps them apart and each quite distinctive; crucially, their respective views of the status of Jesus Christ.

In fact it is their differences that have largely defined Jewish/Christian relations for the better part of 2,000 years. After all, it wasn't easy for Judaism, an exclusive and basically non-proselytising faith, with a long history before the birth of Jesus, to understand why it needed, on a religious level, to have any, let alone any cordial, relations with this inclusive, expansionist, "new" religion that seemed to worship a false Messiah. And Christians, in turn, grew impatient with a people whose very survival was surprising, given their low numbers, refusal to recognise the divinity of Jesus, resistance to conversion and obstinate adherence to their faith. Their minority status, their sheer separateness, in whichever country they lived, challenged and may even have encouraged, early stirrings of national identity.

This impatience led them to persecute and kill Jews in medieval Europe on the flimsiest of charges or evidence - or on no charges or evidence at all. They were Jewish. Often, that was sufficient. Catholic monarchs expelled Jewish communities in England in 1290 after 200 years of co-existence, and in Spain and Portugal in the 1490's after at least 500 years. Later, as we know all too well, there were ghettos, pogroms and the Holocaust. I'm not aware that this murderous hostility was ever reciprocated by acts of mass and unprovoked killings of Christians by Jews. One of the most famous Holocaust survivors, Elie Weisel, once wrote, *One Jew was put to death in Jerusalem two thousand years ago and the non-Jewish world has not ceased to speak of his death. Do we not have the right, the duty to keep alive the memory of the six million dead?*

Now I am not a theologian, cleric of any description, communal or lay leader. My qualifications for commenting on the sensitive matter of interfaith dialogue might comfortably fit on the head of an average pin and still leave room for a dozen dancing angels. But this personal disclaimer aside, in the time available, my opening remarks could only be a painfully incomplete and obviously headline-only historical outline of the context in which I now want to praise four 20th century men and one biblical figure.



Only the biblical figure was Jewish, and I'll end with him. Of my four heroes, one was Italian, one English, one German and one Polish.

First in time is Angelo Giuseppe Roncalli, born in Lombardy in 1881. We know him better as Pope John XXIII, or Il Papa Buono - the Good Pope, the first Pope John for over 500 years. My reason for choosing him is that one of his first acts as Pope was to convene the Second Vatican Council in the early 1960's, after which he removed from the liturgy, and condemned as false, the two millennial charge of deicide. No longer were Jews doomed to eternal exile. *Nostra Aetate*, or *In Our Days*, heralded not just a symbolic, but an actual and seismic sea-change in the public attitude of the Catholic Church hierarchy towards the Jewish People. At last, the old anti-Judaic stereotypes were to be purged from the texts. Pope John wanted to change the landscape fundamentally.

Fifteen years after he passed away, the first non-Italian Pope for 400 hundred years, a Polish cardinal, and sometime goalkeeper, became the Pontiff. Pope John Paul II went one step further than his illustrious predecessor. John Paul II had repeatedly deplored and condemned anti-semitism. As a priest, he had refused to allow a baby whom he was told was a Jewish orphan, to be baptised and brought up as a Christian child. And in 1986, he became the first Pope in 2,000 years to enter and pray in a synagogue. He called for an act of teshuvah - it means repentance - and he said this: *With Judaism, we have a relationship which we do not have with any other religion. You are our dearly beloved brother, and in a certain way, you are our elder brother.* He concluded in fluent Hebrew: *Hodu la Adonai ki tov, ki l'olam hasdo - yomar na Yisrael ki l'olam hasdo. Yomar na Yireh Adonai ki l'olam hasdo.* In English, this message is simple: *Give thanks to the Lord for He is good ...His steadfast love endures forever.* His electrifying religious visit seems to me comparable, in political terms, only to Willy Brandt, when Chancellor of West Germany, kneeling, penitentially, at the monument to the victims of the Ghetto in Warsaw in 1970.

If words were used inspiringly and movingly by these two great Popes, both of whom will be canonised in Rome next month, my next hero distinguished himself as someone who engaged in Jewish/Christian dialogue through his deeds and actions. My last used conscience and

conduct to remind the world that though the Church never excommunicated a single Nazi, some Germans were so courageous that they truly belong to the Righteous among the Nations.

First, the man of action, the Englishman, though he was born in India in 1903 and was partly Scottish. He is Orde Wingate, a distant cousin of Lawrence of Arabia and a brilliant, maverick, British Army Major-General. Wingate's contribution to Jewish/Christian dialogue doesn't lie in his success in restoring Emperor Haile Selasse to the throne of Abyssinia, now Ethiopia - we can all let the Rastafarian community celebrate that. Nor is it his leadership of the Chindits in Burma in 1943/44. No, this passionate, hugely controversial Hebrew-speaking Zionist was a devout member of the Plymouth Brethren. But his eschatological beliefs caused him to identify completely with the return of the Jewish people to Israel. So in the late 1930's, whilst a serving officer in the Army in Palestine, he trained and taught the young Jewish pioneers in the Haganah how to fight, how to conduct surprise night-time attacks, how to use hit-and-run guerrilla tactics.

His pupils included the 21 year old Moshe Dayan. Wingate formed the Special Night Squads and gave the future leaders of the Israeli Defence Force a crash-course education in how to fight and win against numerically stronger forces. To this day, he is known in Israel simply as "The Friend".

Finally, I want to honour Dietrich Bonhoeffer, a German Lutheran pastor and committed anti-Nazi. Bonhoeffer's name is a byword for self-sacrifice. A lecturer in theology at Berlin University, in April 1933, soon after Hitler was elected Chancellor, he was the first to broadcast on German radio the case for the Church to resist State-sponsored persecution of the Jews. Bonhoeffer was in London for two years, in the mid-1930's, but, despite the dangers to his life, went back to Germany and continued to oppose the Nazis. Although he travelled to the USA in 1939, he insisted on returning to Germany in the last ship to cross the Atlantic before war broke out. He was eventually arrested in 1943 and executed aged 39, along with Admiral Canaris on 9th April 1945, days before the War ended. His courage in speaking out, his defiance and refusal to be silent, far less look after himself, and his steadfast, consistent and outspoken opposition

to Nazism means he will never be forgotten. His epitaph could come from his own book, *The Cost of Discipleship*. *Silence in the face of evil is itself evil*, he wrote. *God will not hold us guiltless. Not to speak is to speak. Not to act is to act.*

I have touched on the lives of four outstanding individuals who tried, in their different ways, to oppose prejudice and work for a state of affairs where Christians and Jews can co-exist without enmity. History was always against them. Long before Jesus was born, there was anti-semitism. You could argue it began in Egypt, after Joseph's death when a new king arose who, in that ominous and famous phrase "knew not Joseph" and enslaved the Jewish people. You could certainly say that the Megillah of Esther illustrates the genocidal intentions of Haman, in about 500 BC. Haman remains a bogeyman to this day. There will be jeers and hissing when his name is mentioned in synagogues as the Megillah is read aloud at Purim next week. In contrast, there is Mordecai, the man who defied and faced down this would-be killer and emboldened Esther to explain to the King who Haman really was. To my mind, Mordecai sits well with the two Popes, Wingate and Bonhoeffer. They would all have recognised him as a biblical blood brother, a man of courage and integrity, a man who did the right thing.

As you can tell, I have not mentioned say, Christian/Islam or Islam/Jewish interfaith dialogue. In the time available, they have to be beyond the scope of this short address. But the current outlook is not hopeful. Ghandi's response to a journalist's question *What do you think of Western civilisation?* is as valid today as it was when he gave it. *I think*, he replied, *I think it would be a good idea.* Virulent, persistent and extensive anti-semitism is still alive and kicking in Europe and the Middle East. Sometimes it is nominally "justified" by reference to the problems in Palestine. In reality, that is a figleaf. There are nowadays increasing acts of violence against minority Christians especially in Africa and the Middle East,

I suppose, if asked why it is important to have Jewish/Christian interfaith dialogue, I would answer the question with a question of my own. What do you suggest is the alternative? A return to mutual hostility? Armed struggle? A religious war to somehow "prove" that one religion is "better"

than the other? It seems to me that there is quite enough religious hatred and intolerance out there at the moment. Small acts of kindness can lead to larger acts of understanding and mutual respect. Tolerance and peaceful co-existence do not actually impinge on or threaten other people's belief systems. Sincerity of conviction is not validated by attacking or belittling the religious views of others - even, perhaps especially, if you do not share them.

I'll end on a note of qualified hope. Anne Frank confided to her diary. *In spite of everything, I still believe that people are really good at heart.* And at a White House dinner 60 years ago, maybe on the very day of the Manchester playground incident, Winston Churchill told his hosts that *Jaw Jaw was better than War, War.* Now he was someone who both talked a lot, and had won a war. Perhaps he knew what he was talking about. So the dialogue must continue.

Mother General, thank you very much for giving me the honour of speaking today: ladies and gentlemen, thank you very much for your kind attention.

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## VI. Photos



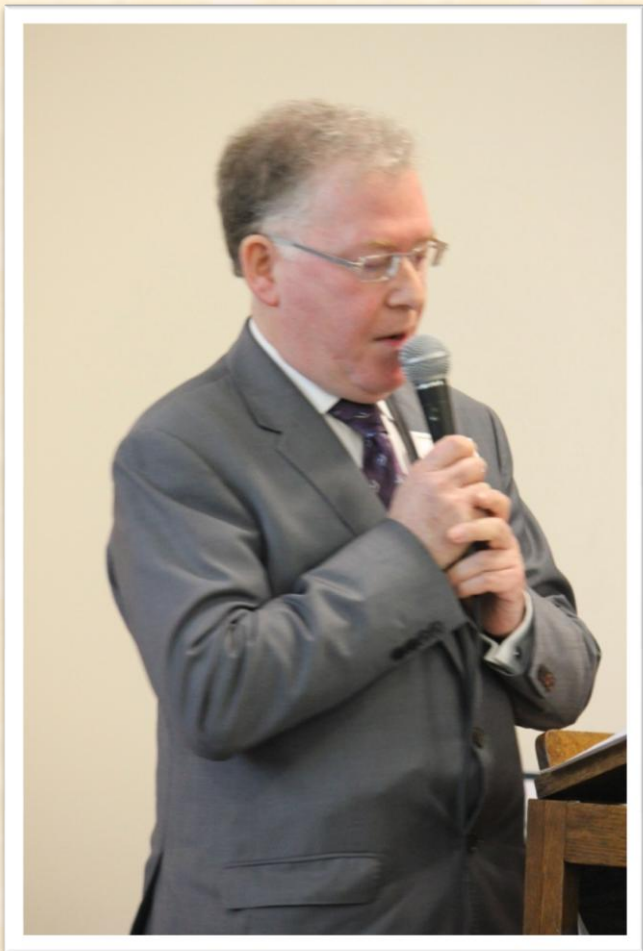
*The replica of Tyburn Gallows decorated with plants and herbs for the ceremony*



*Photos*



*Pictures courtesy of Simon Caldwell, St Gabriel News and Media*



*Pictures courtesy of Simon Caldwell, St Gabriel News and Media*



*Chanting from the Megillah*



*Mordechai Pinchas hands over the restored Megillah to Mother M. Xavier*

*Pictures courtesy of Simon Caldwell, St Gabriel News and Media*



## **VII. Acknowledgments**

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*Simon Rocker*, *The Jewish Chronicle* – feature article

*The Friends of Tyburn Committee*

## Psalm 66

*O God, be gracious and bless us  
and let Your face shed its light upon us.  
So will your ways be known upon earth  
and all nations learn Your saving help.*

***Let the peoples praise You, O God;  
let all the peoples praise You.***

*Let the nations be glad and exult  
for You rule the world with justice.  
With fairness You rule the peoples,  
You guide the nations on earth.*

***Let the peoples praise You, O God;  
let all the peoples praise You.***

*The earth has yielded its fruit  
for God, our God, has blessed us.  
May God still give us His blessing  
till the ends of the earth revere Him.*