

Pope's message of unity gives religious community hope

Christians, Jews react to address as a call to recognize similarities

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Pope John Paul II delivered a special address Sunday from his window overlooking St. Peter's Square, but his message of respect is long overdue, some in the MSU community say.

The pope urged fellowship with other faiths, condemned anti-Semitism and said Christians should respect the "spiritual riches" of other faiths.

"The pope is completely correct. There is good in every religion. Neglecting other religions is where you get your problems," said Kenneth McDonald, a priest at St. James Catholic Church in Mason.

Some of those problems include tensions between Jews and Christians, particularly the teaching that Jews bear the responsibility of killing Christ — a lesson the pope said should be repudiated.

Great pain arises from the "memory of tensions which so many times have marked the relationship between Christians and Jews," the pope said.

Jonathon Koenigsberg, Jewish Student Union chairperson, said unity and understanding only will happen if people of different faiths take the pope's address as a model.

"I approve and applaud the pope in proposing group unity. The idea to gain from each other is worth embracing by all Spartans," he said. "... We must value each other and work together."

RELIGION

International relations sophomore Jason Miller, who is Jewish, said humans are all a part of nature and are all the same — no matter what their beliefs are.

"If we all simply loved our fellow man and woman, just that will make the world a better place to live; a place with less

hatred. And in turn, it will lead us to a better and brighter future," Miller said.

Some Catholic students also believe that Jews and Christians have a particularly intimate relationship. Child development sophomore Kristen Pfeffer said respecting other faiths is a great way for people throughout the world to understand each other and unite.

"As a college Catholic, I have respect for what the pope and the Second Vatican Council is doing," she said.

The Rev. John Folkers, associate pastor for Campus Ministry at Peoples Church of East Lansing, 200 W. Grand River Ave., said most college fellowship groups now seem to focus on the New Testament, whereas the Old Testament is "where all the Judeo-Christian facts are."

"We all must remember that Jesus was also a Jew. Heritage is a real important issue in this situation," Folkers said.

Miller said there always have been misconceptions about Judaism, and people should become more educated with Jewish culture and history.

"We are all different people, whether different by belief or by race or by ideology," Miller said. "No matter what our differences are, we always need to look past our differences with a different vision."

The pope also called for Christians to look to past documents such as the "Nostra Aetate" (In Our Times), which calls for "reciprocal esteem, dialog and cooperation for the true good of man."

The Associated Press contributed to this report.

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