



*A Service
Commemorating the Life of
Sister Rose Thering, O.P., Ph.D.*

Wednesday, September 13, 2006

7:00 p.m.

*The Cathedral Basilica of the Sacred Heart
89 Ridge Street
Newark, New Jersey*

In Memoriam

Sister Rose Thering, O.P., Ph.D.
1920-2006



Sister Rose Thering, a native of Plain, Wisconsin, entered the Dominican Order at 16 and became a leader among her peers even at that early age. After final vows, she taught in several Wisconsin schools, then did graduate work at Dominican College in Racine, Wisconsin before entering a doctoral program at St. Louis University.

Her scholarly investigation into the most widely used catechetical materials led to her dissertation on Catholic teachings about Jews and Judaism, a seminal work that was taken to the Second Vatican Council and served as documentation for the 1965 Vatican document *Nostra aetate*, which states clearly that the Jewish people are not to be held responsible for the death of Jesus.

What led this young woman from a strong Catholic family of 11 children on a path of writing, speaking and teaching about Jewish-Christian relations, activism in international organizations that promoted dialogue and study about the Holocaust, and a lifetime of achievements recognized throughout the United States and the international community? It had to be her inquiring mind, even from childhood, the development of a passionate care for all of God's children, and the commitment to end prejudice and intolerance.

Sister Rose spent more than 40 years at Seton Hall University – teaching, speaking, developing programs, shepherding groups of religious and lay people to the Holy Land (where she traveled more than 54 times). The Sister Rose Thering Endowment for Holocaust and Jewish-Christian Studies honors her for her belief in the power of teachers to impart knowledge and understanding to young people.

Her passing has been acknowledged throughout the world. We gather in this beautiful Cathedral Basilica of the Sacred Heart to celebrate and remember her life of service, a life of appreciation of Jews and Christians that she hoped would help her “become a better person, a better Christian.” We commit ourselves to preserving her legacy, now and in the future.

PROGRAM

Organ Prelude

Adagio for Strings – Samuel Barber
John J. Miller, MM FAGO, *Organist*

Stand

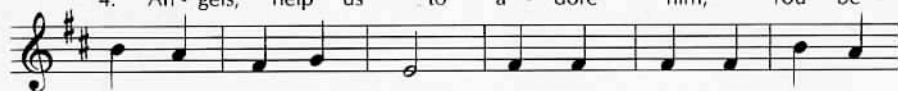
Processional Hymn

Lauda Anima

PRAISE, MY SOUL, THE KING OF HEAVEN



1. Praise my soul the King of heav - en; To his
2. Praise him for his grace and fa - vor us; To his
3. Fa - ther - like he tends and spares us; Well our
4. An - gels, help us to a - dore him; You be -



feet thy tri - bute bring; Ran - somed, healed, re - stored, for -
chil - dren in dis - tress; Praise him still the same as
fee - ble frame he knows; In his hand he gen - tly
hold him face to face; Sun and moon bow down be -



giv - en, Ev - er - more his prais - es sing: Al - le - lu - ia,
ev - er, Slow to chide and swift to bless: Al - le - lu - ia,
bears us, Res - cues us from all our foes. Al - le - lu - ia,
fore him, In his ho - ly dwell - ing place. Al - le - lu - ia,



Al - le - lu - ia! Praise the ev - er - last - ing King.
Al - le - lu - ia! Glo - rious in his faith - ful ness.
Al - le - lu - ia! Wide - ly yet his mer - cy flows.
Al - le - lu - ia! Praise with us the God of grace.

Text: 8 7 8 7 8 7; based on Psalm 103; Henry F. Lyle, 1793-1847, alt. Music: John Goss, 1800-1880.

Sit

Reflections

David M. Bossman, Ph.D.
Executive Director, Sister Rose Thering Endowment

Honorable Jon Corzine
Governor of the State of New Jersey

Aryeh Mekel
Consul General of Israel

David Blewett
Director, National Christian Leadership Conference for Israel

Eugene Fisher, Ph.D.
Secretariat for Jewish-Christian Relations, United States Conference of Catholic Bishops

Abraham Foxman
Executive Director, Anti-Defamation League

Rev. Dr. John Pawlikowski
Professor, Catholic-Jewish Studies, University of Chicago

Paul Winkler, Ph.D.
Executive Director, New Jersey Commission for Holocaust Education

Rev. Dr. Franklin Littell
Distinguished Professor, Richard Stockton State College

Sister Sharon Simon, O.P.
President, Dominican Sisters, Racine, Wisconsin

Anthem

Adonai, Adonai, lo gavah libi

Chichester Psalms

Leonard Bernstein

The Cathedral Choir

Lord, my heart is not haughty,
nor mine eyes lofty,
neither do I exercise myself in great matters
or in things too wonderful for me.
Surely I have calmed and quieted myself,
as a child that is weaned of his mother,
my soul is even as a weaned child.
Let Israel hope in the Lord from henceforth and forever.
Behold how good and how pleasant it is
for brethren to dwell together in unity,

Amen.

Litany

Reverend John F. Morley, Ph.D.
*Professor, Department of Religious Studies,
Seton Hall University*

The Lord's Prayer

Our Father, who art in heaven,
hallowed be thy name:
thy kingdom come;
thy will be done on earth as it is in heaven.
Give us this day our daily bread;
and forgive us our trespasses
as we forgive those who trespass against us,
and lead us not into temptation
but deliver us from evil. Amen

Message from Theodore Bikel

Lois Dranikoff, *reader*
Secretary, Sister Rose Thering Endowment

Mourner's Kaddish

Cantor Daniel Neiden

Magnified and sanctified be his great name in the world which he hath created according to his will.

May he establish his kingdom during your life and during your days, and during the life of all the house of Israel, even speedily and at a near time, and say ye, Amen.

Let his great Name be blessed for ever and to all eternity.

Blessed, praised and glorified, exalted, extolled and honored, magnified and lauded be the Name of the Holy One, blessed be he; though he be high above all the blessings and hymns, praises and consolations, which are uttered in the world; and say ye, Amen.

May there be abundant peace from heaven, and life for us and for all Israel; and say ye, Amen.

He who maketh peace in his high places, may he make peace for us and for all Israel; and say ye, Amen.

Blessing of Aaron

Numbers 6: 24-26
Most Reverend Peter L. Gerety
Archbishop Emeritus of Newark

Anthem

In Paradisum (*Requiem*)

Gabriel Fauré

May the angels lead you into paradise;
may the martyrs welcome you upon your arrival,
and lead you to the holy city of Jerusalem.

May a choir of angels welcome you,
and with poor Lazarus of old, May you have eternal rest.

Recessional

O God Beyond All Praising
Gustav Holst, arr: Eric Thiman
Vincent Carr, *Organist*

PLANNING COMMITTEE

Monsignor Robert Sheeran, S.T.D.
President, Seton Hall University

Frederick F. Travis, Ph.D.
Provost, Seton Hall University

Monsignor Richard F. Groncki
Rector, Cathedral Basilica of the Sacred Heart

Reverend Thomas A. Dente
Director, Worship Office, Archdiocese of Newark

John J. Miller, MM FAGO
Director of Music, Cathedral Basilica of the Sacred Heart

Joan Conroy
Coordinator, Worship Office, Archdiocese of Newark

Reverend John F. Morley, Ph.D.
Professor, Department of Religious Studies, Seton Hall University

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Chairman, Sister Rose Thering Endowment

David M. Bossman, Ph.D.
Executive Director, Sister Rose Thering Endowment

Marilyn L. Zirl
Administrator, Sister Rose Thering Endowment

Assistants at Service

Candle bearers:

Kenneth Oleckna

Past Chairman, Sister Rose Thering Endowment

Mary M. Vazquez

Teacher, Millburn Public Schools

Book bearer:

Sister Suzanne Noffske, O. P.

Historian, Dominican Sisters

WELCOME – MONSIGNOR PETER GERETY

It is my privilege and pleasure to welcome all of you this evening to the Cathedral Basilica of the Sacred Heart. His Grace, Archbishop John Joseph Myers, the Archbishop of Newark, could not be with us this evening and has asked me to convey his greetings, esteem and appreciation for all that you do on behalf of Jewish-Catholic relations.

I know that many of you are visiting this Cathedral for the first time, and some of you, indeed, may be in a Catholic house of worship for the first time. I trust that for you, and for us who are familiar with this building, that our presence here will be an awesome experience that is both spiritual and reverential, as well as aesthetic.

To each of you, from the Jewish and Christian communities, I offer a wholehearted *baruch ha-ba*, **WELCOME!**

We are here tonight to remember in prayer, and with honor, a remarkable woman, Sister Rose Thering. She was a member of the Racine Dominicans for 66 years and was associated with Seton Hall University for almost forty years, many of which she spent as a Professor of Education.

It is not Sister Rose's longevity, however, that brings us together on this occasion. We are here as Jews and Christians because of what Sister Rose has meant to our respective communities and what she has accomplished in bringing us to a greater sense of mutual understanding, overcoming the mistrust, ignorance and prejudices that have affected Jews and Christians for too long.

Sister Rose dedicated decades of her life to ideals that in Catholic religious education there should not be any inaccurate or discriminatory teaching about Jews and Judaism. Sister Rose also supported efforts to remove any aspects of Catholic liturgy that might be interpreted as disparaging of Judaism.

Sister Rose was an ardent Zionist, an ardent supporter of the State of Israel and traveled there over fifty times. She rejoiced that in 1993 the Holy See and the State of Israel concluded a Fundamental Agreement that led to formal diplomatic relations between them.

Sister Rose was, at heart, an educator and there is no greater evidence of this than in the establishment of the Sister Rose Thering Endowment for Jewish-Christian Studies at Seton Hall University.

We celebrate here the memory of this great woman. May it be a blessing for each of us.

Opening Prayer

Let us pray. *Pause for silent prayer.*

Lord, God of endless ages,
from one generation to the next
you have been our refuge and our strength.
Before the mountains were born
or the earth came to be,
you are God.

Have mercy now on your servant, Sister Rose Thering,
whose life was spent in your service.

Give her a place in your kingdom,
where hope is firm for all who love
and rest is sure for all who serve.

We ask this in your name,
Almighty and Merciful God,
who lives and reigns forever and ever.

Amen.

A reading from the Book of Ruth

1.7-11a.13b-16

[Naomi] and her two daughters-in-law left the place where they had been living.

Then as they were on the road back to the land of Judah, Naomi said to her two daughters-in-law, "Go back, each of you, to your mother's house! May the Lord be kind to you as you were to the departed and to me! May the Lord grant each of you a husband and a home in which you will find rest." She kissed them good-by, but they wept with loud sobs, and told her they would return with her to her people. "Go back, my daughters!" said Naomi. Why should you come with me?

No, my daughters! My lot is too bitter for you, because the Lord has extended his hand against me." Again they sobbed aloud and wept; and Orpah kissed her mother-in-law good-by, but Ruth stayed with her.

"See now!" she said, "your sister-in-law has gone back to her people and her god. Go back after your sister-in-law! But Ruth said, "do not ask me to abandon or forsake you! For wherever you go I will go, wherever you lodge I will lodge, your people shall be my people, and your God my God. Wherever you die I will die, and there be buried. May the Lord do so and so to me, and more besides, if aught but death separates me from you!" Naomi then ceased to urge her, for she saw she was determined to go with her.

The word of the Lord.

Thanks be to God.

A reading from the Holy Gospel according to Matthew.

When Jesus saw the crowds, he went up the mountain,
and after he had sat down, his disciples came to him.
He began to teach them, saying:

“Blessed are the poor in spirit,
for theirs is the Kingdom of heaven.
Blessed are they who mourn,
for they will be comforted.
Blessed are the meek,
for they will inherit the land.
Blessed are they who hunger and thirst for righteousness,
for they will be satisfied.
Blessed are the merciful,
for they will be shown mercy.
Blessed are the clean of heart,
for they will see God.
Blessed are the peacemakers,
for they will be called children of God.
Blessed are they who are persecuted for the
sake of righteousness,
for theirs is the Kingdom of heaven.
Blessed are you when they insult you and persecute you
and utter every kind of evil against you falsely
because of me.
Rejoice and be glad,
for your reward will be great in heaven.

The word of the Lord.
Thanks be to God.

What is the harvest of a human life? Tonight we look back upon the life of Sister Rose Elizabeth Thering and we recall a remarkable harvest, indeed.

Sophocles once wrote that you must wait until sunset to see what kind of day it has been. The sun has now set, and Sister Rose's "day" was unforgettable, a "day" that has witnessed new interfaith healing and new, undreamt-of doors being opened for Jews and Christians. And she was center stage in that story, in New Jersey, and well beyond. Indeed, I can think of few American women, few Christian women, who have reaped a finer harvest of interfaith goodwill between Jews and Christians than has Sister Rose Thering.

We remember Rose this evening, a great gathering, in miniature, of her thousands and thousands of friends and colleagues, admirers from all walks of life who cherished her and learned from her; who are committed to her struggle for a better world less marred by bigotry and more just for all children of the one God.

The harvest of Rose's life is, of course, ultimately for the Lord to judge. As I look at her 85 years, I see an unshakable, threefold commitment: her determination to expose and root out anti-Semitism wherever it exists; her resolve to see that new generations are educated about the evils of the Holocaust; and her unstinting support for Israel.

This is the heart of her great legacy, the harvest of her vocation. And this is the challenge passed on to us. Who will fill her shoes? And how will we move her "passion" forward?

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I remember the last time I saw Sister Rose, shortly before she returned to Wisconsin. On Sundays, during her illness, Sister Rose came ("schlepped") from her beloved Jewish Home in Whippany for Mass at St. Raphael's in Livingston. I remember celebrating one of those Sunday Masses and seeing her there, by then frail, and suffering, oxygen tank at her side. Not a short, or easy, trip for her in those last months. But for me it was just one more example of the indomitable spirit of the woman: commitments taken up were taken up, come what may, to end.

Yes, from beginning to end, she just never gave up, never gave in, never stopped, and she asked the same of those who shared her “passion.”

The first time I met Rose was in 1980 when I had just arrived on campus as Rector of the College Seminary. “Father,” she said, “I need your seminarians to take my class. Future priests have to know about anti-Semitism and what is happening now, since Vatican II, between the Catholics and Jews.” And, of course, many did take her class.

We all smile, don't we, as we recall our own stories of Sister Rose's chutzpa and persistence. How else could this young farm girl from Plains, Wisconsin earn her academic degrees and conduct the research that would have such a far-reaching impact in the Church, on the world?

As we read about ongoing terror attacks and more virulent anti-Semitism in the Islamic world and in parts of Europe, we ask ourselves, “What would Sister Rose say...?”

I know what she would say – as do you. She did not hold back. Hers was – and is – an uncommon and bold voice of honesty, a witness to resourceful solutions for seemingly intractable problems.

Whether it was “teaching” undergraduates on Seton Hall’s campus or Kean University, or “preaching” about her beloved Israel in churches and synagogues across the country, or “instructing” the president of Seton Hall on how to do his job . . . we remembered what she said.

* * *

I believe that history is made by individuals, not vague forces.

One person can make a very large difference—a prophetic and historic difference. And God sometimes raises up from the most unlikely of places, like Plains, Wisconsin, the most remarkable of leaders and voices.

Rose is one of those special people, first called to vowed life as a Dominican Sister and then, within that first call, another call—to be a herald of new reconciliation between Jews and Christians.

In 1953, Seton Hall created something then unheard of: a Judaeo-Christian Institute. Monsignor John Oesterreicher planted a seed, small then and insignificant, but it was placed in fertile soil at Seton Hall and watered by God's good Spirit. The work of that fledgling Institute—to build new bridges between Catholics and Jews—bore fruit in the Second Vatican Council, and well beyond, even to our own day.

Later, Monsignor Oesterreicher would be joined by others: Father Edward Flannery and a young nun, Sister Rose, fresh from St. Louis University. They and others (like our Fathers Lawrence Frizzell, John Morley, David Bossman and Rabbi Asher Finkel) would make Seton Hall a renowned center for a new kind of dialogue and friendship.

Other universities, of course, have followed and established similar centers. None, though, has surpassed us. And, you might say, because only Seton Hall had Sister Rose! And her Foundation and Seton Hall's commitment to Jewish-Christian studies and Holocaust education will continue (Rose, I promise you!)

* * *

Friends, let us not be afraid to plant our own seeds, new seeds. In a new world, with even more menacing threats.

Rose wasn't afraid, and we shouldn't be either.

Her harvest is rich because her will was strong, her faith indomitable, her energy seemingly inexhaustible. How many trips to Israel? How many talks in churches and synagogues? How many board meetings and protest marches? How many letters written? Classes taught? Students inspired?

Tonight I thank God for Rose Elizabeth Thering and for her passion.

A passion to see the "stranger," the "other" with accuracy and empathy.

A passion for her Catholic home and her Jewish family.

A passion to uproot senseless hatred among the many children of Abraham.

I thank God for the passion of this one Christian nun, this unique bridge builder.

May the Lord of the harvest give her unending length of days before his face, the reward of her labors. May those other great women who said “yes” to God’s work— Mary of Nazareth, Ruth and Esther and Elizabeth Seton. May they welcome her welcome her.

And may the angels of heaven greet her and bring her to the bosom of Abraham, in that land where there is only life and love and peace.

Thank you.

Sister Rose Thering: Role Model, Teacher, Witness

By Rabbi Irving Greenberg

Others will speak of Sister Rose's pioneering work in assessing Catholic text books and their portrayal of Jews and Judaism and how this work paved the way for *Nostra Aetate*. The purification of these text books fulfilled and extended the Second Vatican Council's mandate that Christianity no longer be a source of anti-Semitism. This was an historic contribution which can never be praised enough and should never be forgotten.

Allow me to speak about three lesser known aspects of Sister Rose's Torah, that is, her teachings and instructions how to live: her conception of the role and responsibility of the individual religious, her relationship to Judaism and her witness as a Christian.

Her portrayal of the world includes a new vision of the Church and its role in the world. Sister Rose operated in the context of the 'democratization' of the Catholic Church and the coming of age of its religious and its lay people. Personal activism and a greater role in guiding the Church for lay people and for grass roots priests and nuns rather than following the top down model of authority were trends set in motion by people like Sister Rose before Vatican II. However, that Council validated and extended these religious directions. Finding the Holy Spirit in the community of the people of God, the mass was brought into the vernacular so as to allow greater popular understanding and participation. Bringing the Church into the world was expressed in nuns exchanging their habits for civilian dress and in their greater involvement in society and daily life. Moral

education shifted its focus to responsible choice rather than shelter from exposure to worldliness. Self-criticism, modesty and restraint in relationships with other faiths and a willingness to listen and learn from them were hallmarks of the new way. Sister Rose was a trailblazer and an enthusiastic proponent of all these approaches.

Vatican II and Nostra Aetate confirmed her way; they unleashed the full force of her unlimited energies which she poured into realizing her vision of a Church purified from discrimination and hate. Her passion for justice inspired her to work tirelessly. Her unwillingness to accept injustice led her first to correct the denigrations of Judaism in the textbooks, then to educate about the terrible revelations in the Holocaust so that the Church might repent and prevent a repetition. Finally, she worked to teach the truth about the spiritual value and dignity of Judaism, the religion which nurtured Jesus Christ.

It takes a lot of maturity to deal responsibly with choice so as not to lose one's way. It takes spiritual focus to avoid becoming drunk on the new freedom and thereby losing sight of the ultimate values. Moreover, this pioneering work required a lot of Christian self-criticism and a willingness to tangle with obstructionist authorities upholding the status quo. Striking the right balance between these conflicting values is as hard as getting a camel through the eye of a needle. Sister Rose threaded that needle beautifully. Her love for God and for Catholicism gave her the depth to fearlessly expose the venomous teachings which degraded Judaism and the courage to fight the encrusted traditionalism which resisted change. She remained loyal to the disciplines of her vocation and her order even as she refused to simply obey orders from Monsignors or

Bishops who thought they knew better. Her passion for pedagogy led her to create graduate programs for Catholic religious and educators. Her conscience led her to stand up to authority when that was needed and to extend her work to rescuing Soviet Jewry or protesting Kurt Waldheim's unregenerate Nazi past. She never wavered from her life work in education and activism – not even when she aged and became sick did she let go. “Those who trust in God renew their strength” (Isaiah 40, 31).

As she met and worked with Jews, Rose Thering came to appreciate the power of Judaism and its values. She came to see and experience it as a living religion and as a life nurturing way of life. In our lives, Sister Rose became a cherished friend and beloved family member. The children took to her and spoke of her as “our Sister Rose”. We loved her visits and she loved to spend Shabbat with us. I was fascinated to see how she entered into the day and drew sustenance from it. When she came to our synagogue sometimes, I would see her participating in the service and prayers. Once I asked her how she could do this. She explained to me that Judaism was a religious way of encounter with God – a valid way, a living covenant which sustained Jesus in his lifetime. She had come to see that this faith was never repudiated by God. Therefore, although the Church and the synagogue had separated, as a Christian she could still draw on these waters of salvation. She could find moral instruction and spiritual inspiration in the shared areas of belief and scripture as well as from areas where Judaism's differences rounded out or illuminated Catholic teachings. She thought that Christians could receive a twofold benefit from exposure to Judaism and other religions – once in coming to respect the pluralism of God's love and choice and once in enriching Christianity with the

insights, teachings and vital models found in the other. Thus Sister Rose pointed to the future teachings of John Paul II as to the eternal covenant between God and Israel. Sister Rose was equally passionate in her insistence that the Church must respect and protect living Jews not just Jewish tradition. To her this meant a fierce defense of the State of Israel and of Jews whenever they were persecuted and whenever their right to live in dignity and peace was assaulted and denied. Thus she was one of the founders and activists in the National Christian Leadership Conference for Israel.

Finally, I want to speak about Sister Rose's witness as a Christian. One might think that a person who focused as much of her activity on a critique of Christian mistreatment and misrepresentation of Judaism and on eradicating the teaching of contempt from Catholicism; someone who spent so much time confronting the Holocaust and forcing the Church to face up to its guilt in generating anti-Semitism and its failures standing idly by the blood of Jewry; someone who stressed the validity and spiritual value of Judaism would not be much of a Christian witness. On the contrary: I speak from personal experience. My wife and I joined the dialogue to critique Christianity and demand repentance and the end to its spawning of anti-Semitism. We met Sister Rose and others like her. In their moral fervor and prophetic self-criticism, they outstripped our efforts on the issues about which we were most concerned. Never had I met such impressive religionists - morally zealous, prophetic, caring, and loving. I was awestruck. Only a great religion could generate people with such justice-saturated souls; only a great religion could nurture people with such all embracing hearts. This encounter turned me to a lifetime search for a Jewish theology honoring the faith and validity of Christianity.

When Sister Rose came to our Orthodox synagogue filled with people with no previous contact with Christians, indeed filled with survivors whose only history was with Christians who despised or vilified or actively persecuted them, I could see the astounding softening of heart which she evoked. I marveled at how everyone quickly recognized the goodness in her and the truth of her affirmations -- and how they came to a new appreciation of the power of the faith which raised and educated her and to which she dedicated her life and her love. To those who feared to correct tradition, lest they undermine the authority of the Magisterium, Rose Thering showed that confession and repentance is the way to renewed life at a higher plane. She proved that a Church more humble in its claims and a religion which gives up its purported monopoly of divinity in order to do justice to others, a faith willing to learn from others, grows in stature and blossoms in the excellence of its service to God and humanity.

Of our Sister Rose we can truly say the words of the Psalmist (Psalms 85:11: in her very being, "covenantal love and truth met; justice and shalom (peace) kissed." We, the living, must honor her memory by assuring that her role model is carried on to the next generation of Catholics and Jews, to teach her teachings until the task of justice and reconciliation is accomplished. Walking in her footsteps, even as she walked in Gods ways, we can together partner to help God's children and heal God's world.

Yehi Zichrah Baruch. May her memory be a blessing.

LUNA KAUFMAN

I could echo the statements of previous speakers and they would be quite sincere. However, I have felt the impact of Sister Rose's accomplishments in a much more personal way. I experienced first hand the devastating results of prejudice since it took the life of my father and sister and resulted in four years of incarceration for my mother and myself. We paid very dearly because nobody took action in the face of the atrocities that were perpetrated in Europe.

It took the courage and perseverance of someone like Sister Rose to speak for the oppressed. Her work has had a great impact on society, but there is still a lot of work to be done. It is up to us to continue what she initiated. She planted a seed that needs to be nurtured in order to grow. We have to commit ourselves to continue her fight.

The Holocaust is not just a piece of history. It provides a road map for correcting the wrongs that are being committed around the world today. It is also not just a Jewish issue. At a recent Holocaust observance that I attended, a new member of the New Jersey Commission for Holocaust Education, a man from Darfur, spoke about the atrocities committed there, and said how learning about the Holocaust gave him guidance in dealing with the issues in his homeland.

We hear about the Jewish lives taken but there were at least an equal number of Christians and others who perished in the Holocaust.

Yes, genocide is universal. Everyone is a potential victim. Therefore, we must all join in efforts to erase it. This is the only way that prejudice can be conquered.

Sister Rose Thering: A Memorial

Sister Rose's words struck to the heart of the matter because they came from her heart as well as her mind. She knew that anti-Semitism was and remains a commanding issue for Christians today. She identified with Jews in their abandonment and isolation. Her heart was that of a Jew in identifying with the plight of Jews through history and into the present.

I found in Rose the compassion and acceptance that comes from one firmly grounded in her own religious community. As a Dominican sister, she felt part of a living church in which growth and change is not only possible but a moral mandate. For her, anti-Semitism was a fact of Christian history and a sin that requires repentance and making amends.

Education meant a great deal to Sister Rose, notably the education of teachers and their students. Her career was built upon recognizing teachings of contempt in texts books. It blossomed in rectifying those teachings with positive learning of the value and worth of Jews and Judaism. If Christians are to make amends for the sins of the past, accurate learning about Judaism and the Holocaust must be the mandate for all schools.

The Sister Rose Thering Endowment aims to fulfill that mandate through supporting teacher education in Jewish-Christian Studies at Seton Hall University. The Newark archdiocese has a long and admirable history of higher education at Seton Hall. Sister Rose felt at home in the mission of Seton Hall as an archdiocesan university where constructive learning about Jews and other minorities displaces prejudice and intolerance. She felt at home in Catholic higher education. Why Catholic? Because that is where the need is high and success for the future is promising.

Sister Rose led the way. It is for us, her colleagues, friends, and admirers to follow in her path toward building a society freed from hate and liberated for inclusive growth through Jewish-Christian Studies.

David Bossman
Executive Director
The Sister Rose Thering Endowment



As an Israeli and a Jew, it would be impossible for me to qualify the life and work of Sister Rose in the little time I have been given to speak. But I do want to convey one thing: she was a heroine.

She was not simply a heroine for revolutionizing Catholic-Jewish relations, for rebuilding a relationship that was in need of repair after the holocaust. She was not just a heroine for her tireless battle against anti-Semitism. She was not only a heroine because she stood up for the right of the Jewish State of Israel to exist, a right that continues to be challenged by some even today.

Sister Rose was a hero because she created momentum. She seized on the importance of renewing relations between Catholics and Jews and she pushed it forwards. The historic document of Nostra Aetate was a result of the first of her efforts, and that declaration has snowballed, fostering closer relations between Jews and Catholic, leading to the first visit of a Pope to a synagogue, the establishment of diplomatic relations between Israel and the Holy See, the late Pope's pilgrimage to the Holy Land in 2000, and perhaps soon the second-ever visit by Pope Benedict XVI.

Sister Rose was not satisfied with accomplishments. She strove to keep all of us moving closer together, learning more about one another, cooperating more and more. Thanks to her work in the field of education, holocaust studies are and will continue to be an integral part of every child's education in this state. Thanks to the legacy she created, all of us who knew of Sister Rose have been encouraged, inspired, or have demanded of ourselves to carry on the work that Sister Rose began.

That is what made Sister Rose so special – that is why she was a heroine. She did not 'accomplish' – she planted seeds that have already begun to grow. It is for this reason that the legacy of Sister Rose – her passion – will continue even now that she is no longer with us.

**IN APPRECIATION OF SISTER ROSE THERING, O.P., Ph.D.,
FROM THE NATIONAL CHRISTIAN LEADERSHIP CONFERENCE FOR ISRAEL**

Our dear Sister Rose's parents named their sixth child well: a bright, beautiful flower with deep, sturdy roots. She grew up close to the earth on her family's Wisconsin farm. Her Catholic faith was rooted in the ancient Israelite belief in the One God who loves all people, especially those who are most vulnerable. She took to heart the divine injunction to care for those who are oppressed. Sister Rose's religious life was imbued with its Dominican heritage. She often quoted to me the spirit of her Order: "to give to others the fruits of our contemplation."

From these deep roots, the bud of an educator began to take shape. In her doctoral dissertation she studied how Catholic religion textbooks portrayed Jews and Judaism. That study contributed to the Second Vatican Council's document "Nostra Aetate," which declared that Christ's death "cannot be blamed upon all the Jews then living, without distinction, nor upon the Jews of today." It proclaims, "The Jews should not be presented as repudiated or cursed by God."

As a teacher Sister Rose opened into the magnificent flower we know and love. I turn to additional words of Nostra Aetate to summarize her life's work: "Since the spiritual patrimony common to Christians and Jews is thus so great, this sacred Synod wishes to foster and recommend that mutual understanding and respect which is the fruit above all of biblical and theological studies and of brotherly dialogues." In her efforts toward mutual understanding Sister Rose helped to found the National Christian Leadership Conference for Israel, a group that works to support the land, people, and State of Israel.

While we miss Sister Rose's presence here among us, we know that in her heavenly home, she reminds God constantly of the needs of Israel's people, and we count on her prayers as we continue the work to which she devoted herself with courage and determination.

Shalom, chaverah. Rest in God's peace, Dear Sister Rose.

Sr. Joan Cook, S.C. for David Blewett, National Director, NCLCI

On the Passing of Sr. Rose Thering, OP – Dr. Eugene Fisher

Sr. Rose Thering was one of the giants of her generation, pioneering Catholic-Jewish relations even before the Second Vatican Council. Indeed, her unflinchingly honest analysis of the treatment of Jews and Judaism in Catholic teaching materials, completed in 1961 as her doctoral thesis for St. Louis University, profoundly influenced the development of the Council's groundbreaking declaration, *Nostra Aetate*. It also profoundly influenced my own life, since it was her study that I updated for my own PhD degree in 1976.

Sr. Rose Thering's work likewise had a deep influence on the work of the Secretariat for Ecumenical and Interreligious Affairs over the years since the Council, first through her colleague at Seton Hall University, Rev. Edward Flannery, and then through myself, Fr. Flannery's successor in serving the U. S. Bishops' efforts to improve Catholic-Jewish relations in this country. In addition, she served as a member of the Advisory Committee on Catholic-Jewish Relations to the Bishops' Committee for Ecumenical and Interreligious Relations for more than twenty years.

Sr. Rose worked tirelessly to bring about the reconciliation between Catholics and Jews, continuing her analyses of Catholic teaching materials, leading joint groups of Jews and Catholics to Israel, fighting for Soviet Jewry, and pioneering in Holocaust education, both in Catholic education and for the State of New Jersey's public schools, producing resources that were used and emulated across the nation.

To say that she will be missed is an understatement. If anyone can be said to be without peer or replacement, it was Sr. Rose. May God gather her up into well-deserved eternal Peace. And may her name be for a blessing for future generations.

Dr. Eugene J. Fisher
Associate Director
Secretariat for Ecumenical and Interreligious Affairs
U.S. Conference of Catholic Bishops

Bishop Richard Sklba, Chairman of the Catholic Bishops' Committee for Ecumenical and Interreligious Affairs

"Sister Rose Thering, a Racine, Wisconsin, Dominican, was one of the great pioneers of Catholic-Jewish relations even before the Second Vatican Council. Her meticulous content analysis of the treatment of Jews and Judaism in the U. S. Catholic teaching materials of the late 1950's was an important part of the documentation used by Cardinal Bea and the Pontifical Commission for Christian Unity, to understand the negative aspects of Christian teaching over the centuries and to develop the Council's historic declaration, *Nostra Aetate* ("In Our Time"). Updates of her doctoral dissertation for St. Louis University were done, also as doctoral dissertations, in 1976 by Dr. Eugene Fisher for New York University and in 1992 by Dr. Philip Cunningham for Boston College. These established objective data showing the increase in understanding of Judaism in Catholic textbooks and in the Church's much more positive assessment of it and of the Jews as Chosen People of God.

Sister Rose served as a member of the Advisory Committee on Catholic-Jewish Relations to the Bishops' Committee for Ecumenical and Interreligious Relations for twenty years, from 1967 to 1987, giving invaluable advice and scholarship to us, as she did informally since then.

Sr. Rose worked tirelessly to bring about the reconciliation between the Catholic Church and the Jewish people. She continued to keep track of Catholic teaching materials, as well as liturgical issues, for areas of improvement. She lead numerous joint groups of Jews and Catholics to Israel, and was a mainstay in the cause of Soviet Jewry. Her pioneering work in Holocaust education, both in Catholic schools and for the State of New Jersey, provided guidance and resources that were used across the nation.

Sr. Rose will be missed by all her friends and those she has so profoundly influenced over the years. She was one of a kind, a woman for our time and for all time. May God gather her up into eternal Shalom. And may her name be for a blessing."

ABRAHAM H. FOXMAN – TRIBUTE TO SISTER ROSE THERING

Etzion Neuer

She proudly wore a Star of David fused to the cross around her neck to symbolize her lifelong struggle for understanding and reconciliation between Christians and Jews. Her doctoral dissertation inspired *Nostra Aetate*, the Vatican II document that changed Roman Catholic Church teachings about Jews and Judaism forever. She set a standard for those of all faiths to emulate and her inspiring legacy will live forever in those she taught and touched with her passion and vision. She never stopped challenging the wicked distortions in teaching and preaching that led to two millennia of tragedy. She had nothing but contempt for the teaching of contempt. Sister Rose was the most beautiful person I knew. Her devotion, determination, fight for goodness and justice were shining lights banishing anti-Semitism and Holocaust denial into the darkness where they belong. The prophet that was Sister Rose changed the course of history. She illuminated our world just by being in it. In our Jewish tradition she is an *ayshes chail*...a woman of valor...who brought enlightenment and scholarship to remembering and teaching about the Holocaust, to battling the demon of anti-Semitism, to challenging the ignorance of prejudice and the teaching of contempt, to championing the cause of Israel. She dedicated her life to *tikkun olam*...repairing the world. Her words will echo forever to me: "Never again can we abandon Jews. G-d has never revoked his/her covenant with Jews. G-d has never revoked the promise." The documentary on her life's work, "Sister Rose's Passion", did not win an Oscar, but she won a central place in our hearts and a right to sit at the right hand of G-d for all eternity. Proverbs says it best: "Well done, thou good and faithful child. Many women have done virtuously, but thou excellest them all."

REV. JOHN PAWLJKOWSKI

I am honored to join in this celebration of Sr. Rose's life and work this evening. I do so as President of the International Council of Christians & Jews, as a member of the U.S. Bishops' Advisory Committee on Catholic-Jewish Relations and, most importantly, as a longtime friend and colleague. Sister Rose launched my own work in Christian-Jewish Relations. I was privileged to be able to edit her groundbreaking research on Catholic textbooks for publication in my volume *Catechetics & Prejudice*. I learned from her and took inspiration from her own commitment to overcome the legacy of Christian antisemitism as we worked on programming at the then Catholic Adult Education Center in Chicago. She planted the seeds of passion for a new understanding and collaboration between Christians and Jews deep in my heart. For that I shall be ever grateful.

Sr. Rose understood the profoundly sinful nature of antisemitism well before the late Pope John Paul II defined it as such. For her there was no compromise on this point, something that I took from her as well. So when the Mel Gibson film appeared we both spoke an unqualified NO. The seeds of this vicious disease cannot be replanted in Christian consciousness. They pose a threat for Jewish survival, even if not immediately, as well as for Christian moral integrity.

I was also pleased to join Sr. Rose in various efforts to support the State of Israel while she served as Executive Director of the National Christian Leadership Conference for Israel, including the successful efforts to rescind the infamous United National Declaration on Zionism as Racism and its formal diplomatic recognition by the Vatican.

This evening I personally recommit myself to carry on the spirit of Sr. Rose and her pioneering efforts for Christian-Jewish reconciliation.



State of New Jersey

COMMISSION ON HOLOCAUST EDUCATION

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HELEN SIMPKINS

September 13, 2006

Dear Friends:

Over the past four months since Sister Rose left this earth, I have had very few conversations that her name was not raised. "What would Sister think"? "What would Sister do"? were constantly uttered. I too found myself, when facing a decision, reflecting on what Rose would do or think.

Many of the present and former members of the Commission first met Rose in October of 1982 when Governor Thomas Kean announced the decision to appoint members to a state wide Holocaust Council. For over 20 years Rose was the conscience, activist, moral compass and instructional leader of the Commission. In thinking back over the years, most of us can recall Rose's passion and commitment to teaching about the Holocaust and genocide. During the debates about the development of curriculum and instructional materials, or during the lengthy discussion on the "mandate" question, it was always Rose who made sure we constantly discussed the question in relation to the impact on survivors, staff and students. Rose also represented the Council, and later the Commission, in the very best light as she spoke at state wide commemorations, meetings, or during her presentations at teacher in-service programs, and mostly in her intimate discussions with students.

The documentary on her life will be utilized by the Commission and the work of Holocaust Centers to teach about the evils of anti-Semitism and of its' impact on the Holocaust. The Commission today wishes to announce, that in the name of Sister Rose, a scholarship will be awarded each year to one individual who exemplifies her spirit and life. We, the Commission, also pledge to continue to work toward implementing her ongoing concern of training teachers at the institutions of higher education.

Sincerely,

Dr. Paul B. Winkler
Executive Director
New Jersey Commission on Holocaust Education

PBW/jab

Remember

Remembrance is Continuing the Resistance

A Tribute to SISTER ROSE THERING, O.P

Sister Rose was a stalwart colleague in Christian/Jewish cooperation and understanding for many decades. She was also a valuable participant in Catholic/Protestant dialogue and cooperation. In both of these settings I had the opportunity to see her in action and to appreciate the calm strength of personality with which she furthered the work (and encouraged the timid). She was also participant in consultations sponsored by the National Council of Churches and the National Conference of Catholic Bishops.

Apart from mutual academic interests, I appreciated her interest in discussing contemporary religious and political developments. In our leadership circles we could always count on her good temper and sense of humor. These qualities were much valued when we were dealing with topics such as the Holocaust, where feelings frequently rose high.

The Director [Dr. Marcia Sachs Littell] of our Annual Scholars' Conferences on the Holocaust and the Churches, in which Sister Rose participated for decades, addressed her privately as "Sister Shoshanna," which delighted her. When the Annual Scholars' Conference moved to New York City under the auspices of the National Conference of Christians and Jews, and later to Philadelphia to meet at St. Joseph's University, Sister Rose was a regular participant. She was never shy – she always made her views known.

Sister Rose was also a valuable colleague in the National Christian Leadership Conference for Israel – a federation of several dozen national and state organizations. She took many groups to Israel for study and conference.

She will be greatly missed.

The Reverend Dr. Franklin H. Littell

Remembering Sister Rose Thering, OP

Scientists tell us that the flit of a butterfly wing in this country might cause a weather change in Africa. As I reflect upon this phenomenon, I cannot help but wonder what impact the “volcano” we know as Sister Rose has had on Jewish-Christian relationships during and beyond her lifetime. S. Rose was a vibrant, dedicated Racine Dominican since receiving her habit on August 4, 1938. I am honored to stand before you this evening representing our Community. We are proud to call Rose our sister. She was a good and faithful member. She was proud to be a Dominican. She loved her sisters in community. Geographically we were separated, but surely not in our hearts. We know she was a take charge person, a strong and driven woman with a sometimes feisty, spirited personality. How else would she have been able to do the work she accomplished in her lifetime? For the first years of her life in community, S. Rose was assigned to teach in Catholic elementary schools, then to direct young woman in High School who were considering a religious vocation, and finally to begin her doctoral studies. In 1968 Rose was recruited to establish an educational outreach program for the Institute of Judeo-Christian Studies here at Seton Hall University in New Jersey. She would minister here for the rest of her active life. We all know how determined she was to help others understand Jewish Christian relations. She was steadfast in trying to root out anti-Semitism and educate people to the evils of the Holocaust. When illness changed her life patterns, the move from her beloved Seton Hall to Siena Center in 2005 was bittersweet. Her final days at Siena Center would perhaps prove to be her greatest challenge. She was so very independent and her illness called her to dependency. However, in her weakness she continued to reach out, to educate, to care about others. An indefatigable lecturer, she spoke on Palm Sunday at Sacred Heart School of Theology in Hales Corners, Wisconsin, less than a month before her death. Rose has kept us alert to the atrocities of the Holocaust and to the ongoing Jewish Christian conflicts. We thank God for the ways she raised our consciousness, to educate and to inspire we, her sisters in community and in the larger world community. In her new life may she be at peace knowing her efforts are being carried on by such groups as we witness here tonight. Thank you to this community for so honoring S. Rose and for keeping her message, her zeal alive. We pray that through the Rose Thering Endowment Program her volcanic passion will continue to empower all who search for peace and justice in our ever changing world. Grabbing some of her spirit let us continue to work intensely for reconciliation and for peace.

Sharon Simon, OP
Racine Dominican
September 13, 2006

Intercessions

My dear friends,
let us join with one another in praying to God,
not only for our departed sister,
but also for believers everywhere,
for peace in the world,
and for ourselves.

Our response is: Lord, hear our prayer.

That all who preach the Word of God
may be given the strength to express in action
the word they proclaim.

We pray:

That those in public office may promote justice and peace.

We pray:

That those who bear the burden of pain in mind or body
may never feel forsaken by God.

We pray:

That God may deliver the soul of his servant Rose
from the powers of darkness.

We pray:

That God in his mercy may blot out all her offenses.
We pray:

That God may establish her in light and in peace.
We pray:

That God may call her to happiness
in the company of the saints.
We pray:

That God may welcome into his glory
those near and dear to us who have departed this life.
We pray:

That God may give a place in the kingdom of heaven
to all the faithful departed.
We pray:

Gathering all our prayers and praise into one
let us pray together the Lord's Prayer:

Our Father . . .

Theodore Bikel
1131 Alta Loma Road, #431
West Hollywood, CA 90069
Tel: 310-652-3002

Remembering Sister Rose

Lamed-vav are two Hebrew letters that add up to a numerical value of 36. Jewish legend has it that in every generation there are 36 righteous persons known as 'lamed-vavniks', noble yet humble persons whose good deeds make the world a better place. Chances are that those who fashioned the legend hardly had in mind a woman, a Christian, a nun. Yet that is exactly what Sister Rose's entire life turned out to be: the life of a lamed-vavnik and that is how she will be remembered by so many among us. What made Rose Thering like the other 35 righteous persons was that her actions and her words did indeed heal wounds, reform errant souls and straighten what had been crooked. What made her different was that she did none of this in the shadow of anonymity. Because she saw the world as it was, saw injustice and could not abide it, saw libel and slander that offended her to the depth of her being, she felt called to battle. And battle in our day, as we all know, must be waged publicly, openly, at times even defiantly. What she fought for – and against – in her own community may not have endeared her to her superiors but neither her sense of justice nor the selfless devotion which she brought to the fight could be denied. In the end no one, whether ally or adversary, could fail to respect her.

Sister Rose built bridges, created bonds between the Christian and Jewish communities. Not the superficial hands-across-the-table kind that sometimes passes for interfaith cooperation, but deep commitments that led to concrete action with lasting effects. She did more than many Jewish activists I know to free Jewish

prisoners of conscience from the Soviet gulag, she made sure that Christian students would get the benefit of proper Jewish studies, she wrote and spoke out against anti-Semitism in any form, whether in the street, in books or on film. She even had to endure the indignity of being arrested and strip searched in Vienna, Austria, for protesting the appointment of the country's new president because he had a Nazi past.

I feel moved to recite the Kaddish for Sister Rose. The Kaddish is known as the prayer for the dead, yet curiously it has not one word of death in it. It is rather a prayer of thanks to the Almighty for having permitted us to share time with one we loved and respected. The prayer was – still is – recited at the end of a lesson. How apt. With Sister Rose's life too, a lesson has come to an end. We must continue to honor the life and remember the lesson.

As we all know, Sister Rose wore a pendant that was a Cross and a Star of David closely intertwined. No one deserved that emblem more than she.

Theodore Bikel

MOURNER'S KADDISH

Glorified and sanctified be God's great name throughout the world which He has created according to His will. May He establish His kingdom in your lifetime and during your days, and within the life of the entire House of Israel, speedily and soon; and say, Amen.

May His great name be blessed forever and to all eternity.

Blessed and praised, glorified and exalted, extolled and honored, adored and lauded be the name of the Holy One, blessed be He, beyond all the blessings and hymns, praises and consolations that are ever spoken in the world; and say, Amen.

May there be abundant peace from heaven, and life, for us and for all Israel; and say, Amen.

He who creates peace in His celestial heights, may He create peace for us and for all Israel; and say, Amen.

Blessing of Aaron (Num 6:24-26)

May the Lord bless you and keep you.

R. Amen.

**May his face shine upon you,
and be gracious to you.**

R. Amen.

**May he look upon you with kindness,
and give you his peace.**

R. Amen.

**Let us go in peace
to love and serve the Lord.**

R. Thanks be to God.

ROBERT MENENDEZ
NEW JERSEY



United States Senate
WASHINGTON, D. C. 20510

September 13, 2006

Dear Friends,

I am sorry I could not be with you tonight as you gather in remembrance of Sister Rose Thering and reflect on her work and her contributions to our nation and the world.

Sister Rose was a great leader, who was dedicated to stamping out bigotry and intolerance and brought Christians and Jews together for increased mutual understanding. It was through her teachings and commitment to Jewish Christian Relations that she was able to build a bridge between people of different faiths and backgrounds, a difficult, but incredibly important task. We remember her as unconventional, feisty and strong willed -- always wanting to make principled decisions in support of her cause.

Sister Rose Thering leaves an incredible legacy, one that will remain alive in the memories of the many that loved and respected her.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Robert Menendez". The signature is fluid and cursive, with a large, sweeping "R" and "M".

Robert Menendez
United States Senator