

## **Donnybrook**

29 October 2021

### **Welcome**

This deep pain felt by St Paul is evident in the first reading. He was saddened that most of his fellow Jews did not come to recognise Jesus, as he had done, as the messiah, the risen one, the Lord. St Paul reflects on this in Romans 9-11 – the chapters are tortuous and difficult, following on the magnificent chapter 8.

### **Topic**

In tomorrow's reading, he arrives at a startling and very positive affirmation: God never takes back his gifts or revokes his choice. In other words, God's first chosen people are still God's chosen people.

### **Steps**

That positive affirmation is today the foundation of over fifty years of highly successful dialogue between Jews and Catholics. The dialogue is not aimed at conversion but at mutual understanding and respect. There was a conversion, of course: the Catholic Church repented of its antisemitism and underwent a change of heart.

The first friendly meeting between the pope and the chief rabbi in Rome took place in the time of John XXIII. He welcomed the chief rabbi to the Vatican with the words "I am Joseph, your brother", echoing the book of Genesis. Eventually, under John Paul II, the pope made the first ever official visit to the main synagogue in Rome and now it is traditional. Such normalisation of relationships is a great sign of hope.

### **Conclusion**

The benefits are clear. For the Jewish people, we have ceased to be anti-Semitic – a recognition that the Christian tradition contributed to the tragedy of the holocaust. They also try to understand us: an edition of the New Testament has been prepared called the Jewish Annotated New Testament, aimed not at conversion but at understanding. We as Christians benefit hugely – we discover our roots, what lies behind many of our practice and convictions, and we see at last what St Paul meant: God never takes back his gifts or revokes his choice. This is good news for everyone.