

Former Archdiocesan Director Receives Award from Interfaith Conference

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CATHOLIC HERALD STAFF

Fifty-three years ago, the Second Vatican Council created *Nostra Aetate*, a document which focuses on the Catholic Church's relationship with other religions, including the Jewish tradition.

Judi Longdin, the former director of the Office of Ecumenical and Interfaith Concerns at the Archdiocese of Milwaukee, took that document to heart in her role, forming bonds with the Jewish members of the Milwaukee community, among other faith traditions. On June 21, she received the *Imitatio Dei* (Imitation of God) award from the Catholic-Jewish Conference at the Jewish Community Relations Council's annual meeting.

In 2015, Longdin, with JCRC director Elana Kahn, developed a series of programs to celebrate the 50th anniversary of *Nostra Aetate*. Longdin organized a concert celebrating the Catholic-Jewish relationship at the Cathedral of St. John the Evangelist to end the year-long celebration. The last song was a modern setting for *Hashkiveinu*, a Jewish prayer that asks that we may lie down in peace at night and return to life the following day.

"I sat beside Judi, very moved, realizing that she had envisioned this moment more than a year before," Kahn reflected.

At the June 21 event, Karen Berman, cantor of Congregation Shalom, and Dean Daniels, the director of the Office for Worship at the archdiocese, sang "Let There Be Love," by Noah Aronson, a Jewish artist.

Longdin was moved to tears and shortly after, accepted the *Imitatio Dei* award. The award was presented by the Catholic-Jewish Conference, a conference created 43 years ago as a dialogue for Catholics and Jews. It is the second longest

Catholic-Jewish dialogue in the United States.

"Though we established the *Imitatio Dei* award almost a decade ago, this is only the third time we have presented it," said Richard Lux, one of the founding members of the Catholic-Jewish Conference and the first person to receive the *Imitatio Dei* award. "Named for the theological concept in Judaism and Christianity that urges us to model our deeds to be more like God, this is the Catholic-Jewish Conference's highest honor."

Longdin served as the director of the Archdiocese of Milwaukee's Office of Ecumenical and Interfaith Concerns from 1993 until her retirement in January. She has also served as a longtime co-chair of the Catholic-Jewish Conference, serves on the Lux Center for Catholic-Jewish Studies' Advisory Board, holds many positions in regional, national and global interfaith programs and has been a leader of the Interfaith Conference of Greater Milwaukee, where she founded the Muslim-Catholic Dialogue.


As Longdin accepted the award, she mentioned the "long and painful history" of the Jewish and Catholic communities, when Catholic dialogue and attitudes toward Jews were not always warm.

"But here in Milwaukee, we have built a relationship of trust," she said. "One that sees differences as a gift, rather than an impediment. This relationship has allowed us to move to a new level of dialogue where we can ask, 'What does the Lord require of us?' and struggle together for the answer, to act justly and love mercifully and to walk humbly with our God."

Although the rest of the annual meeting focused around anti-Semitism and the nation's border policy, leaders like Longdin make the community hopeful for the future.



▲ Judy Longdin (left), former director of the Office of Ecumenical and Interfaith Concerns at the archdiocese, received the *Imitatio Dei* award June 21.




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