

Jewish-Christian Dialogue at the Carmel of Saint-Rémy and the Skete of Stânceni, within the Saint Elijah Fraternity

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Mother Élisabeth and the Carmel of Saint-Rémy

First of all, we must recall Mother Élisabeth, radiant with a love drawn from the heart of our great God, which naturally blossomed into an ecumenical and interreligious prophecy. It was she who kindled in our hearts a love for Judaism. At the Carmel of Chung King (China), she understood the need for Christian Unity for proclaiming the Gospel and was introduced to interreligious dialogue with Confucianism, Taoism, and Buddhism. Her memoirs from China, published in French in 1998 under the titles *Partir vers la Chine, en Chine, À Dieu la Chine* – and translated into Romanian, English, and German – narrate this experience (1933–1952). In 1965, the year I entered the Carmel of Nancy, Mother Élisabeth – then prioress, after her expulsion from China by the Communist Party – dedicated herself to instructing the entire community in the major texts of the Second Vatican Council, which had just concluded: especially the Constitution on the Church *Lumen gentium*, the one on Divine Revelation *Dei Verbum*, the Decree on the Renewal and Adaptation of Religious Life *Perfectae caritatis*, the Decree on Ecumenism *Unitatis redintegratio*, the Decree on the Eastern Catholic Churches *Orientalium Ecclesiarum*, and the Declaration on the Relationship of the Church to Non-Christian Religions *Nostra aetate*. To do this, she invited Vatican II experts to the Carmel in Nancy, such as Jean Daniélou, Antoine Wenger, and even witnesses like Cardinal Slipyj. Inspired, she conceived the idea of founding a Byzantine Rite Carmel to foster communion with Orthodoxy through a shared liturgical office. Thus, the Carmel of Saint Elijah (Saint-Élie) was founded in Saint-Rémy (Côte d'Or) on May 11, 1974.

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The Saint Elijah Fraternity

From this Burgundy-based Carmel, which still lives in the Byzantine tradition, was born the Saint Elijah Fraternity on December 14, 1991, at the suggestion of the Orthodox theologian Olivier Clément, during a round table of Christians from various denominations. In connection with the monastery at Saint-Rémy, the fraternity's members share its double rootedness – Carmelite and ecumenical – according to their state of life, wherever they may be. They commit to working for Christian unity through prayer, in evangelical charity and truth, and strive to deepen their understanding of “the spiritual bond” between Jews and Christians. Very quickly, over 400 people from about twenty countries joined this primarily spiritual association. A triannual journal, *Mikhtav*, maintains a connection among the members. Each day, members of the fraternity are united in invoking the prophet Elijah: “*You are living, Lord, God of Israel, before whom I stand*” (cf. 1 Kings 17:1).

In 1980, a chance encounter with Emmanuel Eydoux (1913–1992), a Jewish poet from Marseille, led to twelve years of profound exchanges through his *Dialogue multiple*. He opened the Saint Elijah Fraternity to Judaism.

Jewish-Christian Themed Conferences

Other Jewish individuals and Christians involved in Jewish-Christian dialogue came to Saint-Rémy to give lectures during the feast of the Prophet Elijah, on July 20. These include: Rabbi Sibony (Dijon), Jewish thought specialist Raphaël Cohen, Archpriest Alexandre Abraham Winogradsky, Caucasus expert Bernard Outtier, Biblical scholar Jacques Goldstain OSB, Franz Rosenzweig expert Didier Gonneaud, Édouard Divry OP, Sandrine Caneri, Historian Carol Iancu, Members of a Polish group committed to dialogue, Vanda Gufoni of the D.A.V.A.R. Association, Former AJCF president Jacqueline Cuche, Menahem Macina, philosopher Cristiana Dobner OCD, etc.

Most of them also came to the Carmelite skete of Stânceni, founded in 1994 in Romania, along with: The Jewish community of Târgu Mureș and its presidents Alexandre Ausch and later Vasile Dub, The Chief Rabbi of Bucharest, Rafael Shaffer, Felicia Taubmann, Christian figures such as Louis-Marie Coudray OSB, secretary for relations with Judaism for the French Bishops' Conference, Michel Remaud, director of the Jerusalem Jewish Studies Center, Alexandru Ioniță, researcher at the Ecumenical Institute of Sibiu, etc.

Most of these conferences are published in *Mikhtav*, which also reviews numerous books on Judaism. There are also Romanian translations of French books by Michel Remaud, Jean-Miguel Garrigues, and others.

An international symposium is often held during the feast of the Transfiguration at the Stânceni skete focused on Jewish-Christian dialogue themes: *Identity of Israel and the Church*, *50 Years of Nostra Aetate*, *Jews and Christians Together for Social Ethics*, etc.

Pilgrimages of the *Saint Elijah* Fraternity in the Footsteps of Jewish Communities of...

Poland. The general secretary of the Polish Council of Jews and Christians kept us informed of their activities. In 2010, she reported on *Simchat Torah* celebrations in Warsaw. In 2011, she recounted a prayer march commemorating the Warsaw Ghetto Uprising. With the director of the *Joannicum Ecumenical Center* in Warsaw, a Polish group came one year to the Carmel of Saint-Rémy and another year to the Stânceni skete. In response, in 2008, a pilgrimage was organized to Poland. A Franco-Romanian group from the Fraternity visited Jewish heritage sites in Lublin, Warsaw, Krakow, and Auschwitz-Birkenau.

Ukraine. Two years later, a pilgrimage to Ukraine took place. The group was welcomed by the rabbi in the synagogue of Chernivtsi, visited Jewish Lviv, prayed at its Holocaust memorial near the Janowska camp, sang at the Beis Aharon B'Yisrael synagogue, and visited the tombs of the Baal Shem Tov in Medzhybizh and Rabbi Levi Isaac in Berdychiv. They also held a moment of silence at Babi Yar.

Romania. We held moments of prayer in the Jewish cemeteries near the Stânceni skete (Stânceni, Toplița, Reghin, Sărmășel, Târgu Mureș...), and visited synagogues in Borsec, Gheorgheni, Târgu Mureș, Piatra Neamț, Mediaș, Cluj, bearing witness to once-thriving communities. At Târgu Mureș, we visited the synagogue's adjacent museum and Holocaust memorials, and participated in services – particularly *Berechit*.

Romania Judaica (May 2025). Thirty members of the *Amitié judéo-chrétienne de France* (AJCF) – came to Romania under the guidance of Professor Carol Iancu to explore Romanian Judaism. The group stopped at the Stânceni skete for fruitful exchanges. Among them were AJCF president Jean-Dominique Durand, vice-presidents Anne-Marie Reijnen and Mireille Hadas-Lebel, and a former president of *Conseil représentatif des institutions juives de France* CRIF (Representative Council of Jewish Institutions in France).

Editorial note

“Friend of the Jewish Communities of Romania”

A significant moment occurred on May 19, 2008, when Mother Éliane printed a manuscript dedicated to the Jewish community of Târgu Mureș and its president and vice-president: *À la louange de sa gloire (To the Praise of His Glory)*. This study includes the discussion of more than 320 problematic texts from the Byzantine Office regarding the mystery of Israel and the Church, along with proposed revisions. In 2011, she was awarded the medal “Friend of the Jewish Communities of Romania,” in the presence of the late Isidore Iancu of the Dorohoi Jewish community, members of the Jewish community of Târgu Mureș, and the Saint Elijah Fraternity, including Metropolitan Serafim Joantă. The medal was given for sustained activity within the Saint Elijah Fraternity aimed at understanding the spiritual link between Jews and Christians, honouring Jewish values, developing spiritual relationships with Jews, combating antisemitism and Holocaust denial, studying anti-Jewish texts in the Byzantine Office (dedicated to the memory of 5,493 Jews from Târgu Mureș killed during the Shoah), for attachment to the local Jewish community, and for reciprocal participation in events and ceremonies.