

## Who Are the People of God?

This is still an unresolved theological issue. For so long the resolute answer of many was: the Roman Catholic Church is the people of God. However, the Second Vatican Council’s Decree on Ecumenism (*Unitatis Redintegratio*) opened the Church’s understanding to include all Christian denominations, paraphrasing Ephesians 4:4–5: “There is one body and one Spirit, just as you were called to the one hope of your calling; one Lord, one faith, one Baptism” (UR 2). The council went even further in the Dogmatic Constitution on the Church (*Lumen Gentium*), “calling together a people made up of Jew and Gentile, making them one, not according to the flesh but in the Spirit. This was to be the new People of God” (LG 9).

To be united with Protestants is one thing; to be united with Jews is quite another. For centuries, many interpreted the New Testament to say that the Jews lost favor with God. Such thinking supported—even caused—various forms of anti-Semitism, ethnic and religious persecution, and killings. We realized how wrong this thinking was. Vatican II quotes

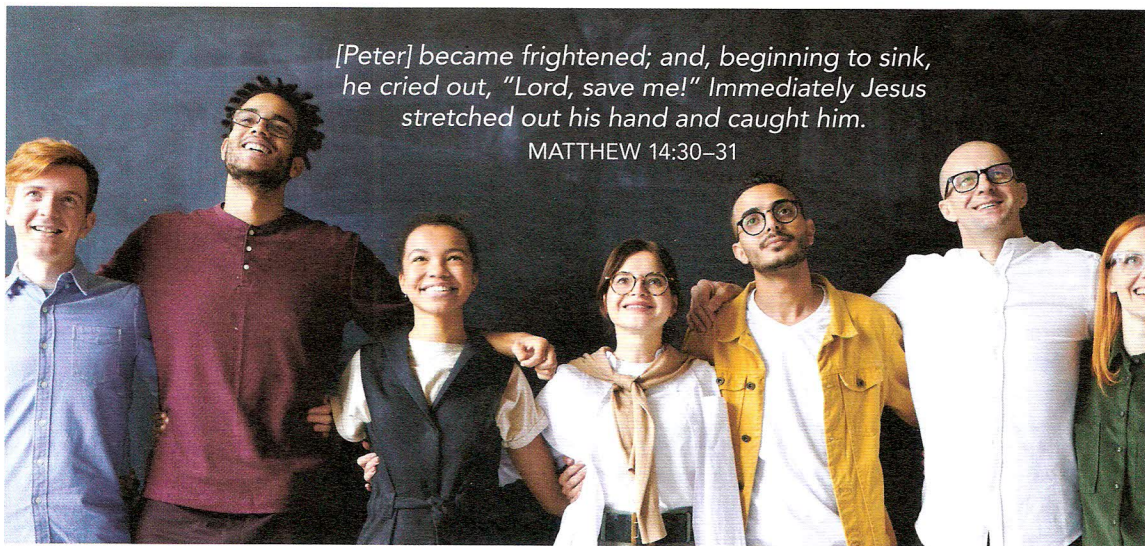
today’s second reading and later states: “This sacred synod wants to foster and recommend...mutual understanding and respect which is the fruit, above all, of biblical and theological studies as well as of fraternal dialogues” (Declaration on the Relationship of the Church to Non-Christian Religions [*Nostra Aetate*], 4).

We may have corrected some grievous errors in this matter, but we have not gotten much further than Paul did in resolving the issue. However, he experienced “great sorrow and constant anguish in my heart” (Romans 9:2) because of the separation. Do we?

—Sr. Dianne Bergant, CSA

### FOR Reflection

- ▣ The original followers of Jesus were simply different kinds of Jews.
- ▣ Much of our Christian religious tradition is grounded in the Old Testament.



[Peter] became frightened; and, beginning to sink, he cried out, “Lord, save me!” Immediately Jesus stretched out his hand and caught him.

MATTHEW 14:30–31

