

RABBI LEON KLENICKI

(1930 – 2009)



On January 27, 2009 the national and international Jewish-Christian dialogue lost a committed pioneer in interfaith relations when Rabbi Leon Klenicki died after a lengthy battle with multiple myeloma.

The Center for Christian-Jewish Learning is greatly indebted to this major leader who helped to implement the vision of the Second Vatican Council in the United States and internationally, as it applies to Jews and Catholics. It is the sustained efforts of such giants as Rabbi Klenicki that laid the foundation for the work we are able to do today through our center.

A native of Argentina, Rabbi Klenicki was ordained at Hebrew Union College-Jewish Institute of Religion in Cincinnati. As interfaith affairs director of the Anti-Defamation League (ADL) in New York, from 1984 to 2000, he served as ADL's co-liaison with the Vatican, lectured at several Catholic universities and seminaries, and published numerous books and articles on Catholic-Jewish issues in English, Hebrew, Spanish and Portuguese.

After coming to the United States, Rabbi Klenicki continued to play an important role in Catholic-Jewish relations in Latin America. In the 1990s he also helped develop programs of Catholic-Jewish understanding in Poland.

In recognition of his historic contributions, Rabbi Klenicki was made a Papal Knight by Pope Benedict XVI in 2007. The knighting took place during a ceremony at the Vatican's Mission to the United Nations. Cardinal Sean O'Malley of Boston presided at Klenicki's knighting ceremony.

MAY HIS MEMORY BE FOR A BLESSING