

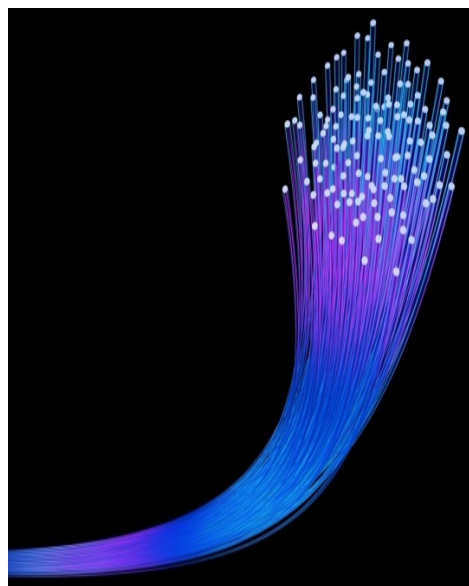
# Encounters in Ecumenism

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Jacob, son of Isaac, son of Abraham, had a twin brother Esau. They fought even in the womb, the story goes. Esau was the first born, but Jacob was on his heels from moment of their birth. Esau grew up to be a large burly man who loved hunting and was probably a very intimidating warrior. Jacob, on the other hand, was a trickster of sorts. He won the birthright from Esau in exchange for a bowl of stew, tricked his blind father into thinking he was Esau to get Isaac's blessing, and later won a large part of his father-in-law's animals. Because of all this, Jacob was not the most loved among others.

At one point, he returns from his father-in-law's and comes to meet Esau. In response, Esau sets out with 400 warriors; it looked like Esau was going to crush this trickster once and for all! The night before he is to encounter Esau, he sends his family across the river, and he is left alone with a messenger from God in human form. They fight long into the night until the angel realized he cannot win so he strikes Jacob's hip and injures him. Despite the injury, Jacob manages to pin the angel and prevail the story says.

After this encounter, Jacob is changed. The change is symbolized in his name; he is no longer Jacob, but Israel – one who contends with God. The next day he encounters his brother. Rather than fighting, they embrace. Rather than hating, they love. Interestingly, though, rather than walking together as fellow warriors, Jacob says to Esau, "Let my lord, then, go on ahead of me, while I proceed more slowly at the pace of the livestock before me and at the pace of my children" (Genesis 34:14). He is not a conqueror in sense of a warrior, but conqueror with wounds. He doesn't ride triumphantly in front, but walks at the pace of the slowest among them. He has encountered the divine, and now he walks with the least rather than the greatest. (paraphrase of Rabbi Rami Shapiro's talk at Temple B'nai Tikvah, Friday, November 20, 2009)



## Scripture to contemplate

Let my lord, then, go on ahead of me, while I proceed more slowly at the pace of the livestock before me and at the pace of my children (Genesis 34:14)

## Questions to Ponder

- Have I felt a deep hurt that stays with me (the thorn in my side to use the words of St. Paul)?
- Have I embraced this hurt and found a deeper connection with my fellow human beings (especially the weak and the lowly)?

## Ecumenism in Action

Share ecumenical/interfaith activities happening in your parish. Deadline: 5<sup>th</sup> of each month. E-mail Fr. James at [ecumenism@rcdiocese-calgary.ab.ca](mailto:ecumenism@rcdiocese-calgary.ab.ca) or call 218-5521 with details.

Nov. 26 @ 5:30 p.m. Calgary Says No To Hate. A peaceful response to the horrible graffiti directed toward Calgary's Jewish community. Boyce Theatre (1410 Olympic Way SE).

Mark your calendars: Following in the Footsteps of St. John of the Cross: A Silence and Awareness Meditation Retreat; Friday March 5 to Sunday March 14, 2010; FCJ Christian Life Centre. Register before December 1, 2009 to receive a saving of \$100. Register at [www.wisdomcentre.ca](http://www.wisdomcentre.ca).

## Commission Members

Fr. Avinash Colaco – Vice-Chair, Deacon Gary Haney, Harry Ziel, Fr. James Hagel – Director, Joel Christie, Leslie Padula – Chair, Maureen Condon Horon, Mike Heimbecker.