

Cardinal who led in Catholic-Jewish relations dies at age 86

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William Henry Keeler, a Roman Catholic cardinal known for ecumenical and interfaith engagement and for his responsible handling of the sexual abuse crisis, died March 23 at age 86 in Catonsville, Maryland.

Keeler was archbishop of Baltimore from 1989 until his retirement in 2007, and from 1992 to 1995 served as elected president of the U.S. Conference of Catholic Bishops.

He received the praise of survivors of clergy sexual abuse and their advocates for being one of the earliest bishops to publicly release the names of priests who were “credibly accused,” according to the *Catholic Review* of Baltimore, one of the places the 57 names were published.

“The problems now facing some other dioceses didn’t really happen here in the same way,” Daniel Medinger, who was editor and associate publisher of the *Catholic Review* at the time, told the publication. “There wasn’t the perception of cover-up.”

In the 2000s, Keeler played a role in having [U.S. Catholic leaders join the ecumenical group Christian Churches Together](#), which includes evangelicals, Pentecostals, mainline Protestants, historically black churches, and Orthodox Christians. (The Catholic bishops had not been part of the National Council of Churches.)

Keeler was also an adviser at the Second Vatican Council, when [the bishops adopted *Nostra aetate* \(“In Our Time”\) on the church’s relationship with Judaism](#).

A. James Rudin, the American Jewish Committee’s senior interreligious adviser, [wrote in a commentary about his four decades of friendship with Keeler](#), including coleading trips to Israel. Rudin praised Keeler as “a gifted and energetic man who loved his church and dedicated his life to Catholic-Jewish reconciliation and authentic dialogue.”