

label and create the package in the shape of a violin case."

The initial marketing focus will be on Israel, the United States and Canada, where the Janets believe the potential market is about a third, or 3 million, of all Jews living in those countries. They hope to roll out the first products by Chanukah.

Design Plus' contract with the IPO gives the company the authority to run the program and allows it to grant licenses to manufacturers and distributors of IPO products.

"We're the brand keepers," explained Carol, who is doing a lot of traveling these days in Europe and Israel in search of just the right licensees for the project.

Design Plus has a lot of experience in related projects. Carol, originally an electrical engineer, began the company as a way to keep her career alive when she and Meyer were starting a family. Initially, she did brand designs for companies like Hallmark and Crayola in South Africa. Periodically, Carol traveled to the United States, where she made contacts and built relationships with consumer product giants like Mattel and Harley Davidson.

In the early 1990s social instability and violence erupted in South Africa following Nelson Mandela's release from prison and his subsequent election as president of that troubled nation. The Janets were robbed twice, with the thieves cleaning them completely out of clothing and computer equipment.

One relationship from their growing business — with Coca-Cola — proved to be the couple's ticket to America.

"Coke asked if we'd like to help with the Olympics doing product extension development," said Carol. "Would we ever," she told them. And with no promise of future business beyond a six-month contract or even help with working papers, Meyer and Carol, along with their daughters Elisha and Abigail, who were then 15 and 12, moved to Atlanta.

Design Plus boasts a client resume that includes numerous Fortune 500 giants like Anheuser-Busch and Taco Bell. Just before the first movie came out, the company created the very first Harry Potter merchandise for

Warner Brothers.

Husband and wife have worked exceptionally well as a business team, with Carol being the "streetwise" creative talent, while Meyer, an MBA, tends to the business and financial side.

"The balance is phenomenal," said Carol.

Carol says she also enjoys working with smaller, emerging businesses like that of "Goodbye Girl" actress Marsha Mason, for whom Design Plus is helping to stylize and market a line of herbal remedies.

The business has evolved to where they are able to take

on a project like the IPO, which is more out of love for Israel and the orchestra than for their monetary

cut, says Carol. One ulterior motive, she confessed, is that daughter Abigail will soon be making *aliyah*.

"We always said that we would have work wherever our children lived," Carol said.

In the meantime, the Janets are busy looking for licensees and forming partnerships for the complex venture. Locally, their friend, Sam Schatten, former president of Ahavath Achim, is contributing as an advisor to the project.

And Carol is particularly thrilled about the addition of one well-known Judaica designer and manufacturer to the efforts. Michael Strauss of Michael Strauss Silversmiths in New York has agreed to participate in the sourcing and manufacturing of limited-edition items such as hand-made sterling silver reproductions of museum pieces of Judaica.

Strauss says he likes the project because it supports two things he loves: Israel and its orchestra.

"We American Jews really have to help promote Israel not just as country with war issues, but one that has tremendous culture," said Strauss.

Yoel Levi says that many other major orchestras — including groups in New York, Chicago and Atlanta — all sell "beautiful merchandise" at their concert halls.

But there is one difference, says Carol, which makes this idea different.

"No other orchestra," she said, "has an international fan base, driven by Zionism, who will purchase lifestyle merchandise worldwide." □



**ISRAEL  
PHILHARMONIC  
ORCHESTRA**  
MUSIC DIRECTOR:  
ZUBIN MEHTA

# An Opening for Dialogue

## *Jewish groups welcome archbishop as 'peacemaker'*

By **FRAN NACHMAN PUTNEY**  
*The Jewish Times*

A year ago, the release of Mel Gibson's film, "The Passion of the Christ," had Jews everywhere worrying about whether or not it would fuel anti-Semitism and how the movie might impact relations between Catholics and Jews.

This year, however, the appointment of Wilton D. Gregory, 57, as Atlanta's new archbishop, gives Jewish Georgians a good reason for optimism, say Jewish leaders.

"I think he is an extremely gracious and open church and community leader," said Margo Dix Gold, community relations director at the Jewish Federation of Greater Atlanta. "His credentials and reputation certainly give every indication that he is open and welcoming to interfaith communication, cooperation and interaction to benefit our Atlanta community."

About 50 individuals, representing a cross-section of the Jewish community, formally welcomed Gregory March 18 at a luncheon in his honor at Ahavath Achim Synagogue in Buckhead. The event was co-hosted by the American Jewish Committee (AJC) Atlanta chapter, the Anti-Defamation League, the Atlanta Rabbinical Association, and the Community Relations Committee of the Jewish Federation of Greater Atlanta.

Gregory is an African American and Illinois native who comes to Atlanta from Chicago, where he served as a bishop in Belleville, Ill., for more than a decade. From 2001 to 2004, he was president of the U.S. Conference of Catholic Bishops, and was the first African American to hold that position. Gregory was ordained into the priesthood in 1973.

At the luncheon, Ron Segal, associate rabbi at Temple Sinai and head of AJC interfaith committee, introduced Gregory as a "peacemaker."

Gregory thanked the hosting organizations for the opportunity to meet members in Atlanta's Jewish community.

"Communities are enhanced when people of faith come together," said Gregory. "I hope our relationship will grow strong."

He spoke about his Chicago roots, his relationship with regional and national Jewish leaders, and said that he had twice been to the Yad Vashem Holocaust memorial in Jerusalem.

In talking about the challenges before him as the leader of the Roman Catholic Church in a region where that church is not the dominant religious institution, Gregory noted: "God has given me some experience in being a minority."

After he spoke, Gregory fielded questions, which included his thoughts on the relationship between Judeo-Christian and Islamic clergy, his own priorities for the Catholic Church here and how he views immigrants' rights.

He responded to a question about anti-Semitism among some foreign-born Hispanics, by saying: "If our members are failing to live up to our faith, I'll call them on that." □

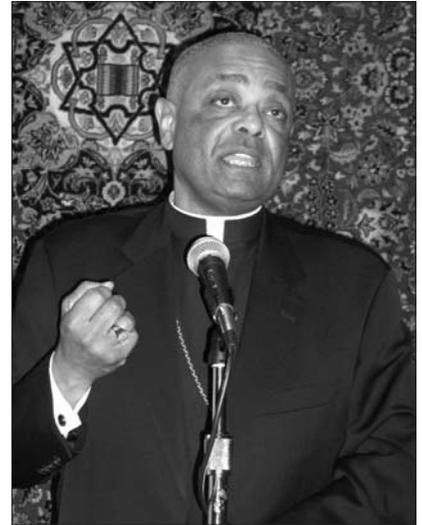


PHOTO COURTESY AJC

**The Jewish community welcomed Archbishop Wilton Gregory at a luncheon at Ahavath Achim Synagogue.**

Judy Marx, the AJC's associate director, predicts Gregory will be "a remarkable partner for us. The feeling I got was sincerity and integrity and a willingness to commit his energy and time, not only to his own parishioners, but to the Atlanta community."

Gregory was installed as Atlanta's sixth archbishop on Jan. 17. He succeeds John F. Donoghue, who held the post for 11 years before retiring.

Gold, who was present at Gregory's installation at the Georgia Convention Center, where thousands attended, said she was impressed with his opening remarks there, which were in Spanish and an obvious overture to the large percentage of Hispanic Catholics.

The Archdiocese of Atlanta has a growing Catholic population of about 500,000, according to Gregory. Atlanta's Jewish population is estimated at between 85,000 and 100,000.

Welcoming the new archbishop and building a positive relationship with him are important, because "the Jewish community lives in an interfaith world and we must continue to have relationships with all [religious] leaders," said Sherry Frank, the AJC's regional executive director.

Frank added that "never in history have we had a pope that was as friendly to Jews, which has reverberated to the whole Catholic Church as a voice against anti-Semitism." Gregory says he believed the pope's attitudes emanate from his background growing up in Poland and seeing the Holocaust first-hand.

Shelley Rose, associate director of the ADL, said her impression is that Gregory will be someone with whom the Jewish community "can dialogue and share concerns and know they'll be listened to."

Marx concurs. The next time something like "The Passion" comes around, "the Jewish community now can feel like we can pick up the phone," she said. "In words and deed he has indicated that he wants to continue to talk." □