

Miklos Kallos In The Synagogue



I can't remember on which occasion this photo was taken. Maybe it was in 1998 or 1999. It could have been a 'Holocaust Memorial Day' where I talk as the community president.

Here's my situation now. In 1997, they proposed me for the presidency of the Jewish Communities in Cluj and they elected me. Are you familiar with the Beckett syndrome? Do you know Beckett?

There was a play, and there was a film too. So Beckett was a close friend of Prince Henry of England. Both of them were steady drinkers and womanizers and they never missed a party.

At a certain point, Henry made Beckett the head of the Anglican Church, as he wanted to have a trustworthy man up there. But Beckett took his position seriously and really began to act like the head of the church.

So when Henry asked him to separate him from his wife, he refused. And he was killed because of it eventually. It's a very interesting thing.

This is what the Beckett syndrome means: when you are appointed in a certain position and you try to take that position seriously. And this is pretty much what happened to me too.

In what way? They were in for a surprise when they elected me president of the Community. Since we're at it, I should tell you that I never denied my Jewishness; I couldn't have, even if I had wanted to.

I didn't turn religious or something, but I did tell them, at the very first community meeting, about my conviction that religion was the factor which played the most important part in preserving the Jewish identity throughout the entire history of the Jewish people.

I am the first to admit this. And I told them that, as president, I would do everything within my power to support the religious life. And this is what I really tried to do.

But the community is getting really old. Unfortunately, people began to disappear one after another. And most of the ones who knew how to perform a religious service are among the departed.

I had learned how to do this in my childhood and my adolescence, so volunteered myself to officiate on Saturday and on holidays. It's like a sort of folklore to me.

I don't do it out of faith or out of conviction. But I'm one of the few who know how to do it, so here I am. I'm not even religious - you won't see me praying in the synagogue. I won't act, I won't pretend.

So I stayed what I was before, a free thinker, but I perform these services...