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CONVERSATIONS BETWEEN THE PONTIFICAL COUNCIL FOR PROMOTING CHRISTIAN UNITY AND THE SALVATION ARMY

ADDRESS OF GENERAL ANDRÉ COX OF THE SALVATION ARMY GENERAL TO POPE FRANCIS
12 December 2014

Your Holiness,

It is a very great honour to be able to meet with you personally. On behalf of Salvationists living in 126 countries I bring messages of cordial greeting, but more importantly offer assurance of prayer support for the tremendous responsibilities that God has entrusted to you.

Through many of your public utterances, alongside the actions you are taking to address various matters within the Catholic Church, we clearly recognise your Christlikeness as you seek faithfully to be a true minister of the Gospel. This example of holiness transcends denominational boundaries and we are grateful to God for every evidence of His Spirit abiding in your life.

Your commitment in the fight against poverty, injustice and corruption is something that resonates strongly in the hearts of Salvationists. Speaking entirely personally, this aligns completely with my own deeply held convictions. Like you Salvationists firmly believe that the church, being the body of Christ, must reflect the mind of Christ. As such, we should be a welcoming community that in practical ways exerts a redemptive presence within God's good, though fallen, creation.

As Salvationists, we are keenly aware that our places of Christian worship are not retreats from the world for a select few. Rather, they are bridgeheads of God's Kingdom into the world – Jesus-centred, grace-filled communities serving others selflessly. Our churches are places in which Christ's disciples can be resourced, empowered and enabled to fulfil the Great Commission – in word and in deed. Paul, in writing to the Philippians, helpfully testifies, "What is more, I consider everything a loss because of the surpassing worth of knowing Christ Jesus my Lord, for whose sake I have lost all things. I consider them garbage; that I may gain Christ."

Catholics and Salvationists are united in affirming the dignity and value of each human life, recognising that all are created in the image of God. We readily acknowledge how our shared desire to be faithful to God's calling upon our lives binds us in common endeavour. We share concern about and action against ongoing societal evils such as slavery; human trafficking; addiction; and stigmatisation of those who are HIV+. Countless Catholic Priests and Salvation Army officers live and minister side by side, together serving some of the world's poorest and most marginalised people. Our complementarity stems from faith-filled action that, for Catholics and Salvationists, is motivated by an obedience to Jesus Christ for the greater glory of God.

Alongside the instances of Salvationists and Catholics working closely together, I wonder whether there may also be opportunities on occasion for us to speak with a united voice. One such example of a shared message is our recently published book, "Conversations with the Catholic Church." It is my pleasure and privilege this morning to present you with a copy. Not only is this a record of most enriching and fruitful dialogue between 2007 and 2012, I believe this publication positions us perfectly to take our discussions further. It is my hope and prayer that we will not only walk alongside each other, edifying though that is, but will walk together as credible witnesses to the truth that Jesus is Lord. Thank you very much indeed for so graciously meeting with me today. I consider this a most precious privilege.

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[<http://www.christianunity.va/content/unitacristiani/en/dialoghi/sezione-occidentale/salvation-army/other-documents-and-events/general-cox-s-address-to-pope-francis.html>]