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**SPEECH ON THE OCCASION OF THE CONFERRAL OF THE CANONICAL PRIVATE
JURIDICAL PERSONALITY TO CROSS CATHOLIC OUTREACH**

Vatican City - September 18, 2015

Dear Friends,

Dear Eminence,

On behalf of the Pontifical Council *Cor Unum*, it is a joy for me to welcome all of you here. In a special way, I am pleased to warmly welcome back His Eminence Cardinal Robert Sarah, who was the president of *Cor Unum* until he was named Prefect of the Congregation for Divine Worship and the Discipline of the Sacraments last November. I also greet Mr. Jim Cavnar, president of Cross Catholic Outreach, who as one of the founders initiated Cross' collaboration with *Cor Unum*. At the same time, I wish to extend a special greeting to the benefactors who are here in Rome on a pilgrimage to the tomb of St. Peter. On behalf of the Church, I thank you for your generous support throughout these years, which not only opens great possibilities to the suffering and needy, but most importantly it is an eloquent reminder of God's constant care and solicitude for them.

We are gathered here today to grant the canonical private juridical personality to Cross Catholic Outreach as an international Catholic charitable organization within the Catholic Church. This is a significant and historical event both for our Pontifical Council and for Cross Catholic Outreach.

As you already know, *Cor Unum* is the Dicastery of the Holy See responsible for the realization of the Holy Father's charitable intentions, particularly when disaster strikes somewhere in the world. We also work to foster the catechesis of charity and encourage the faithful to give a concrete witness to evangelical charity. In the past years, our work has also been directed at sharing a reflection with the Bishops of the local churches on the nature of Christian charity, especially reflected in the Encyclical *Deus Caritas Est* and in a juridical way in the *Motu Proprio Intima Ecclesia Natura* on the Service of Charity. Added to our existing task of orienting and coordinating the organizations and charitable activities promoted by the Catholic Church, this *Motu Proprio* has given to our Pontifical Council the competence of the canonical establishment of charitable agencies at the international

level. Therefore, today's solemn conferral of the canonical private juridical personality to Cross Catholic Outreach for us is historically significant because you are the first charitable agency with whom we exercise this competence.

For Cross Catholic Outreach, receiving this canonical approval also has profound significance for your mission and activity in carrying out God's compassionate love to the needy. From the beginning of your foundation in 2001, Cross Catholic Outreach has been dedicated to the service of alleviating material and spiritual destitutions through programs that promote the Christian and human integral development of peoples in developing countries. Also, through concrete initiatives of parish visits, educational programs and other activities, you are helping to educate American Catholics of the serious needs worldwide and presented them with a reliable channel to become personally involved through prayer and financial support.

In 2003, Cross Catholic Outreach entered into collaboration with *Cor Unum*. Throughout these years, this relationship has provided a direct and immediate response to emergency situations and has made an important impact in the lives of the suffering in many parts of the world through various projects of feeding the hungry, providing medicines to the sick, responding to the needs of refugees, and being a support in times of natural disaster. I thank you wholeheartedly for this cooperation.

We are aware that many of the projects implemented by Cross Catholic Outreach have the essential characteristic of evangelization, that is, bearing witness to God's love through charity. In fact, this is one of the guiding principles of your institution: "to look for those who effectively meet the spiritual needs of the poor through appropriate evangelization and spiritual formation as well as their material needs". This is an important dimension of your charitable activity that will continue to be a relevant contribution to the Church's charitable mission. For today, the real suffering of mankind is not the lack of material needs required to live a dignified life. His most debilitating hunger and thirst is the absence of God in his life and the lack of authentic love, the love that was revealed to us through Jesus Christ.

Pope Francis is insistently inviting the whole Church to enter into a dimension of profound service to humanity, especially the poor and suffering. He is helping us to rediscover that the service of charity, love towards the poor and marginalized, is part of the integral mission of the Church. This charitable mission of the Church is a fight against

material and spiritual destitutions, whether it be the lack of basic living conditions opposed to human dignity like food and housing or the dire consequences of rejecting God in one's life. This mission of the Church truly consists of restoring to the human person his vocation as a child of God. Without this fundamental dimension, our charitable work reduces itself to a mere philanthropy or secular humanitarian activity that leaves aside the Gospel. In alleviating these material and spiritual destitutions that bring suffering to those who are touched by them, the Church will always pay attention to the affected persons. Behind such phenomenon of misery and suffering, there is the human face. The Church's mission is to help rediscover the face of Christ in the suffering, the poor and the abandoned. We serve these people and in them the Son of God, who wanted to be poor in order to save humanity. Pope Francis reminds us of this important spiritual dimension in *Evangelii Gaudium*: "I want to say, with regret, that the worst discrimination which the poor suffer is the lack of spiritual care. The great majority of the poor have a special openness to the faith; they need God and we must not fail to offer them his friendship, his blessing, his word, the celebration of the sacraments and a journey of growth and maturity in the faith" (EG n. 200).

The conferral of the canonical private juridical personality to Cross Catholic Outreach has a great significant for you not only because you have now an important date and event to add into the annals of your history, but it gives a whole new dimension to your identity and mission. From here onwards, the Church's mission of manifesting God's love through charity truly becomes your mission. You have the task of assisting the Church to be attentive to the cry of those who are suffering and in need and to bear witness to the charitable mission that Jesus has entrusted to the Church. Through your spiritual and corporal works of mercy and love, the Church reaches out to countless people who are able to recognize and sense God's love.

For the Church, the point of departure of all her charitable activity is the experience of God who inspires charity and helps us to serve every human person as God has served him. It is a service that incarnates the mercy that is at the heart of the Gospel's message. Therefore, for Cross Catholic Outreach, this private canonical juridical personality will help to root its identity more concretely within the Church's mission so as to be able to respond with greater dedication and spirit of service to the suffering and marginalized. As we continue to journey on this path, let us renew our commitment and collaboration to foster the charitable witness and mission of the Church so that people can experience God's

compassionate love. Cross Catholic Outreach can offer a remarkable contribution to this task. We pray that Cross Catholic Outreach along with those who are committed to this charitable service may come to find Christ in those they serve and in their charitable actions discover that Christ is the wellspring of life and love. We also pray for those who are recipients of such charity may come to recognize that through such human instruments, Christ enters into their lives to cure the wounds of their body and soul. As you embark on this journey as collaborators of the Church's charitable mission, I wish to assure you of *Cor Unum's* availability, closeness and support.