

CATHOLIC COMMUNITY RELATIONS COUNCIL

Testimony of Joseph Rosenberg, Director of the Catholic Community Relations Council In Support of Reso. 801-A, before the City Council Committee on Cultural Affairs September 16, 2015 1:00 P.M.

Good morning Chair Van Bramer and Members of the City Council Committee on Cultural Affairs. I am Joseph Rosenberg, Executive Director of the Catholic Community Relations Council. I represent the Archdiocese of New York and the Diocese of Brooklyn on local legislative and policy issues and am pleased to be before you today in strong support of Resolution 801-A, praising Pope Francis for his lifelong pursuit of peace among all peoples and commending him on his upcoming historic visit to New York City.

We are thankful to Speaker Melissa Mark-Viverito, Councilmember Paul Vallone and the sponsors of this Resolution for their initiative and interest in officially honoring Pope Francis on his trip to New York City. The goal of the Pope's visit to the United States is the World Meeting of Families in Philadelphia but before going there he will stop in Cuba, Washington D.C. and New York City. Although Pope Francis's time in New York City will consist of only 36 hours, his schedule is of a whirlwind nature focusing on many of the causes that he has focused upon throughout the decades and especially during his 2 ½ years since assuming the office of the successor of St. Peter in 2013.

The places Pope Francis will visit were chosen by him. In addition to Vespers at St. Patrick's Cathedral and a Mass for 20,000 at Madison Square Garden, he will address the General Assembly of the United Nations, make a prayerful visit to the 9/11 Memorial and then participate in an Inter-Religious Service with the leading representatives of many faiths at the 9/11 Memorial and Museum. Pope Francis will visit a third grade classroom at Our Lady Queen of Angels School in East Harlem where he will spend time with third and fourth grade students and principals from four Harlem schools including St. Ann's School, St. Charles Borromeo School and St. Paul's School and will be greeted outside the school by hundreds of students representing over 200 Catholic Schools. He will then meet with hundreds of immigrants and refugees who have been helped by Catholic Charities including unaccompanied immigrant minors, whose welfare has been a long standing and absolute priority of Catholic Charities, and who have benefited in so many ways from being a major focus of your far reaching legislative and funding initiatives.

Much has been written about what people are calling the "Francis Effect". In the words of Cardinal Dolan, the Pope's "sincerity, warmth, simplicity, joy and humility have captivated a world . . ." And although many are seeking a worldly message from Pope Francis, quoting again Cardinal Dolan, "he is not coming as a politician, an economist, a scientist, an ethicist, a social commentator. Pope Francis will come as a pastor, an evangelist, an apostle."

The Archdiocese of New York and the Diocese of Brooklyn are pleased that the New York City Council is part of this warm welcome.

Thank you.

Testimony on Behalf of Res. No. 801-A
Praising Pope Francis for his lifelong pursuit of peace among all peoples and
Commending him on his upcoming historic visit to New York City
September 16, 2015

Thank you for this opportunity to give testimony in support of Resolution 801-A praising Pope Francis for his lifelong pursuit of peace among all peoples and commending him on his upcoming historic visit to New York City.

I am Rosemarie Pace, Director of Pax Christi Metro New York, a regional chapter of the international Catholic peace movement. It is my honor to affirm this Resolution unconditionally. The Resolution eloquently recognizes many of the reasons I could only reiterate to encourage passage of it. But there is even more that can be said, for example:

Not only has Pope Francis been a ceaseless advocate for the poor and a staunch critic of economic inequality. He has also been quite clear in connecting poverty with conflict. Accordingly, he has stated unequivocally that when some people are allowed to suffer from lack of basic necessities, not just luxuries, we have planted the seeds for revolt. Conversely conflict helps create poverty where there was none.

Not only did Pope Francis invite Presidents Peres and Abbas to meet and pray together; he has appealed for an end to the violence with which Palestinians, especially Christian Palestinians, are forced to live under occupation. Similarly, he has expressed compassion for innocent Israeli civilians who may live in fear of retaliatory violence.

Not only has Pope Francis denounced the violence in Iraq and Syria and prayed for peace there. He called all people of faith to join him in a day of prayerful solidarity that many of us believe is what avoided all-out war by the U.S. and western allies in the region. Similarly he has opposed military interventions in every other part of the world where there is violent conflict.

Pope Francis was a clear catalyst in the re-opening of relations between the U.S. and Cuba, reversing decades of ineffective embargo and choosing dialogue instead.

In his recent encyclical, *Laudato Si' On Care for Our Common Home*, Pope Francis again makes the connections. Referring to "integral ecology," he articulately illustrates the links among the environment, economics, politics, and peace. He says throughout the document that we cannot protect creation if we do not protect one another from economic exploitation, political power play, and war. Each feeds or starves the others.

In addition, Pope Francis has called for the abolition of nuclear weapons, one of the greatest threats to our Earthly existence. He joins countless others in supporting the Iran Deal which promotes diplomacy over nuclear weapons proliferation and the risk of nuclear holocaust.

In every possible way on every possible issue, Pope Francis is an informed voice for what I might call "integral peace," a peace that is not just the absence of war, but also the triumph of justice for all people and all of God's creation.

Just last week, at an international meeting titled "Peace is Always Possible – Religions and Cultures in Dialogue," organized by the Community of Sant'Egidio in cooperation with the Orthodox Autocephalous Church of Albania and the Albanian Episcopal Conference, and held in Tirana, Albania, Pope Francis issued this message:

"It is necessary to reaffirm that peace is always possible. We must never be resigned to war! And we must not be indifferent in front of people who suffer from war and violence,.... To state that peace is always possible is not naivety.... We are required to be involved, personally and through our communities, in the great work of peace."

I urge the Committee on Cultural Affairs, Libraries and International Intergroup Relations to approve this Resolution as a most well-deserved welcome to Pope Francis to our wonderful city.

Again, I thank you.

**THE COUNCIL
THE CITY OF NEW YORK**

Appearance Card

I intend to appear and speak on Int. No. _____ Res. No. 801-A
 in favor in opposition

Date: _____

(PLEASE PRINT)

Name: Rosemarie Pace

Address: 371 Sixth Ave., NY, NY

I represent: Pax Christi Metro New York

Address: _____

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**THE COUNCIL
THE CITY OF NEW YORK**

Appearance Card

I intend to appear and speak on Int. No. _____ Res. No. 801
 in favor in opposition

Date: 9/16/15

(PLEASE PRINT)

Name: Joseph Rosenberg

Address: 80 Maiden Lane

I represent: Catholic Community Relations Council

Address: _____

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