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12 December 2015

LCJE Responds to Vatican Document “The Gifts and Calling of God Are Irrevocable”

According to a Vatican commission document released Thursday and characterized as “far-reaching” by the *New York Times*, Jewish people do not have to believe in Jesus to be saved.

Titled “The Gifts and Calling of God are Irrevocable,” the document's release received broad global news coverage this week, even though the document itself states that it is only a “reflection” of the views of the Vatican’s Commission of Religious Relations with Jews and is not “a doctrinal teaching of the Catholic Church.”

“There is nothing substantively new in the document that we haven’t seen in past years in Jewish-Catholic dialogues,” said Jim Melnick, international coordinator of the Lausanne Consultation on Jewish Evangelism (or “LCJE”), part of the broader worldwide Lausanne Movement, which seeks to bring the Gospel to all people around the world. That movement asserted in its 1989 manifesto in Manila: “It is sometimes held that in virtue of God’s covenant with Abraham, Jewish people do not need to acknowledge Jesus as their Messiah. We affirm that they need him as much as anyone else, that it would be a form of anti-Semitism....to depart from the New Testament pattern of taking the gospel ‘to the Jew first’...” (A.3)

That same year the Willowbank Declaration on the Christian Gospel and the Jewish People declared that “it is unchristian, unloving and discriminatory to propose a moratorium on the evangelizing of any part of the human race, and that failure to preach the Gospel to the Jewish people would be a form of anti-Semitism, depriving this particular community of its right to hear the gospel.” (IV.23) More recently, in 2010 the Lausanne Cape Town Commitment proclaimed: “We affirm that, whereas the Jewish people were not strangers to the covenants and promises of God, ... they still stand in need of reconciliation to God through the Messiah Jesus.” (II. B)

“While we applaud the Vatican’s efforts to combat anti-Semitism and to show love and honor to the Jewish people – one area where the document succeeds,” Melnick continued, “we strongly reject how it has turned the Scripture of Romans 11 on its head in order to end up with the exact opposite meaning of what the Apostle Paul intended regarding the salvation of the Jewish people. When Paul wrote that ‘the gifts and calling

of God are irrevocable,' he was saying that the Jewish people remain beloved in His sight - not that they can find salvation without faith in Yeshua (Jesus)."

The LCJE is a global network of evangelical Messianic Jewish and Gentile believers in Jesus from nearly thirty countries and six continents, representing a variety of denominations, missions and ministries. The group held its 10th international conference in Jerusalem in August. Its official conference statement affirmed "the special importance of taking the gospel to the Jewish people as an ever-present obligation on the Church, in accordance with Romans 1:16." That statement also proclaimed "the Jewishness of Jesus, who, as Israel's Messiah, is the Savior of the world."

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