



PONTIFICIUM CONSILIUM
AD CHRISTIANORUM UNITATEM FOVENDAM

E Civitate Vaticana, die 5 September 2019

PROT. N. 913 /2019/e

Reverend Father Eric Andrews, CSP
President of the Paulist Fathers
Paulist Fathers Motherhouse
415 West 59th Street
NEW YORK (NY) 10019 USA

Dear Father Andrews,

I write to offer my condolences having received the sad news of the death of Father Thomas Francis Stransky, CSP. As you will know, Father Stransky was one of the original members of the Secretariat for Promoting Christian Unity (SPCU), and as such holds a particular place in the hearts of all who have worked in that office and its successor, the Pontifical Council for Promoting Christian Unity as it became in 1988.

It was a combination of the decision of his Paulist superiors to send Father Stransky to Europe for study and his own inquisitive young mind that led to his lifelong commitment and involvement in ecumenism. Father Stransky describes arriving at Rotterdam on an ocean liner and very quickly being introduced to Monsignor Jan Willebrands, then rector of the seminary of Warmond and later Secretary and President of the SPUC. It was this encounter that led to his appointment in the late summer of 1960 to the newly formed Secretariat.

Very quickly Father Stransky was involved in the drafting of key Council documents which would ultimately be promulgated as *Unitatis redintegratio*, *Nostra aetate*, and *Dignitatis humanae*. These documents remain a sure guide and inspiration to this Pontifical Council and the Pontifical Council for Interreligious Dialogue. He played an important role in facilitating the presence of ecumenical observers at the Council. After the Council Father Stransky initiated and edited the SPCU's official bulletin, *Information Service*, and took part in some of the first bi-lateral dialogue meetings initiated by the Secretariat. He first staffed and subsequently remained a member of the Joint Working Group between the Catholic Church and the World Council of Churches from 1965–1998.

Elected to the position of President of the Paulist Fathers in 1970 Father Stransky returned to the United States but his commitment to Christian unity continued to shape his work and ministry. As rector of the Tantur Ecumenical Institute (1988–1999) he gave the community a clear identity and direction. He edited a number of important collections of ecumenical documents and wrote some important articles. Having been present both prior to and during the second Vatican Council, Father Stransky enjoyed recounting the history of those years, and in so doing recorded many fascinating and diverting details of the early years of this office.

We remain indebted to Father Stransky for the foundational work that he undertook in those early years, for his work for Christian unity throughout his ministry, and for his unstinting prayer and support. As we pray for the repose of Father Stransky's soul we rely upon his continued prayers for us and for the unity of God's Church.

Yours in Christ,

Kurt Cardinal Koch
President