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WASHINGTON, D.C. 20008-3610

APOSTOLIC NUNCIATURE
UNITED STATES OF AMERICA

No. 11571
No.

October 10, 2015

This No. Should Be Prefixed to the Answer

Personal and Confidential

Lucinda Antrim
New York Yearly Meeting
Religious Society of Friends (Quakers)
15 Rutherford Place
New York, NY 10003

Dear Ms. Antrim:

Thank you for your letter of September 7th concerning the Doctrine of Discovery, and the several Papal Bulls of the 15th century upon which the doctrine is said to rest. Thank you as well for your kind words about the Holy Father's recent encyclical letter, *Laudato Sii*, relating to the care which we all owe for our common home here on earth.

I can assure you that the concerns you express about the Doctrine of Discovery have in fact been brought to the attention of the responsible officials at the Holy See. Meanwhile, and not meant in any way as an answer to your request for the renunciation of the relevant Papal Bulls, it should nevertheless be pointed out that it is not within the control of the Holy See if a court, such as, in the case of the United States, the Supreme Court, makes use of the Doctrine of Discovery in its jurisprudence. Indeed, the Supreme Court would not be bound by any renunciation of 15th century Bulls by the Holy See. Nor, for that matter, is such a renunciation necessary for the Supreme Court to conclude that prior cases which establish the Discovery Doctrine in U.S. jurisprudence were "wrongly decided." One need only look to the issues of slavery, or the doctrine of "separate but equal" in racial matters to see that the U.S. Supreme Court is quite capable of reassessing its own legal precedents and completely reversing course. This state of things might suggest that the Holy See is not the only appropriate focus for discussions relating to the injustices perpetrated upon the Indigenous Peoples of North America. I offer this merely for your consideration, and not as I said, as a response or "solution" to the issue you raise.

Once again, thank you for writing to the Holy Father.

With cordial regards and best wishes, I am

Sincerely yours in Christ,

Archbishop Carlo Maria Viganò
Apostolic Nuncio