



## **Australian Council of Christians and Jews**

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### **Australian Council of Christian and Jews Media Release**

#### **The accession of Cardinal Bergoglio to become Pope Francis the First.**

As Cardinal Bergoglio the Archbishop of Buenos Aires, he has been involved extensively in Interfaith dialogue with the Jewish Community. This dialogue is not just words but action. For example, about ten years ago, Cardinal Bergoglio was involved in a Jewish Catholic initiative in Buenos Aires to distribute aid to poor people, he has participated in services at Synagogues in Argentina and at one Synagogue stated at their congregation that he was present to consider his conscience and feelings "...as a pilgrim together with you my elder brothers".

In November 2012 Cardinal Bergoglio hosted a Kristallnacht commemoration in Buenos Aires Metropolitan Cathedral together with Rabbi Avruj.

Pope Francis the First gives every indication of continuing the very important interreligious dialogue work that was conducted by Pope John Paul the Second and then built upon by his successor Pope Benedict XVI.

A good indication of the intentions and conscience in terms of interfaith dialogue displayed by the Pontiff is to be found in "*On Heaven and Earth*" a book that he co-wrote with Rabbi Skorka in 2011. The then Cardinal said in this work:

*"Dialogue is born from an attitude of respect for the other person, from the conviction that the person has something good to say. It assumes that there is room in the heart for the person's point of view, opinion and proposal. To dialogue involves a friendly reception, not a pre conceived rejection. In order to dialogue it is necessary to know how to lower one's defences, open the doors of the house and offer human warmth."*

His piety and humility stemming from Jesuit Order, will be hallmarks of his style of papacy and his ability to speak with the masses is an important trait to have.

He has already reached out to the masses in St. Peters Square and also on his first day, extended an invitation to the Chief Rabbi of Rome to attend his inauguration and expresses his expectation that dialogue and collaboration between Christians and Jews will continue.

We extend our congratulations to the Pontiff and believe that his commitment to interfaith dialogue will continue during his Papacy.

Yours faithfully,

William M Szekely  
**Chair, Australian Council of Christian and Jews**