



## THE SIGNIFICANCE OF A HISTORIC EVENT

### *A day of rejoicing, the culmination of a dialogue, a new beginning: the Evangelical Church of Reconciliation in Caserta reflects on Pope Francis' historic visit*

CASERTA, 28/7/2014 – Gratitude, satisfaction and surprise are the dominant emotions as we look back over Pope Francis' visit to the Evangelical Church of Reconciliation in Caserta.

**Gratitude to Pope Bergoglio**, who, overcoming the complications concerning protocol that preceded his visit, came and took part in the worship service organised on Monday morning in the unfinished building in Via Feudo di San Martino, together with the local congregation and representatives of the pastors of the Church of Reconciliation.

**Satisfaction** over the outcome of the day's celebrations, which the efforts over several weeks of the organising team – as well as the security forces, who provided effective and discreet security arrangements – enabled the participants to enjoy to the full.

Pope Francis had expressly asked to take part in an evangelical worship service, and we were happy to respond by organising what turned out to be a historic event.

And finally, **surprise** over the historic declaration made by Pope Francis, who “as the pastor of the Catholic Church” asked forgiveness for the suffering inflicted by the laws which for decades restricted Pentecostals' freedom of worship in Italy.

The events of Monday 28<sup>th</sup> July were the culmination of a process, **an ending and at the same time a new beginning**. An ending, thanks to this unprecedented request for forgiveness which marks the closure of a long drawn-out chapter of history involving – in Pope Francis' own words – hurts, conflicts, jealousy and pain. A new beginning, because this initiative lays the foundation for a dialogue between brothers which is not an uncritical acceptance of all of the other's doctrines and practices, but, as Pastor Traettino underlined, a desire for fellowship based on a *personal relationship with Christ*, involving an unqualified respect for our differences and the specific identity of each side.

We believe that, in a world that is only nominally Christian and in substance increasingly pagan, it is of ever greater importance that true believers should recognise one another. It is precisely on this theme that part of the private dialogue between Pope Francis and Pastor Traettino has developed. Pastor Traettino has repeatedly emphasised that there is a great deal to be done in all Christian denominations, especially those with a long history, in terms of **conversion** and **reformation**: conversion as the answer to churches full of “baptised pagans”, who may go to church on Sundays but have never experienced in their own lives a personal encounter with

Christ; and deep and continual reformation (*“Ecclesia semper reformanda”*), a constant following of the instructions of the Bible and the Holy Spirit in the times in which we live.

It is on this basis that the Church of Reconciliation intends to continue developing its commitment to dialogue, a commitment somewhat different from classical ecumenism, emphasising a spiritual dynamic which gives primacy to relationships between those who are living out a personal experience of faith. We intend to go forward from here, keeping away from polemics and seeking rather to meet the needs of a world which urgently needs God and faithful witnesses of His message.

Press contact: Franco Bosio, tel. +39 0823 446149  
e-mail: [info@riconciliazione.org](mailto:info@riconciliazione.org)