



CURIA GENERALIZIA DELLA COMPAGNIA DI GESÙ

20 June 2017

Mr. Joseph M. Stewart



Dear Mr. Stewart:

Thank you for your letter of May 5, for the petition that you presented along with Cheryllyn M. Branche, Karran Harper Royal, and Richard J. Cellini, and for the supplemental materials that you sent to me here in Rome.

Jesuit slaveholding in the United States and, in particular, the sale of 272 slaves from the Jesuit estates in southern Maryland to purchasers in Louisiana, were a sin against God and a betrayal of the human dignity of your ancestors. I have great concern for this tragic history and its continuing legacy nearly two centuries later.

I have read the report issued by Georgetown University, and I was consoled to learn that some descendants and Jesuits celebrated Mass together at Georgetown on April 17 and then came together again at the Liturgy of Remembrance, Contrition, and Hope on April 18. I trust that this is the beginning of fruitful engagement.

The Jesuit way of proceeding is for the Jesuit provincials in the United States, through the structure of the Jesuit Conference of Canada and the USA, to continue to address this history. The Jesuit *Constitutions* state that "the Superior General should have provincials worthy of his great confidence" [797], and I do have confidence in the provincials who serve in the USA today. I entrust dialogue with descendants and discernment of the way forward to these provincials and their Conference. Of course, I will also ask them to continue to keep me informed about the progress of the dialogue.

I assure you of my prayers for you and the entire descendant community and ask that you keep me and my fellow Jesuits in your prayers, too.

Sincerely yours in Christ,



Arturo Sosa, S.I.  
Superior General

Cc: V. Rev. Timothy Kesicki, S.J.,  
President, Jesuit Conference of Canada and the USA