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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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Statement on the Election of Pope Francis as 267th Supreme Roman Pontiff

Lexington. With today’s election of Pope Francis (Cardinal Jorge Mario Bergoglio, S.J., 76, of the Archdiocese of Buenos Aires, Argentina) as the 267th Supreme Roman Pontiff, Bishop Ronald W. Gainer, head of the Roman Catholic Diocese of Lexington, released the following statement:

“Christ commissioned Peter as chief among the Apostles, entrusting to him the keys of the kingdom and the care of the flock. Since Jesus commissioned him to lead the Church, two hundred and sixty-six men have exercised the ministry entrusted to Peter the fisherman, Peter the prince of the apostles.

“Since Peter, the ministry of the papacy has been exercised by a different face, a different individual, for each age and time: saints and sinners, warriors and judges. But the papacy is not a dynasty. The papacy—a series of bishops in the Petrine ministry of faith, unity, and love—occupies an indispensable role in the Catholic Church.

“There are many gifts in the Body of Christ, the Church, but there is one particular ministry which unites all of them—the ministry of the one who sits in the Chair of Peter, teaching and guiding, so that all may grow to maturity in the community of the baptized.

“The pope is a servant of the truth, not its master. It is counterintuitive to the mind of the prevailing secular culture, but the pope cannot change the constitutive truths of the faith in the way that an elected official may change government policies or the way a corporate CEO may change marketing strategies. No pope can and no pope will. The truth is constant. The Truth is a person, Jesus Christ, who is the same yesterday, today, and forever.

“I urge everyone to pray for the Church and in a very special way for Pope Francis as he assumes this singular and central ministry.”