



NEWS

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ANGLICAN-ROMAN CATHOLIC CONSULTATION NOTES PROGRESS, SEEKS FURTHER MANDATE

WASHINGTON--Describing their denominations as "sister Churches," participants in the official Anglican-Roman Catholic dialogue in the U.S. have asked their respective sponsoring bodies for specific directives concerning future joint study and action.

In a report summarizing 12 years of dialogue and looking to the future, they expressed belief that they have "discovered a significant and substantial unity of faith between the two Churches, a unity which demands visible expression and testimony now."

But they also acknowledged "differences which continue to separate the two Churches" and appealed to their sponsoring bodies for "direction and a continuing mandate...for the pursuit of the unity God wills for his church."

For the Episcopalian participants the sponsoring body is the Episcopal Church's Joint Commission on Ecumenical Relations. For the Roman Catholics it is the National Conference of Catholic Bishops through its Committee for Ecumenical and

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2/Consultation

Interreligious Affairs.

Entitled "Where We Are: A Challenge for the Future," the 16-page report is signed by the 19 members of the Anglican-Roman Catholic Consultation (ARC) in the U.S.A. Its co-chairmen are the Rt. Rev. Arthur A. Vogel, Episcopal Bishop of West Missouri, and the Most Rev. Raymond W. Lessard, Roman Catholic Bishop of Savannah, Ga.

The document reviews progress achieved in 19 official consultations by the group since 1965. While significant agreement has been achieved in a number of areas, it says, significant questions remain in many of the same areas. Topics covered in the report include the two Churches' understanding of worship, scripture, the "articulation of the faith," the role of bishops, ethical questions, and "personal life in Christ."

In a concluding section offering "pastoral recommendations," the ARC participants asked their sponsoring bodies whether the Consultation should proceed to establish any of five suggested joint task forces. These would deal with world hunger, evangelism, prayer and spirituality, Anglican-Catholic "covenants" or cooperative agreements between parishes and other bodies, and the "pastoral role of bishops."

They also asked their sponsoring bodies whether ARC should go on to study four "problem areas." These are:

--Authority in the Church, including the role of the pope and bishops and perhaps also "more practical realities"

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3/Consultation

such as the handling of women's ordination by Episcopalians and the handling by Roman Catholics of recommendations pertaining to women's role in the Church made by the Catholic Call to Action conference held in October, 1976, in Detroit.

--Theological questions pertaining to the Churches' understanding of sex roles--"what it means to be a woman and a man, and how men and women image God in their being and their callings in the Church and the world."

--The relationship between Church tradition and individual conscience, with specific reference to "such current questions as abortion and the right to life, the pastoral approach to ecumenical marriages, and homosexuality."

--"The degree of unity that each of us feels necessary as prerequisite to sacramental sharing, and how each Church intends to relate this convergence between us to the ongoing ecumenical relations each of us has in many other ecumenical dialogues." Included under this heading is the question of Anglican Orders, in light of Pope Leo XIII's negative pronouncement of their validity.

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