

ANGLICAN/ROMAN CATHOLIC JOINT PREPARATORY COMMISSION

First Meeting - Gazzada - 9th to 13th January 1967

PRESS RELEASE

12th January 1967

After four hundred years of separation between the Roman Catholic and Anglican Churches, official representatives from both have taken the first steps towards restoring full unity. The Joint Preparatory Commission met at the Conference Centre at the Villa Cagnola, Gazzada, near Milan, from 9th to 13th January 1967. This Commission was set up as a consequence of the Common Declaration of Pope Paul VI and Archbishop Michael Ramsey following their meeting in Rome on 23rd/24th March 1966 when they affirmed:

'their desire that all those Christians who belong to these two Communion may be animated by these same sentiments of respect, esteem and fraternal love, and in order to help these develop to the full, they intend to inaugurate between the Roman Catholic Church and the Anglican Communion a serious dialogue which, founded on the Gospels and on the ancient common traditions, may lead to that unity in truth, for which Christ prayed'.

This Commission representing both Churches was composed of the following members:

The Most Revd. J.G.M. Willebrands, tit. Bishop of Mauriana
The Most Revd. C. Helmsing, Bishop of Kansas City-St. Joseph
The Most Revd. W.Z. Gomes, tit. Bishop of Parlais
The Right Revd. L.D. Fox, tit. Bishop of Maura
The Revd. L. Bouyer
The Revd. Professor G. Tavard, A.A.
The Revd. M. Richards
The Revd. J. Keating, C.S.P.
The Revd. Professor A. Hastings
The Very Revd. Canon W.A. Purdy (a Secretary to the Commission)

The Right Revd. J.R.H. Moorman, Bishop of Ripon
The Right Revd. W.G.H. Simon, Bishop of Ilandaff
The Right Revd. C.H.W. de Soysa, Bishop of Colombo
The Right Revd. E.G. Knapp-Fisher, Bishop of Pretoria
The Revd. Canon J. Atkinson
The Revd. Canon E. Kemp
The Revd. Professor H.E. Root
The Revd. Dr. Massey H. Shepherd, Jnr.
The Revd. Professor E.R. Fairweather
The Revd. Canon J. Findlow (a Secretary to the Commission)
The Revd. Canon J.R. Satterthwaite (a Secretary to the Commission)

The World Council of Churches was represented by the Revd. Paul Verghese as an Observer.

The Bishop of Kansas City-St. Joseph and the Bishop of Ripon acted as Joint Chairmen.

Papers were given on "Why is Anglican/Roman Catholic dialogue possible today?" by Bishop Moorman and Bishop Willebrands, and on "Where should dialogue begin?" by the Revd. M. Richards and the Revd. Professor E.R. Fairweather. A free and frank discussion followed on such subjects as the relation of the Church to the Gospel, Authority and Comprehensiveness, Intercommunion, and the place of the Blessed Virgin Mary in Christian theology and devotion. Plans were made for more detailed examination of certain issues which emerged from these discussions as being of primary importance.

Various practical problems were discussed and the Commission decided to make a number of concrete recommendations to be submitted to the authorities of both Churches. These include recommendations for joint action in certain practical matters intended to remove tensions and promote the growing together of Anglicans and Roman Catholics.

The members recommended the setting up of a special commission for the study of the theology of marriage and its application to mixed marriages.

The conference was held in an atmosphere of daily prayer together; and each delegation, having celebrated the Eucharist according to its own rite, attended the rite of the other. In beginning this new stage in Anglican/Roman Catholic relations, the Commission is humbly grateful for the sense of urgency and Divine guidance throughout the conference.