

A Meeting of the Pope and Canterbury's Archbishop

Women's ordination and the Roman Catholic response to the Final Report of the first Anglican-Roman Catholic International Commission were among points discussed when Pope John Paul II and Anglican Archbishop George Carey of Canterbury met May 25 at the Vatican. A joint press release describing their meeting was issued afterward. Although the Roman Catholic response to ARCIC I "was not able to endorse the claim" of the commission "to have reached 'substantial agreement' between Anglicans and Roman Catholics on the eucharist and the ordained ministry, that judgment should not be interpreted as putting a brake on the dialogue," the joint release said. It indicated that in discussing women's ordination, Carey "expressed his conviction that this development is a possible and proper development of the doctrine of the ordained ministry," while the pope "reiterated what has already been said to Archbishop Carey's predecessors, that this development constitutes a decision which the church does not see itself entitled to authorize and which constitutes a grave obstacle" to the process of reconciliation of the churches. "It was agreed, however, that there must be further study of the ecclesial and ecumenical aspects of this question." The leaders also discussed the re-evangelization of Europe today and cooperation in action for peace and

justice. And they "stressed their commitment to the search for fuller communion." The joint press release follows.

On May 25, 1992, the archbishop of Canterbury, Most Rev. Dr. George Leonard Carey was received in audience by His Holiness Pope John Paul II. This was the first meeting between the pope and Archbishop Carey, who was enthroned as archbishop of Canterbury in April 1991.

In visiting the Holy See, Archbishop Carey followed in the footsteps of his four immediate predecessors. Especially important was the visit of Archbishop Michael Ramsey to Pope Paul VI in 1966, which marked a decisive turning point in Anglican-Roman Catholic relations. It was at that meeting that the Anglican-Roman Catholic International Commission was founded. The last visit of an archbishop of Canterbury to the pope was in October 1989 when Archbishop Robert Runcie returned the visit made to Canterbury by Pope John Paul II in 1982. A high point of that visit was a joyful celebration of Evening Prayer at which the

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Holy Father presided and during which Archbishop Runcie gave an address. Both the Holy Father and Archbishop Runcie reaffirmed the need for Anglicans and Catholics to rediscover together their common patrimony of faith. Fidelity to that patrimony is the indispensable basis for further progress toward unity.

At their May 25 meeting the pope and the archbishop of Canterbury stressed their commitment to the search for fuller communion between Anglicans and Roman Catholics that was first made in 1966 by Pope Paul VI and Archbishop Ramsey. In that context they also spoke together of some of the complex and exacting issues that figure in the present dialogue between the Catholic Church and the Anglican Communion.

"The activity of proclaiming faith together, however, can only take place to the extent that there is actual agreement in faith. Hence the urgent necessity of the theological dialogue, whose aim is to ensure agreement in the content of faith, although there may be diversity in its expression."

1. The Holy Father and the archbishop spoke about the Catholic response to the Final Report of ARCIC I. The archbishop was assured by the Holy Father that although the response was not able to endorse the claim of ARCIC I to have reached "substantial agreement" between Anglicans and Roman Catholics on the eucharist and the ordained ministry, that judgment should not be interpreted as putting a brake on the dialogue. Rather, the response, which described the Final Report as a "milestone" in Anglican-Roman Catholic relations, should be seen as a stimulus to the resolution of outstanding differences. Pope John Paul II and Archbishop Carey emphasized their commitment to the process of dialogue, which is to be pursued both at the theological level and in the framework of exchanges and cooperation between the believers at all levels.

2. The pope and the archbishop spoke of the question of the ordination of women to the priesthood. The archbishop expressed his conviction that this development is a possible and proper development of the doctrine of the ordained ministry. The Holy Father reiterated what has already been said to Archbishop Carey's predecessors, that this development constitutes a decision which the church does not see itself

entitled to authorize and which constitutes a grave obstacle to the whole process of Anglican-Roman Catholic reconciliation. It was agreed, however, that there must be further study of the ecclesial and ecumenical aspects of this question.

3. The archbishop expressed his appreciation of the terms in which the Church of England, together with other churches and ecclesial communities, had been invited to send a "fraternal delegate" to the special session for Europe of the Synod of Bishops. He recalled the following statement from the Holy Father's letter from Fatima to the bishops of Europe: "As we consider the evangelization of our continent in the perspective of the year 2000, we need to give special attention to ecumenical cooperation." The archbishop also expressed his agreement with the statement made in the synod declaration that "the re-evangelization of Europe is the common task of all Christians." He explained to the Holy Father that his desire to visit the Catholic Church in Italy was motivated in part by a desire to build closer relations between the Church of England and the Catholic Church in Italy, since any attempt at collaboration in evangelization requires mutual knowledge, understanding and trust. The Holy Father and the archbishop agreed that all Christians, by virtue of their baptism, must bear witness to the salvation they have received in Christ. The activity of proclaiming faith together, however, can only take place to the extent that there is actual agreement in faith. Hence the urgent necessity of the theological dialogue, whose aim is to ensure agreement in the content of faith, although there may be diversity in its expression.

Pope John Paul and the archbishop spoke together about the need for collaboration and common witness on matters of justice and peace. They encouraged all Christian people to commit themselves to responsible stewardship of God's creation.

The archbishop was accompanied by Mrs. Carey, Bishop William Ind of Grantham and Rev. Canon Stephen Platten, secretary for ecumenical affairs.

Pope John Paul II presented the archbishop with a copy of the *Codex Vaticanus Latinus 39* New Testament as a sign of the fact that Anglicans and Catholics share in the word of God. In that spirit Archbishop Carey gave the Holy Father a modern Book of Hours, whose production was an ecumenical initiative. He also gave the Holy Father a chalice symbolizing the sacramental nature of Christian faith, with the inscription, "A sign of common prayer and hope for that gift of full communion which we know to be the will of our Lord."

After his meeting with Pope John Paul II May 25, Archbishop George Carey, leader of the worldwide Anglican Communion, told journalists that their discussion of women priests was "the toughest" part of the meeting.

The two leaders also discussed the Vatican's December response to the work of the first Anglican-Roman Catholic International Commission. The text of the Vatican's response appeared in Origins, Vol. 21, pp. 441ff.

The pope and Carey spent 10 minutes alone in the papal library before being joined by their top advisers on Catholic-Anglican relations for a 30-minute, wide-ranging discussion.

Carey said the pope "understood exactly what we were saying" about the reason some churches in the Anglican Communion have decided to ordain women. And, "I was able to understand the thrust he was getting at."

"It sometimes looks as though the Roman Catholic Church has a negative attitude toward women," the archbishop said. The pope "wanted to make the point that the emphasis is on the dignity of women in the world today, and that came across very strongly."

Carey's Church of England is expected to vote in the fall on whether to join other Anglican churches in ordaining women. The archbishop said he did not feel the pope was trying to dictate the outcome of the vote. "He knows the Church of England must face this issue head on and he knows also where I stand on this particular matter."

The pope and the archbishop reaffirmed the need for the Anglican-Roman Catholic dialogue to study "the ecclesial and ecumenical aspects" of the ordination of women in the Anglican Communion. Asked if this meant that the Roman Catholic Church might be open to changing its practice, Cardinal Edward Cassidy, president of the Pontifical Council for Promoting