

CONFIDENTIAL

A./R.C.J.P.C./M.M.5.

ANGLICAN/ROMAN CATHOLIC JOINT SUB-COMMISSION ON THE THEOLOGY OF  
MARRIAGE AND ITS APPLICATION TO MIXED MARRIAGES

Second Meeting - Pineta Sacchetti, Rome, 27th - 30th November 1968

Copy of a letter to the Rt. Revd. Mgr. J.G.M. Willebrands from  
the Most Revd. George O. Simms, Archbishop of Dublin, and  
the Most Revd. Ernest L. Unterkoefler, Bishop of Charleston,  
Joint Chairmen of the Sub-Commission.

ROME

30th November 1968

Your Excellency,

We write as co-chairmen of the Anglican-Roman Catholic joint sub-commission on mixed marriages. We beg to enclose the report of the proceedings of our recent meetings in Rome, November 27th to 30th. It contains a number of recommendations, in particular, on the form of celebration of marriage and the cautiones.

We have been able to arrive at these recommendations as a result of the agreement reached by us at our first meeting, April 16 - 18, 1968, at Windsor, when the theology of marriage and its application to Anglican-Roman Catholic marriages were thoroughly discussed.

The report of the Windsor meeting, a copy of which we also enclose, sets forth the theological principles and considerations which provided a basis for the recommendations from our recent meeting. It dealt especially with: (1) the life-long union and indissolubility; (2) the sacramental character of marriage; (3) some fundamental theological principles; as follows:

(1) The indissolubility of marriage was discussed and explanations were invited and given of the Anglican practice of admitting to Holy Communion certain members of their Church who have been divorced in civil courts and have remarried. Whilst it was explained that the practice in the Church of England (as distinct from the other Provinces of the Anglican Communion) is affected by Statute Law, it was made clear that the general principle governing Anglican practice was to refuse the

Marriage Service in church to persons thus remarried, in witness to and in safeguard of the integrity of the Christian doctrine of marriage. The concessions of accepting second marriage and of eventually admitting those remarried to Holy Communion were dictated by pastoral concern. Roman Catholics welcomed the assurance that an Anglican priest would always require of people entering marriage that they should do so with a full and unconditional intention of lifelong and exclusive fidelity.

(2) It emerged from the discussion that although the Reformation formularies in particular might suggest a divergence between Roman Catholics and Anglicans as to the sacramental status of marriage, in fact the two Churches agree in recognising marriage as a sign covenanted by Christ as an instrument of His grace, as expounded in St. Paul's nuptial symbolism.

(3) The following three fundamental theological principles were agreed as a basis upon which future progress might be made:

i. That Holy Baptism itself confers Christian status and is the indestructible bond of union between all Christians and Christ, and so of Christians with one another. This baptismal unity remains firm despite all ecclesiastical division.

ii. That in Christian marriage the man and the woman themselves make the covenant whereby they enter into marriage as instituted and ordained by God, this new unity, the unity of marriage, is sacramental in virtue of their Christian baptism and is the work of God in Christ.

iii. That this marriage once made possesses a unity given by God to respect which is a primary duty; this duty creates secondary obligations for the Church in both its pastoral and its legislative capacity. One is the obligation to discourage marriages in which the unity would be so strained or so lacking in vitality as to be both a source of danger to the parties themselves and to be a disfigured sign of, or defective witness to, the unity of Christ with his Church. Another is the obligation to concert its pastoral care and legislative provisions to support the unity of the marriage once it is made and to ensure as best it can that these provisions be not even unwittingly divisive.

The remarkable degree of agreement reached by us leads us to hope that, having regard to the special place given to the Anglican Communion in the Decree On Ecumenism, special consideration will be given to our recommendations concerning Anglican-Roman Catholic marriages.

With reference to the report of the Rome meeting in regard to the section dealing with the celebration of marriage, we wish to point out that our sub-commission did not enter into the matter

of formulating the regulations which would have to be drawn up, if the recommendation made in the second paragraph is accepted. The sub-commission feels, however, that in relation to the Roman Catholic party the question may have to be considered as to what should be the requirements for the validity of the marriage and whether they should include, in particular, the authorization by the bishop of the Roman Catholic party.

We wish to express once more our deep appreciation of your kindness in affording us the opportunity of meeting with you at the conclusion of our deliberations. We would also like to record our gratitude to the Secretariat for Promoting Christian Unity for its very generous hospitality during our stay in Rome.

With sentiments of esteem, we beg to remain

Sincerely yours in Christ,

(Signed) George Dublin

The Most Revd. George O. Simms,  
Archbishop of Dublin

(Signed) + Ernest L. Unterkoefler

The Most Revd. Ernest L. Unterkoefler  
Bishop of Charleston, S.C., U.S.A.

S.E.R. Mons. Giovanni Willebrands,  
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SECOND INTERIM REPORT OF THE ANGLICAN/ROMAN CATHOLIC JOINT SUB-COMMISSION ON THE THEOLOGY OF MARRIAGE AND ITS APPLICATION TO MIXED MARRIAGES

The second meeting of the Anglican/Roman Catholic Joint Sub-Commission on the Theology of Marriage and its application to Mixed Marriages was held at Pineta Sacchetti, Rome, from November 27th - 30th 1968. The delegates at this second meeting were as follows:

Roman Catholic Members

The Most Revd. Ernest L. Unterkoefler, Bishop of Charleston, South Carolina, U.S.A. (Roman Catholic Chairman).

The Rt. Revd. Langton D. Fox, Auxiliary Bishop of Menevia, Llanelly, Carmarthenshire, South Wales.

The Rt. Revd. Francis J. Spence, Auxiliary Bishop to the Military Vicar, Canadian Forces Headquarters, Ottawa, Canada.

The Revd. Professor P.F. Cremin, D.D., I.U.D., St. Patrick's College, Maynooth, Ireland.

Anglican Members

The Most Revd. George O. Simms, Archbishop of Dublin (Anglican Chairman).

The Rt. Revd. Donald H.V. Hallock, Bishop of Milwaukee (Episcopal Church in the U.S.A.).

The Rt. Revd. Ralph S. Dean, Bishop of Cariboo (Anglican Executive Officer).

The Revd. Canon Gordon R. Dunstan, Frederick Denison Maurice Professor of Moral and Social Theology at King's College, London.

Secretaries

The Very Revd. Canon W.A. Purdy (Vatican Secretariat for Promoting Christian Unity).

The Revd. Canon J.R. Satterthwaite (Church of England Council on Foreign Relations).

Papers were read on the following subjects: "The Pastoral Approach to the Problems of Mixed Marriages" by the Rt. Revd. Donald H.V. Hallock, "Form and Cautions" by the Most Revd. Ernest L. Unterkoefler, "The Relation of the Encyclical 'Humanae Vitae' to the Sub-Commission's Task" by the Rt. Revd. Langton D. Fox, and by the Revd. Canon G.R. Dunstan. A paper entitled "Proposed Pastoral Guidelines for Inter-Christian Marriages" by the Very Revd. Mgr. H.G.J. Beck was also considered. After full

discussion of the subjects raised in these papers it was unanimously agreed to recommend the submission of the following proposals to the respective authorities of both Churches.

## I OBLIGATIONS OF THE PARTIES

The Roman Catholic party to a mixed marriage is, according to the traditional teaching of his Church, bound by the law of God not to endanger his own faith and to do everything in his power to safeguard the Roman Catholic education of his children. The extent of this obligation in relation to the children is being re-examined. Ecumenical reasons are among those which prompt this re-examination. However the Roman Catholic members of this Sub-Commission have not yet found any theological considerations that would lead them to a different understanding of this obligation.

Yet they recognise freely that the consequent burden on the Roman Catholic conscience may be matched by a similar burden on the Anglican conscience. The resultant intensely difficult problem will, the Sub-Commission hopes, continue to receive open and sympathetic attention throughout both Churches. Such attention we would expect to include a profound examination of the theology behind the cautiones (guarantees) and a careful weighing of the pastoral and ecumenical factors about which this Sub-Commission in common with many Christians has felt deep concern.

Meanwhile we recommend that no more be asked of the Anglican party than was proposed by the Synod of Bishops in Rome on 24th October 1967: namely that he knows of the obligation in conscience of the Roman Catholic party and at least does not rule out the Roman Catholic baptism and education of the children.

## II THE CELEBRATION OF MARRIAGE

The contracting parties are the ministers of Holy Matrimony. When one party is Anglican it seems to us entirely reasonable that the parties should decide between themselves whether they shall contract marriage before a Roman Catholic minister or before

an Anglican minister, and whether in a Roman Catholic or an Anglican church. Therefore we would recommend that, on condition that joint pastoral preparation has been given, and freedom to marry established to the satisfaction of the bishop of the Roman Catholic party and of the competent Anglican authority, the marriage may validly and lawfully take place before the duly authorised minister of the Church of either party. Should a minister of the Church of the other party assist in the solemnisation, as he might, on the invitation of the parties and with the concurrence of the local minister, we would hope that he would be assigned an appropriate part of the rite used in that Church and not any addition to it.

### III MARRIED LIFE

Thus far whilst recognising persisting theological problems we have agreed on recommendations which we would press urgently upon the authorities in our Churches concerning the preparation for and celebration of marriage. We recognise, however, that no dispositions which the Churches can make can wholly determine the future of the marriage.

We acknowledge that as the spouses after their marriage "experience the meaning of their oneness and attain to it with growing perfection day by day" (Gaudium et Spes, No. 48) they must be encouraged to come to a common mind in deciding questions relative to their conjugal and family life. This acknowledgement would be manifested in, rather than prejudiced by, joint pastoral care. This too requires further theological study and, perhaps, discussion at another meeting.

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All the members wished to record their gratitude to the Vatican Secretariat for Promoting Christian Unity for the gracious hospitality throughout the meeting and to the Revd. Fr. A. Taché, O.M.I., and his staff for all their kindness and help at the International Scholasticate at Pineta Sacchetti.