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PRESS RELEASE

The Anglican-Roman Catholic International Commission held its fourth meeting at the Villa Cagnola, Gazzada, North Italy, from August 30th to September 7th, 1972. Its previous three meetings had culminated in an Agreed Statement on Eucharistic Doctrine, which has come to be referred to as the Windsor Statement. In the past few months this Statement on the Eucharist has received a wealth of response from members of both the Anglican and Roman Catholic communions. The International Commission is grateful for this widespread interest. It is encouraging that even those who had criticisms or reservations nearly always welcomed the document as a remarkable and historic advance in the relations between the two Churches.

The questions raised and criticisms made in the public media and in private discussion and correspondence were carefully discussed by the Commission during its meeting at Gazzada, on the basis of a report prepared by a Sub-Commission which met for this purpose two days earlier. It was felt that some of the objections arose from a misunderstanding of the scope of the document. Other difficulties, it was hoped, would dissolve in the light of a volume of background

material to the Windsor Statement which is to be published in due course. The Commission felt that some major questions would be further clarified after the publication of the projected documents on Ministry and Authority.

At this time, therefore, it seems premature for the Commission to attempt detailed answers to queries and objections which have been received.

Some of the comments made, however, suggest that it would be useful for the Commission to clarify once more the status and character of its work. A document drawn up by the International Commission is presented by a Church-appointed group of Anglican and Roman Catholic bishops and theologians as an ecumenical service to their world-wide communions. It thus serves as a practical instrument for forging a common expression of shared faith. It does this by providing the Churches with a carefully prepared statement, which they can evaluate by reference to their own beliefs in common discussion and study.

This status of the Commission's documents dictates their style and character. Succinct, clear and positive expression of consensus at the level of faith is the aim. The claim to have reached substantial agreement expresses the conviction that this aim has been achieved, by concentrating explicitly on the core of Eucharistic doctrine.

In its procedure, the Commission recognises the intimate connection between various areas of faith: it is confident, therefore, that all its documents will be mutually illuminative. The document on the Eucharist was prepared first, because the Commission felt that the question of Ministry could not be resolved without a prior agreement on the doctrine of the Eucharist.

The Introduction to the Statement on the Eucharist, prepared by the Co-Chairmen of the Commission, is indicative of the spirit and manner in which this document must be studied.

The Commission remains convinced that, though no attempt was made to present a fully comprehensive treatment of the subject, nothing essential has been omitted. The document has been presented to our official authorities, but obviously it cannot be ratified by them until such time as our respective Churches can evaluate its conclusions.

At its Gazzada meeting, the Commission began its study of Ministry, for which preparations had been made by a small group gathered at Woodstock College, New York, in May. A number of areas were isolated for discussion. The Commission succeeded in outlining, for the purposes of its work, the New Testament picture of ministry, and proceeded to do some exploratory work on the notion of apostolicity

and its range. At the end of this work there emerged an outline which, during the coming year, groups meeting in a number of centres in various countries will expand into a draft statement on the doctrine of ministry. This will be submitted to the Commission's next meeting a year hence, at which we would hope to be able to bring it to maturity.

During its stay at Gazzada, the Commission was much pleased and encouraged by an unexpected visit from Cardinal Willebrands, the President of the Secretariat for Promoting Christian Unity, who turned aside from his journey back to Rome after holidays to take luncheon with the Commission. His Eminence gracefully expressed his warm encouragement to the Commission in its future work.