

5th September 1987

PRESS RELEASE

(First Draft)

73/6

The Second Anglican-Roman Catholic International Commission (ARCIC-II) held its fifth plenary meeting from 1st - 10th September 1987. The meeting was held at Palazzola, the retreat and conference centre owned by the English College in Rome, which is situated overlooking Lake Albano, directly opposite the Pope's summer residence of Castel Gandolfo.

January 1987 saw the publication of the Commission's document "Salvation and the Church", which is an agreed statement on the doctrine of justification. At its Palazzola meeting the Commission began work on a new project entitled Growth in Communion: Unity in Diversity. This new project will comprise a study of the Church as communion which will be the context for studying some specific topics such as the reconciliation of ministries, ordination of women, moral matters and steps towards fuller communion. At the Palazzola meeting the Commission made a good start on this work.

On 2nd September, the first full day of the Commission's work, Pope John Paul II came to Palazzola to visit the Commission. The Pope was welcomed by Cardinal Willebrands and the co-chairmen of the Commission, Bishop Cormac Murphy-O'Connor and Bishop Mark Santer. On his arrival, the Pope joined in a short prayer service with the members of the Commission and then met them individually. He then joined the Commission for lunch. At the end of the meal both the co-chairmen made addresses to the Pope. Bishop Murphy-O'Connor recalled that it was Pope John Paul who in 1982, together with the Archbishop of Canterbury, had brought the Commission into being and given it its mandate. He also said "The presence of the one who presides over the Church in love fires our imagination and focuses hope in a vital aspect of our growth towards full communion". Bishop Santer

said: "we perceive your visit as an example of that loving care for the unity of all the churches which we, as Anglicans, are coming to recognize afresh as one of the gifts which inheres in the office of the Bishop of Rome". He went on: "Events such as the Day of Prayer for Peace in Assisi last year are enabling Christians throughout the world to see the ministry you exercise in service of Christian and human unity as having dimensions which extend deeper and wider than the questions of jurisdiction which have been matters of such bitter controversy".

In his reply the Pope spoke warmly of his visit to Canterbury in 1982, the occasion on which he and the Archbishop of Canterbury set up ARCIC-II. He recalled that the labours of the Commission had already born fruit with the publication of Salvation and the Church and he especially commended the Commission's present study of the theology of Communion and its discernment of the steps that could lead Anglicans and Roman Catholics to fuller communion. All the members of the Commission felt strongly affirmed by the Pope's visit and his very positive encouragement.

The study of Growth in Communion will be pursued over the next twelve months by the members of the Commission working individually or in groups. The next plenary meeting of the Commission will take place in Ireland, from August 30th - September 8th, 1988, three weeks after the end of the Lambeth Conference.