

6th September, 1987

PRESS RELEASE

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 over-looking 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. This new project will comprise a study of the Church as communion which will be the context for studying 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 also 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 recognise afresh as one of the gifts which inheres in the office of the Church 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. He said "It was then that this Commission was constituted with a mandate to examine all those things which stand in the way of fuller communion between Roman Catholics and Anglicans. With the publication of Salvation and the Church the Commission shared the fruit of its labours in probing the heart of the Reformation controversies. Your present study of the theology of communion is also of great importance. It is my hope that in pursuing this topic you will be able to discern more clearly the steps towards that unity which is the will of Christ for his followers."

The Pope had strong words of encouragement for the Commission and assured them of his prayers for their work. Reflecting on a passage from the prophet Isaiah, he said of the search for Christian unity: "We must respond with an open

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heart to his grace - that grace which summons us to conversion, to new knowledge and to new life."

The study of Growth in Communion will be pursued over the next twelve months by 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.