

THE MEETING OF ARCHBISHOP RUNCIE WITH POPE JOHN PAUL II

September 30, 1989

On Saturday morning, September 30, the Holy Father received in private audience His Grace Dr Robert Runcie, Archbishop of Canterbury, and his suite. After the discourses by the Pope and Archbishop there followed the exchange of gifts. The Holy Father presented his guest with a facsimile copy of the "Codex Benedictinus", the original of which is in the Vatican Apostolic Library. It dates from 1072 and originated in the monastery of Monte Cassino. The Archbishop of Canterbury presented the Pope with a painting by a contemporary English artist, Sonia Lawson, depicting St Augustine's landing to evangelize the English at the command of St. Gregory the Great.

THE HOLY FATHER'S ADDRESS

Your Grace,
Dear Brothers and Sisters,

I greet you this morning in the love of our Lord Jesus Christ, and I extend a warm welcome to you, Archbishop Runcie, as well as the other representatives of the Anglican Communion who accompany you.

As we meet this morning, Your Grace, we are supported by the hopes and prayers for unity that rise from the hearts of Catholics and Anglicans throughout the world. We call to mind the groundwork that has been done by those who have gone before us in responding to the promptings of the Holy Spirit, who leads and urges us along the path of unity in accordance with the will of Christ. In the course of the last decades, a new intensity of relationship has emerged at many levels between the Catholic Church and the Anglican Communion. We rejoice in what has been achieved and seek God's guidance for the future.

At the meeting in 1966 of our beloved predecessors of happy memory, Pope Paul VI and Archbishop Michael Ramsey, a mandate was given to the first Anglican-Roman Catholic International Commission. The intervening years have been a time of painstaking study by the Commission. Progress has been made, but it is also true that the character of and background to the differences

that still separate us have come into clearer light. We must face our differences honestly, but always with openness and undaunted hope. I take this opportunity to assure the members of the Commission and all who work for fuller communion between Catholics and Anglicans that they have my continued prayers and support.

May the strength and wisdom of the Holy Spirit sustain us all in the ecumenical task to which we have been called. May his abundant blessings be upon Catholics and Anglicans everywhere.

ARCHBISHOP RUNCIE'S ADDRESS

Your Holiness, we have spoken together of important matters. Above all I am convinced that Anglicans and Roman Catholics *already* share a profound, underlying unity which no particular disagreements — real as these are — can take away.

I have introduced to you those who have accompanied me on this ecumenical pilgrimage to the Church in which Peter and Paul proclaimed the Gospel and witnessed to Christ by the shedding of their blood. We represent not only the Church of England but the family of the Churches of the Anglican Communion.

In centuries past Anglicans and Roman Catholics dishonoured the name of Christ we bear by mutual persecution. To this day in some parts of the world there are still traces of that competitive and polemical spirit which is alien to our brotherhood in Christ.

But for over twenty years Anglicans and Roman Catholics have been rediscovering the unity they have always shared. We are beginning to receive from each other the gifts and treasures of our two traditions. We are learning the cost of growing into that more perfect unity which accords with Our Lord's will.

This morning, Holy Father, I have with me two gifts. I wear as my episcopal ring the gift of Pope Paul VI to Archbishop Michael Ramsey in 1966. And I think of the great Catholic theologian, Yves Congar — whom I have known and respected for many years and whom I visited not so long ago in

Paris. He once compared the ecumenical movement with an engaged couple that is never daring enough to get married. This ring given by a much loved Pope to a beloved Archbishop is a sign not unlike an engagement ring. It is a token of commitment. I wear it today as we rededicate ourselves to the search for visible and sacramental unity between Anglicans and Roman Catholics throughout the world.

But I spoke of another gift. My gift to you reminds us that the purpose of Christian unity is in order that the world may come to believe in the Gospel of Christ. I give you a painting by a distinguished contemporary English artist, Sonia

Lawson. It is an interpretation of St. Augustine's landing to evangelize the English at the command of your predecessor St. Gregory the Great.

In the painting Augustine and his monks, with dark hair representing the warm south, move forward with enthusiasm to our green northern island with its fair-coloured peoples. The bridge between them is the book of the Gospels. Its radiance illuminates. Its good news is gift.

Holy Father, I ask you to receive *this* gift as a symbol of the infinitely greater gift of Christ's Gospel which unites all Christians as we work and pray for the fullness of unity which is also Christ's gift and promise.