

STRICTLY CONFIDENTIAL

*Letter from His Eminence Cardinal Augustin Bea
to His Grace the Archbishop of Canterbury
10 June 1968*

Secretariat for
Promoting
Christian Unity

Vatican City,
10 June 1968

Your Grace,

It is with heartfelt joy that I am sending to you the personal letter of the Holy Father in which he expresses his satisfaction and gratitude for the work of the Anglican–Roman Catholic Joint Preparatory Commission, which after its sessions held during 1967 at Gazzada, Huntercombe, and in Malta, has completed the preparatory work committed to its members by compiling at its last session a report which makes concrete proposals for the continuation of the work done by the Commission. Despite our diversities we have some truths in common, which are very important and oblige us to travel the road towards unity.

His Holiness has charged me to explain more in detail, how this continuation, on the basis of the work already done, should further be planned:

We approve the idea and agree that further studies be made on the points related in the report:

- (a) on a common declaration of faith between Catholics and Anglicans;
- (b) on liturgical problems of common concern for the Roman Catholic Church and the Anglican Communion;
- (c) on the possibility of co-ordinate action through joint or parallel statements on urgent human issues at international, national, and local level;

- (d) on the problems and difficulties which arise in the field of missionary strategy and activity of the Church, and the possibility of co-operation;
- (e) on the theological and pastoral problems of the doctrine of marriage and the difficulties caused by mixed marriages;
- (f) on the ecclesiological principles of the Roman Catholic Church and the Anglican Communion in connection with the problem of sacramental intercommunion;
- (g) on the theology of the Church and the theology of the ministry in connection with the nature of the priesthood and the application of this doctrine to the Anglican ministry of today;
- (h) on the nature of authority in the Church and its concrete form in the teaching authority, in the Petrine primacy, etc.;
- (i) on problems of moral theology;
- (j) on the application of practical directions given in the Decree of the Second Vatican Council on Ecumenism and in the Directory issued by our Secretariat for Promoting Christian Unity.

Moreover we approve certain practical recommendations made in the report such as:

- (a) periodical joint meetings in regions where both the Roman Catholic Church and the Anglican Communion have a hierarchy of either the whole or some considerable representation of the two hierarchies;
- (b) consultations on pastoral problems of evangelization in the modern world;
- (c) common prayers, according to the rules of the Directory issued by our Secretariat for Promoting Christian Unity;
- (d) development under the direction of the respective Superiors of a special relationship between religious orders of similar inspiration in the two communions.

Other practical recommendations, however, such as agreements for joint use of churches, and agreements to share facilities

for theological education and temporary exchange of students require further investigation and especially consultation with the appropriate authorities (the episcopal conferences and the competent authority in Rome).

In order to assure the continuation of the work done by the Anglican–Roman Catholic Joint Preparatory Commission and to carry out the proposals for further studies and activities, we accept the recommendations made by the Commission:

- (a) that the Commission be replaced by a Joint Commission responsible for the oversight of Roman Catholic–Anglican relations, and the co-ordination of future work undertaken together by the Roman Catholic Church and the Anglican Communion;
- (b) the constitution of joint sub-commissions, responsible to the Joint Commission, which are necessary for the execution of the programme if approved by the authorities on both sides;
- (c) the Secretariat for Promoting Christian Unity and the Church of England Council on Foreign Relations in association with the Anglican Executive Officer should study the methods and concrete ways in which the practical recommendations, as far as they have been approved on both sides, can be realized.

Concerning the question of the publication of the Malta Report, we believe it is better not to give the report for publication to the press. In some of its phrases, the formulation seems not quite clear and exact. Its publication through the press might create the impression that the report represents more than a report of a preparatory commission and even create among the Bishops of the Church the impression that the Report has been already approved by the competent authorities in all its details and that it was communicated to them for implementation. But in fact we are still at a phase of study and for the present moment we prefer that further steps be taken after careful study and with approval of the official authorities on both sides. Of course we do not intend to prevent Your Grace from communicating the content of the report to the members of the Lambeth Conference, if you would think this advisable in order to have their reactions and their proposals for the continuation of the dialogue and the co-operation.

I express my sincere hope that with the support of the

prayers of all the faithful through the grace of God the Churches may be led by him who is the way, the truth, and the life, to the unity in the Holy Spirit, "That there may be one visible Church of God, a Church truly universal and sent forth to the whole world that the world may be converted to the Gospel and so be saved, to the glory of God" (Decree on Ecumenism, 1).

With a warm and heartfelt greeting in the name of our common Lord and with a renewal of my personal pledge of prayers for the guidance of the Holy Spirit in your momentous labours this summer.

I remain,

Yours devotedly in Christ,

✠ J. G. M. Willebrands

(signed) ✠ Aug. Card. Bea

Secr.