

9th July 1975

Your Holiness,

After our predecessor's visit to Rome in 1966, together with him you inaugurated a 'serious dialogue' between the Roman Catholic Church and the Anglican Communion. The Agreed Statements of the consequent Anglican/Roman Catholic International Commission on the Eucharist and the Ministry are not authoritative statements of faith of either the Roman Catholic Church or the Anglican Communion; nevertheless they do bear witness to the steady growth of mutual understanding and trust developing between our two traditions.

It is with this in mind that we write now to inform Your Holiness of the slow but steady growth of a consensus of opinion within the Anglican Communion that there are no fundamental objections in principle to the ordination of women to the priesthood.

At the same time we are aware that action on this matter could be an obstacle to further progress along the path of unity Christ wills for his Church. The central authorities of the Anglican Communion have therefore called for common counsel on this matter, as has the General Synod of the Church of England. Thus in view of our concern, both for the truth as it is understood within the Anglican tradition, and for ecumenical counsel, we are already in correspondence with His Eminence Cardinal Jan Willebrands, President of the Secretariat for Promoting Christian Unity and with the Right Revd. Bishop John Howe, Secretary-General of the Anglican Consultative Council and we anticipate mutual discussion on this question in the future.

It is our hope that such common counsel may achieve a fulfilment of the Apostle's precept that "Speaking the truth in love", we "may grow up into Him in all things, which is the head, even Christ."

Your affectionate brother in Christ,

(Signed) DONALD CANTUAR

His Holiness Pope Paul VI.

CFR RC 52