

9th February 1976

My dear Cardinal Willebrands,

Your Eminence will recall that a Note was addressed to us by the Anglicans and Roman Catholics who engaged in informal talks at the Vatican last November. I was deeply appreciative that His Holiness the Pope in his letter to me of 30th November gave it as his hope that these informal talks might lead to further common counsel and growth of understanding.

The Note, which concerned the Ordination of Women, said:

"We see no ground for supposing that the ordination of women by Anglicans need prejudice the efforts of our two Communions to find organic union with one another.

"Given that member Churches of the Anglican Communion are almost certain to ordain women priests in the new few years, we recommend a consultation between Anglicans and Roman Catholics - not to discuss whether or not it is right to ordain women, but to try to find to what extent and in what ways Churches with women priests and Churches without can be reconciled in sacramental fellowship.

"We are however aware of the difficulty that this issue may pose for the Orthodox Church, and we also recommend that the ordination of women be considered by the Anglican/Orthodox Commission."

This letter is to suggest that the consultation proposed in the second paragraph could profitably be undertaken as soon as it can be arranged conveniently. I believe the consultation might be most useful if it were arranged simply by your Secretariat for Unity and the Anglican Consultative Council and without any of the formalities of a Commission. It could be small with about four Anglican and four Roman Catholic members, the majority of them being scholars. Their task would be to produce a fairly short report for the help and consideration of readers in our Churches, and for those in other Churches who might like to study it. I would hope that two meetings of about three days each would be sufficient.

His Eminence Cardinal J.G.M. Willebrands.

While the part of the Secretariat and the Anglican Consultative Council would be given recognition, the report would be over the names of the authors.

If a procedure on some such lines as these commends itself to you, I will ask Bishop Howe to think about the Anglican membership, and to confer with you about such arrangements as will be needed.

I shall greatly value your views on this matter.

Yours very sincerely,

Archbishop of Canterbury.

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