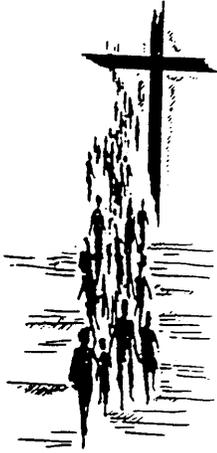


ON THE WAY TOGETHER: A PEOPLE CREATED FOR THE COMMON GOOD



Joint Statement of the Anglican/Roman Catholic Dialogue (Canada)

Preface:

Members of the Anglican/Roman Catholic Dialogue of Canada have been revisiting our common moral tradition in response to the statement of the Anglican/Roman Catholic International Commission, *Life in Christ: Morals, Communion and the Church*.¹ We wish to affirm this joint statement, in particular the recognition that “Anglicans and Roman Catholics derive from the Scriptures and Tradition the same controlling vision of the nature and destiny of humanity and share the same fundamental moral values” (*Life in Christ*, Introduction). This insight applies to our participation as members of Canadian society. We reaffirm that in our common heritage there are principles which shape our participation in the human community. These are increasingly challenged by the present climate of social and economic change. As representatives of our two churches, we affirm them as a basis of our common witness to the Gospel and an expression of our common faith in the Trinity.

Introduction - A Shared Heritage:

In our times Canadians face many critical questions. The rapid movement of globalization is producing social instability and economic uncertainty for many. Together with men and women across Canada, we ask, “What kind of society will we have in the new

millennium?” and “Where are the decisions being made which affect our lives?” For each day more women and men are confronted by the prospect of unemployment. Workers face growing demands. The poor and the vulnerable encounter increasing hardship. Families struggle with mounting pressures. Young people despair for their future.

We are encouraged to see new networks of collaboration and cooperation being forged as people seek to respond to these growing concerns. We, the members of the Anglican/Roman Catholic Dialogue of Canada, see in our present context a call to our two churches to witness together to the unity and communion which God desires for the human community. The uncertainty of our moment in history renders our common witness more urgent than ever.

Through dialogue and study the members of the Anglican/Roman Catholic Dialogue of Canada have discovered anew that we share a common heritage which informs our participation in human community and in the shaping of our society. This common heritage is rooted in our common faith in the Trinity. Through baptism we participate in the life of the divine Trinity, a life of communion, of being in relation with God, with other persons and with all of creation. Together we wish to affirm the following marks of such a life of communion and participation in the world:

¹ Second Anglican-Roman Catholic International Commission (ARCIC II), *Life in Christ: Morals,*

Communion and the Church. London: Church House/Catholic Truth Society, 1994.

1. Created for Communion:

Both the Anglican and Roman Catholic traditions strongly affirm the dignity of the human person. The Holy Scriptures teach us that every human person is created in God's image and likeness. By the fact of our createdness, we live in a profound relationship of interdependence with all of creation. No matter what differences exist between people – such as colour, gender, creed, or social status – all persons share equal dignity. From each one's dignity as a creature of God flow the basic human rights to such necessities of life as food, clothing, shelter, education, work, freedom for religious expression and freedom to participate in the shaping of society. We are created for a communion implying relation with God, with other persons, and with creation. From such communion our personhood grows and develops to its fullness. Every human has the dignity of a person created for communion.

2. Freedom for Responsiveness:

Our common tradition balances the dignity and rights of the individual with the good of the whole community. A genuine notion of human freedom seeks to balance personal rights with duties and obligations because in Christ we have been set free *for* communion with God in the whole of creation. We hold that human persons “may not exercise a freedom that claims to be independent, wilful and self-seeking. (...) The freedom that is properly theirs is a freedom of responsiveness and interdependence. They are created for communion, and communion involves responsibility, in relation to society and nature as well as to God” (*Life In Christ*, 7). Authentic freedom is accomplished in responsibility.

3. The Common Good:

Both the Anglican and Roman Catholic traditions teach that living out the Gospel includes living in a relationship of justice and love with our neighbours. This common good which shapes us in turn requires that each of us

contribute to the common good according to our means and the needs of others. We are called to follow the example of Christ's self-giving love. At times this is a call to renounce what is rightfully ours in order to respond to a greater need of others in the human community. At other times we may be called to defend our human rights for the sake of the common good. In each case we must ask what, because of Christ, solidarity and communion with others require of us. Portrayals of ethical and moral questions which see only the competition of one group's rights with those of others betray a diminished concern for the common good. “Those who are in communion participate in one another's joys and sorrows (...), they share together to meet the needs of one another and of the community as a whole” (*Church As Communion*, 15). As people of communion, we are committed to the common good.

4. Sharing Resources:

Since we believe that God's blessings are for all people, we consider that the unanswered need of the poor in the midst of our comfort is a symptom of diminished community. Jesus emptied himself to identify with the poor and oppressed, with the outcast and the voiceless. His followers are called to do the same. We know that some of his disciples provided for the needs of others “out of their resources” (Lk 8.3b), and others had “all things in common” sharing their goods “as any had need.” (Acts 2:44-45). Their example of self-emptying prompts us today “to critique every form of society based on the unbridled pursuit of wealth and power” (*Life In Christ*, 21) and to hold up a proper balance between our own claims and the needs of others. The voiceless in Canadian society include the growing numbers of disenfranchised and homeless people who dwell in our cities, women and children living in poverty, aboriginal peoples, and uncounted women and men who search for meaningful work. As Christians we stand together with them. In so doing, we not only show we share in God's compassion for the poor but find ourselves made whole. Together we are ready to

work for a more just sharing of our resources so that none will go in need and our community will be complete.

5. Gauging the Community's Health:

Today governments and corporations are seeking to reduce deficits and pay back debts. This is an important aspect of responsible fiscal policy. However, we must ask if the human and social cost resulting from present economic restructuring is not too high a price to pay. Too many people are excluded from participation. As people of communion, we hold that the confirmation of a sound economic strategy is the well-being of the whole human community. While profit is one indication of a healthy economic life, for Christians, the primary gauge of corporate health is the extent to which every person is enabled to contribute to the common good and to the betterment of society. Often, when persons experience unemployment, they are denied the opportunity to participate in the most basic way in the renewal of their society. An economy where a few prosper inordinately at the expense of the many, or where the contribution of some of society's members is viewed as expendable, falls short of the fullest concern for the common good. Healthy economic life means justice for all and the participation of all.

6. Authority and Good Government:

Anglicans and Roman Catholics share a common tradition which recognizes the need of authority for the building of community. As responsible citizens and participants in society, we support the important task of those who are entrusted with authority in our society. The human community must not be jeopardized by the inclination of individuals to follow their own opinion without reference to the wider implications of their choices. We have need of a public authority that affirms the importance of balancing private interests with social responsibility, and will guide the energies of all towards the common good. Christians have the responsibility to call our governments to be

accountable in their task of working for the common good so as to create a climate where the good of each individual can be realized. This includes a particular responsibility to hear the concerns and respond to the needs of the poor and vulnerable members of society. As men and women called to communion, we must speak out when public authorities act in a manner which excludes any group from their concern. Genuine authority and good government serve the common good.

7. Civility and Generosity:

It is natural that, when many aspects of the future seem uncertain, different visions of society emerge within the public forum. In a democratic society they can and indeed must be discussed openly if we are to find a common way forward. This exchange must take place in a spirit of civility and generosity. Our society cannot survive a polarization of public discourse where the interests of one group are pitted against another, where those with differing views are devalued, or where some are blamed for the ills of all. Recognition of the right of all to participate creates a spirit of civility and generosity. In such a climate our actions are characterized by mutual respect and esteem, our attitudes are those of patience and openness, grounded in our recognition of all as members of the same family. True generosity is a response to the recognition that we are each and all indispensable parts of one another.

8. Common Action:

The momentous scale of social and economic change affecting the world community tempts us to remain passive with a great and growing sense of powerlessness. Because we are made for communion we are, however, active participants in, not passive subjects of the social change which affects our neighbourhoods, our communities, our society. Anglicans and Roman Catholics are members of two global communities of people who find their meaning in communion with God, with other persons, and with creation. An increasing

number of fellow citizens are denied any meaningful opportunity to participate in the decision-making processes which have an impact on their lives. In this climate of alienation and uncertainty, our shared tradition impels us to join with all people of good will to participate actively in creating communities of reconciliation and hope, and to work together for a society where the participation and contribution of all is valued and enabled. These communities will be the seeds of hope for a new society. We are called to active participation in common action.

9. The Teaching of Christ:

Our churches exist within the particular context of Canadian society and culture. This context shapes our identity, and we affirm and celebrate the legacy of generosity and good will which have been characteristic of Canadian society. This affirmation, however, is from the perspective of a further identity as Christians which impels us to discern and guide our participation in society by the teaching of Christ. In accordance with his teaching we are called to challenge some aspects of our culture and work to transform our society for the good of all. In particular, the Gospel calls us to work for the transformation of unjust structures and systems that stand in the way of the full realization of the dignity of human persons and their full participation in society. The Gospel informs the decisions we make each day in our family life, in the workplace, in our neighbourhood, our community.

10. The Reign of God's Reconciling Love:

We affirm that the Church is a communion of women and men gathered together in Christ. Jesus Christ has reconciled all creatures to God. In so doing he has also reconciled us to each other. The fact of our journey together towards full ecclesial communion attests to the gift of Christ's reconciling love. The church is called to be a sign of that communion which God wills for all humanity. Filled with the Holy Spirit, the

Church is called to proclaim the reign of God's reconciling love, and to be the sign and first fruits of its coming (*Life In Christ*, 19). Our response to the gift of Christ's reconciling grace, received in baptism, is lived out in ongoing conversion to the Gospel through our daily lives. As Christians growing together in communion we are called to proclaim the reign of God's reconciling love by witnessing to our common faith.

Conclusion: Commitment to a Common Mission

Years of ecumenical dialogue between Anglicans and Roman Catholics have led us to a deep awareness that we share many genuine bonds of real, if imperfect, communion rooted in a common heritage and tradition of faith. "This common tradition carries with it a 'missionary imperative' – a call to preach the Gospel, to live the life of the Gospel in the world, and to work out a faithful and fruitful response to the Gospel in our encounter with different cultures" (*Life In Christ*, 14). We commit ourselves to cooperate in every way we can to speaking out whenever the harmony of that community is threatened or diminished and to the building of a truly human community.

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A *Study Guide* is being prepared. For further information, please contact the Ecumenical Offices of either the Anglican Church of Canada or the Canadian Conference of Catholic Bishops.