

COMMUNIQUE FROM THE SUMMIT MEETING OF IARCCUM: THE INTERNATIONAL ANGLICAN-ROMAN CATHOLIC COMMISSION FOR UNITY AND MISSION

“NEW STEPS ON AN ANCIENT PILGRIMAGE: TOGETHER FROM CANTERBURY TO ROME”

30 September – 7 October 2016

IARCCUM 2016 has been an historic summit, rich in symbolism and significance for the Anglican Communion and Catholic Church. It brought together 36 bishops from around the world for a week in Canterbury and Rome to celebrate and reflect upon the deepening relationship between the two traditions over the past 50 years, and to find practical ways by which we can give witness to our unity in ecumenical mission to the world.

The highlight was the mandating of the bishops by Pope Francis and the Archbishop of Canterbury, Justin Welby, at a service they jointly led at the church of San Gregorio al Celio. The IARCCUM bishops were commissioned in pairs, an Anglican and Catholic representing countries and regions where the two communions exist in significant number, and were sent out “as our Lord sent out his disciples in pairs” to preach the gospel “in word and deed” and to serve “those who are most vulnerable and marginalized.” The service also saw the Pope and Archbishop exchange gifts as a sign of friendship – echoing the moment in 1966 when Pope Paul VI presented his papal ring to the Archbishop of Canterbury, Michael Ramsey – a moment that ushered in a new era of dialogue. On this occasion Pope Francis presented Archbishop Justin with a carved replica of the head of the crozier of St Gregory which had been lent to Canterbury in January of this year. In return Archbishop Justin took off his own pectoral cross, a “cross of nails” from Coventry Cathedral, which Pope Francis immediately kissed and put on over his vestments.

The time of pilgrimage in Rome was marked by visits to St Peter’s and St Paul’s basilicas to pray at the tombs of the apostles and celebrate the Eucharist (Catholic and Anglican respectively) at each. In St Peter’s basilica, after the IARCCUM Mass, the bishops joined over a hundred worshippers at the altar of the tomb for Morning Prayer led by Archbishop Justin.

As part of their reflections on the theological progress already made and the pastoral opportunities that lie ahead, the bishops participated in a symposium at the Pontifical Gregorian University on current relations between the churches and the possibilities of future co-operation and dialogue. During the symposium Cardinal Koch presented the final report of the second phase of the Anglican-Roman Catholic International Commission (ARCIC). This volume entitled *Looking towards a Church Fully Reconciled* details over 20 years of theological work aimed at reconciling the two traditions. The report was presented to Pope

Francis and Archbishop Justin by ARCIC's co-chairs at an audience the following day.

The time in Canterbury was also a rich mixture of serious reflection with prayer and pilgrimage. The Suffragan Bishop in Europe, David Hamid, gave the homily at a Catholic Vigil Mass in the undercroft of the Cathedral celebrated by Cardinal John Dew. The following day, Archbishop-elect of Regina, Donald Bolen, preached the sermon at the Sung Eucharist in the Cathedral.

Bishop Hamid – who co-chairs IARCCUM with Archbishop Bolen – said the summit had been an historic moment in our official dialogue, and deeply valuable.

“This has been an immensely rich occasion, full of significance for our two traditions. It has been a source of deep joy to all the bishops gathered from all over the world, who have shared their experiences, their challenges and their wisdom. It was a profound time of collegiality and communion, and they are inspired now to go out into the world and work together for unity and common mission.”

Archbishop Bolen spoke enthusiastically about the meeting and said he was deeply encouraged about the future.

“The bishops engaged in everything in a way that was beautiful to see. Strong friendships have formed. In our discussions we did not shy away from the difficulties we sometimes face. But the possibilities for our two traditions working together in a needy world are abundant and promising.”

One of the bishops, Archbishop Paul Nabil El Sayah from Beirut said the summit had been a joyful occasion that would yield practical results.

“The atmosphere has been very positive,” he said. “You can feel there is deep, sincere fellowship and a willingness to bring new things forward. I am completely sold on practical ecumenism. I see lots of potential. This is not about looking inwards but about coming to the outside world together. The more we come together, the more our message has credibility.”

Bishop Alwin Samuel, from Sialkot in Pakistan, has been working alongside Archbishop Sebastian Shaw from Lahore during the summit. Bishop Alwin said he was looking forward to collaborating more with the Catholics at home.

“We have been looking at how we can take concrete steps towards unity. One example is where we have existing projects of our own. We looked at how we could begin to work together on them. For example, in areas such as health, especially women's health, where one church might provide the resources and the other would deliver them.”