

INTERNATIONAL ANGLICAN-ROMAN CATHOLIC
COMMISSION FOR UNITY AND MISSION



IARCCUM

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

30 SEPTEMBER–7 OCTOBER 2016

Walking Together: Common Service to the World and Witness to the Gospel

An appeal from the IARCCUM bishops to the bishops and the people of the Anglican and Catholic communities

As shepherds of Christ's flock we have come together from nineteen regions of the world, representing our churches, to take steps together as Anglicans and Roman Catholics along the pilgrimage to a common life and mission. We rejoice in the many fruits of our ecumenical journey so far, not least the achievements and remarkable convergence we have achieved in the theological dialogue (Anglican–Roman Catholic International Commission – ARCIC), which has set before us the deep communion which we share in Christ Jesus in the power of the Holy Spirit. We are compelled to express this real but impaired communion at this stage in our pilgrimage in common service to the world and witness to the Gospel.

Anglicans and Roman Catholics walk together by faith, guided and strengthened by our Lord who walks the pilgrim path with us. Through fifty years of dialogue our churches have explored many questions, building in hope upon the firm foundation of our common faith in Christ, his death and resurrection, and the mission of the Holy Spirit in and through the Church, as expressed in the holy scriptures and the catholic creeds. We recognize each other as brothers and sisters in Christ through baptism into this faith. We have found significant agreement about Eucharistic doctrine, ministry and salvation, and reached important convergence on authority, the Church as communion, moral principles, Mary and the saints, and episcopacy (including the role of the bishop as the symbol and promoter of unity). We share common traditions in liturgy, spirituality, and forms of consecrated and monastic life. In prayer and study together we have noted the

complementarity of our social teaching and of our pastoral efforts to live the Gospel of mercy and love. We recognize that the fruits of our dialogue need to be more widely known and received into the life of the Church. We welcome the publication of *Looking Towards a Church Fully Reconciled* (the collected works of ARCIC II), the IARCCUM website, and the many efforts at ecumenical education. Our commitment is to seek out ways in which our agreements can further transform our ecclesial life.



While we were in Rome, Pope Francis and Archbishop of Canterbury Justin Welby signed a common declaration which made reference to both longstanding and new disagreements which constitute serious obstacles to our full unity, including differences relating to the ordination of women and human sexuality in some Anglican provinces. Nevertheless, with Pope Francis and Archbishop Justin we affirm and emphasize that these differences “cannot prevent us from recognizing one another as brothers and sisters in Christ”, nor should they lead us to a lessening of our ecumenical endeavours. They encouraged us to continue to walk together as bishops on our pilgrimage.

We have discovered that as Christ draws us closer to the full visible unity which is his will, we are led to the foot of the Cross, where we stand together with the One who bears the pain of broken humanity. This too is a deep experience of communion which some have described as a communion of poverty, of persecution, even of blood. During these days together, we have shared testimonies from both communities, struggling in dire circumstances in our respective regions. These included environmental degradation; mass migration; war and persecution resulting in refugees, displaced populations, and post-conflict trauma; societal decisions eroding the dignity of human life from beginning until natural end; human trafficking and modern slavery. This ‘ecumenism of the Cross’ unites us as we bear together the plight of our people who face the challenges of our troubled world.

An essential dimension of our ‘communion of the Cross’ is standing with the poor, and reaching out together to reveal Christ’s presence among those at the margins of our world. South Sudan, Pakistan and other places of conflict were very much in our prayers. In the Middle East – the place where the Word became flesh – the very life and witness of Christian communities is threatened. The changes in our world since the inauguration of IARCCUM in 2001 call for deeper commitment to work for a just and lasting peace in the Middle East, where the meaning of the Cross is a concrete reality for millions, in what is now an age of terror and destruction.

At the foot of the Cross we, as bishops, have reflected on an ‘ecumenism of humiliation’. We lament our failures and share the brokenness of our church communities. We failed to protect vulnerable people: children from sexual abuse, women from violence, and indigenous peoples from exploitation. In this communion of shame, we confess that our own feeble witness to God’s call to life in community has contributed to the isolation of individuals and families, and even to that secularization which removes God from the public space. We, as bishops, are called to lead the church in repentance and to seek justice for the abused.

In placing the boundless mercy of God in Christ at the centre of our common proclamation and mission, we are called not only to bear the wounds of others, but also to acknowledge the wounds that we have given each other as churches through the centuries. We were reminded by the Archbishop of Canterbury that through the working of the Holy Spirit “we become each other’s healers by walking alongside each other in healing the world’s wounds.” We were also reminded by one of our brothers of the costly nature of that mission as disciples of a crucified Lord: “We are called to die together in order to rise together.”

Pope Francis reminded us that “Our ministry is that of dispelling the gloom of this world with the light of the Gospel, with the non-violent power of a love that conquers sin and overcomes death” (5 October 2016). This ministry we embrace joyfully together. It is at the heart of the universal mission of Christ’s Holy Catholic Church.

Our pilgrimage made real the experience of the Paschal Mystery. We live under the shadow of the Cross. We experience the silence of Holy Saturday and we celebrate the joy of the Resurrection. As Anglicans and Roman Catholics have done in their local contexts throughout the world, in our sharing with one other in conversation and in prayer, we found ourselves living the real but incomplete communion that exists between our churches. The unity we seek is a unity which, to a significant degree, we were already experiencing.

In these days we have also listened with immense joy to testimonies of profound friendship. We have heard stories of common witness and mission where existing ecumenical directives are being applied creatively and faithfully with great practical effectiveness at the service of the kingdom of God.

Like the disciples on the road to Emmaus, we have caught glimpses of the truth that when we walk together humbly and honestly, the Risen Lord walks with us, and the Holy Spirit, who so deeply desires our reconciliation, guides us. Our walking under the Cross opens to a relational ecumenism of joy and hope. We were also encouraged to remember that it is more important to fail at things that will ultimately succeed than to succeed at things that will ultimately fail. Our pilgrimage is, and always has been, in the hands of God, who is author of time and Lord of history.

Gestures have played a role in the long walk towards reconciliation over the past fifty years, at times speaking more strongly than our joint statements. Fifty years ago, when Pope Paul VI took off his own episcopal ring and gave it to Archbishop of Canterbury Michael Ramsey, it spoke of a new beginning in relations between the Anglican Communion and the Catholic Church, holding the promise of the unity that Christ wills for his disciples.

The gift of Pope Francis to Archbishop Justin of a replica of the pastoral staff of St Gregory the Great during our gathering, reminds us that at the heart of our proclamation as bishops is the love of God made manifest in the crucified and risen Christ, who is the Good Shepherd of us all. Archbishop Justin gave the Pope his own pectoral cross, the cross of nails from Coventry Cathedral, a symbol of the sinfulness of war and violence, and of the new life which is made possible through the reconciling work of Calvary.

We return to our homes having received the gift of a Lampedusa cross, made from the wreckage of boats carrying refugees fleeing their countries, many of whom have drowned in the Mediterranean, summoning us to stand together in countering the globalization of indifference. Gathering for Vespers at the Church of San Gregorio in Rome, from which Pope Gregory sent Augustine of Canterbury to England at the end of the 6th century, Pope Francis and Archbishop Justin commissioned us to be artisans of healing and reconciliation in the power of the Gospel, and to go forth as pairs of pilgrims, returning to our home nations and regions to encourage common prayer, mission and witness.

On the last morning of our pilgrimage, we gathered at the Basilica of St Paul Outside-the-Walls where Archbishop Michael Ramsey and Pope Paul VI signed a common declaration in 1966, launching a new stage in Anglican–Roman Catholic relations. Mindful that Jesus sent his disciples forth in pairs, we as pairs of bishops walked together through the Holy Door marking the Jubilee Year of Mercy. We go forth now motivated by our commission to continue our pilgrimage to unity and mission, developing plans of action, spreading the vision we have shared among our episcopal counterparts, our clergy, and our lay faithful. We go forward together summoned to extend the mercy and peace of God to a world in need.

Rome
7 October 2016

From the International Anglican–Roman Catholic Commission for Unity and Mission *New Steps on an Ancient Pilgrimage: Walking Together from Canterbury to Rome* 30 September to 7 October 2016