



The Holy See

**ADDRESS OF HOLY FATHER FRANCIS
TO HIS GRACE JUSTIN WELBY
ARCHBISHOP OF CANTERBURY AND PRIMATE OF THE ANGLICAN COMMUNION**

Friday, 14 June 2013

Your Grace, Dear Friends,

On the happy occasion of our first meeting, I make my own the words of [Pope Paul VI](#), when he addressed Archbishop Michael Ramsey during his historic visit in 1966: "Your steps have not brought you to a foreign dwelling ... we are pleased to open the doors to you, and with the doors, our heart, pleased and honoured as we are ... to welcome you 'not as a guest or a stranger, but as a fellow citizen of the Saints and the Family of God'" (cf. *Eph* 2:19-20).

I know that during Your Grace's installation in Canterbury Cathedral you remembered in prayer the new Bishop of Rome. I am deeply grateful to you – and since we began our respective ministries within days of each other, I think we will always have a particular reason to support one another in prayer.

The history of relations between the Church of England and the Catholic Church is long and complex, and not without pain. Recent decades, however, have been marked by a journey of rapprochement and fraternity, and for this we give heartfelt thanks to God. This journey has been brought about both via theological dialogue, through the work of the Anglican-Roman Catholic International Commission, and via the growth of cordial relations at every level through shared daily lives in a spirit of profound mutual respect and sincere cooperation. In this regard, I am very pleased to welcome alongside you Archbishop Vincent Nichols of Westminster. These firm bonds of friendship have enabled us to remain on course even when difficulties have arisen in our theological dialogue that were greater than we could have foreseen at the start of our journey.

I am grateful, too, for the sincere efforts the Church of England has made to understand the reasons that led my Predecessor, [Benedict XVI](#), to provide a canonical structure able to respond to the wishes of those groups of Anglicans who have asked to be received collectively into the Catholic Church: I am sure this will enable the spiritual, liturgical and pastoral traditions that form the Anglican patrimony to be better known and appreciated in the Catholic world.

Today's meeting, my dear brother, is an opportunity to remind ourselves that the search for unity among Christians is prompted not by practical considerations, but by the will of the Lord Jesus Christ himself, who made us his brothers and sisters, children of the One Father. Hence the prayer that we make today is of fundamental importance.

This prayer gives a fresh impulse to our daily efforts to grow towards unity, which are concretely expressed in our cooperation in various areas of daily life. Particularly important among these is our witness to the reference to God and the promotion of Christian values in a world that seems at times to call into question some of the foundations of society, such as respect for the sacredness of human life or the importance of the institution of the family built on marriage, a value that you yourself have had occasion to recall recently.

Then there is the effort to achieve greater social justice, to build an economic system that is at the service of man and promotes the common good. Among our tasks as witnesses to the love of Christ is that of giving a voice to the cry of the poor, so that they are not abandoned to the laws of an economy that seems at times to treat people as mere consumers.

I know that Your Grace is especially sensitive to all these questions, in which we share many ideas, and I am also aware of your commitment to foster reconciliation and resolution of conflicts between nations. In this regard, together with Archbishop Nichols, you have urged the authorities to find a peaceful solution to the Syrian conflict such as would guarantee the security of the entire population, including the minorities, not least among whom are the ancient local Christian communities. As you yourself have observed, we Christians bring peace and grace as a treasure to be offered to the world, but these gifts can bear fruit only when Christians live and work together in harmony. This makes it easier to contribute to building relations of respect and peaceful coexistence with those who belong to other religious traditions, and with non-believers.

The unity we so earnestly long for is a gift that comes from above and it is rooted in our communion of love with the Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit. As Christ himself promised, "where two or three are gathered in my name, there am I in the midst of them" (*Mt 18:20*). My dear brother, let us travel the path towards unity, fraternally united in charity, and with Jesus Christ, our elder Brother, as our constant point of reference. In our worship of Jesus Christ we will find the foundation and *raison d'être* of our journey. May the merciful Father hear and grant the prayers that we make to him together. Let us place all our hope in him who "is able to do far more abundantly than all that we ask or think" (*Eph 3:20*).

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