



The Holy See

**ADDRESS OF HIS HOLINESS POPE FRANCIS
TO MEMBERS OF THE ANGLICAN-ROMAN CATHOLIC INTERNATIONAL COMMISSION**

Thursday, 30 April 2015

[Multimedia]

Dear Brothers and Sisters in Christ,

1. It is a pleasure to be with you, the members of the Anglican-Roman Catholic International Commission. In these days you are gathered for a new session of your dialogue, which is now studying the relationship between the universal Church and the local Church, with particular reference to processes for discussions and decision making regarding moral and ethical questions. I cordially welcome you and wish you a successful meeting.

Your dialogue is the result of the historic meeting in 1966 between Pope Paul VI and Archbishop Ramsey, which gave rise to the first Anglican-Roman Catholic International Commission. On that occasion, they both prayed with hope for "a serious dialogue which, founded on the Gospels and on the ancient common traditions, [would] lead to that unity in truth for which Christ prayed" (*The Common Declaration by Pope Paul VI and the Archbishop of Canterbury Dr Michael Ramsey, Rome, 24 March 1966*).

We have not yet reached that goal, but we are convinced that the Holy Spirit continues to move us in that direction, notwithstanding new difficulties and challenges. Your presence here today is an indication of how the shared tradition of faith and history between Anglicans and Catholics can inspire and sustain our efforts to overcome the obstacles to full communion. Though we are fully aware of the seriousness of the challenges ahead, we can still realistically trust that together great progress will be made.

2. Shortly you will publish five jointly agreed statements of the second phase of the Anglican-Roman Catholic dialogue, with commentaries and responses. I offer my congratulations for this work. This reminds us that ecumenical relations and dialogue are not secondary elements of the

life of the Churches. The cause of unity is not an optional undertaking and the differences which divide us must not be seen as inevitable. Some wish that, after fifty years, greater progress towards unity would have been achieved. Despite difficulties, we must not lose heart, but we must trust even more in the power of the Holy Spirit, who can heal and reconcile us, and accomplish what humanly does not seem possible.

3. There is a strong bond that already unites us which goes beyond all divisions: it is the testimony of Christians from different Churches and traditions, victims of persecution and violence simply because of the faith they profess. And not only now, that there are many of them: I think also of the martyrs of Uganda, half Catholics and half Anglicans. The blood of these martyrs will nourish a new era of ecumenical commitment, a fervent desire to fulfill the last will and testament of the Lord: that all may be one (cf. *Jn 17:21*). The witness by these our brothers and sisters demands that we live in harmony with the Gospel and that we strive with determination to fulfill the Lord's will for his Church. Today the world urgently needs the common, joyful witness of Christians, from the defence of life and human dignity to the promotion of justice and peace.

Together let us invoke the gifts of the Holy Spirit in order to be able to respond courageously to "the signs of the times" which are calling all Christians to unity and common witness. May the Holy Spirit abundantly inspire your work. Many thanks for your service.