



Press Release

Pope Francis and the Archbishop of Canterbury Commission Anglican and Roman Catholic Bishops for Joint Mission and Witness in the Week of Prayer for Christian Unity

Press photos - Anglican Communion Office: <http://tinyurl.com/iarccuspressphoto>
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Today, Pope Francis and the Archbishop of Canterbury, Justin Welby, commissioned pairs of Anglican and Roman Catholic bishops from across the world at Vespers (Evening Prayer) at the *Basilica of St Paul's Outside the Walls* in Rome. Marking the end of the Week of Prayer for Christian Unity, the ecumenical congregation drawn from various Christian traditions, prayed for the unity of the Church.

The bishop pairs are currently attending 'Growing Together,' a weeklong programme of ecumenical dialogue and pilgrimage, taking place in Rome and Canterbury. It is organised by the International Anglican-Roman Catholic Commission for Unity and Mission (IARCCUM), supported by the Anglican Communion Office and the Dicastery for Promoting Christian Unity.

The Pope and the Archbishop commissioned the bishops to engage in joint mission and witness and to promote reception of the agreements already reached in theological dialogues between the two traditions. The location of the commissioning is significant, as it marks the place where the apostle Paul was buried after his martyrdom in Rome.

During the commissioning, Pope Francis addressed the bishops, saying:

"Brothers and sisters, fourteen centuries ago, Pope Gregory the Great commissioned Saint Augustine, first Archbishop of Canterbury, and his companions, to set out from Rome to preach the joy of the Gospel to the peoples of England. Today, with gratitude to God for our sharing in the Gospel, we send you forth, beloved co-workers for the kingdom of God, so that wherever you carry out your ministry, you may together bear witness to the hope that does not deceive and the unity for which our Saviour prayed."



During the commissioning, The Archbishop of Canterbury addressed the bishops, saying:

"Brothers and sisters, God reconciled us to himself through Christ and has given us the ministry of reconciliation. As we send you forth from the tomb of the Apostle to the Nations, we call on you to make this ministry your special care. As you preach and celebrate the sacraments with God's holy people, bear witness to the one hope of your calling. May your ministry alongside one another as Catholics and Anglicans be for the world a foretaste of the reconciling of all Christians in the unity of the one and only Church of Christ for which we pray this day."

The Pope and the Archbishop of Canterbury together invoked God's blessing on the pairs of bishops, using words from St Paul's second letter to the Corinthians:

The grace of the Lord Jesus Christ, the love of God, and the communion of the Holy Spirit be with all of you.

The Pope and the Archbishop then shared the sign of peace with each of the bishop pairs, as the hymn *Ubi caritas* was sung. This ancient hymn from the liturgy of Holy Week includes the words, "*By the love of Christ we have been brought together. Let us find in him our gladness and our pleasure. ... So when we as one are gathered all together, let us strive to keep our minds free of division; may there be an end to malice, strife and quarrels, and let Christ our God be dwelling here among us.*"

This is the second time that the Pope and the Archbishop of Canterbury have commissioned Anglican and Catholic bishop pairs. The first commissioning took place in 2016 at the church of San Gregorio al Celio in Rome, in the context of the first IARCCUM summit.

The service at *St Paul Outside the Walls* is one of a series of sites the bishops are visiting in both Rome and Canterbury as part of their ecumenical programme. Prayer at other holy sites include the tombs of Saints Peter, Paul, Augustine of Canterbury and Thomas à Becket.

The Chairs of the Summit, Archbishop Donald Bolen, Archbishop of Regina, Canada and Bishop David Hamid, Suffragan Bishop in Europe both commented on the commissioning.

Archbishop Donald Bolen, Archbishop of Regina, Canada said:

"When Jesus called and formed disciples, he sent them forth to continue his mission. The tradition of being sent forth in mission has continued in the Church through the ages. It continued when Pope Gregory sent Augustine to



England over 1400 years ago to spread the Gospel. Because of divisions within Christianity, this 'sending forth' has been carried out in separation, and for centuries, it was seen as being in opposition to each other. It is a sign of the great ecumenical work of recent decades, growing in understanding and in respect, that today we experience our churches' leaders jointly sending forth Anglican and Catholic bishops to carry out their mission, and wherever possible to carry it out together. It is a day of great joy for the Church."

Bishop David Hamid said:

"The IARCCUM Summit is truly a historic gathering of Anglican and Roman Catholic bishops coming together for ecumenical dialogue, prayer and commitment. For the bishops attending this week, having their ministry commissioned by both the Pope and the Archbishop of Canterbury is a significant moment. It calls and challenges them to go home and work with colleague bishops, as well as with clergy and parishes to join more profoundly in common mission in our fragmented world, sharing the love of Christ in their communities and taking steps to deepen our fellowship as we journey towards the visible unity which is Christ's will."

Ends

Notes to Editors

About IARCCUM

- IARCCUM aims to foster closer co-operation between the Anglican and Roman Catholic traditions and put into practice progress made in theological conversations.
- It works through pairs of bishops in particular countries, one Anglican and one Roman Catholic, meeting together and promoting shared mission.
- It was established in 2000, by Archbishop George Carey and Cardinal Edward Cassidy, the then President of the Pontifical Council for Promoting Christian Unity.
- IARCCUM's work is co-chaired by Bishop David Hamid, Suffragan Bishop of the Diocese in Europe, and Archbishop Donald Bolen, the Catholic Archbishop of Regina, Saskatchewan. It is supported by the Dicastery for Promoting Christian Unity in Rome and the Anglican Communion Office, Secretariat to the Anglican Communion.

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Press photos are available here and will be uploaded during the week:

<http://tinyurl.com/iarccuspressphoto>

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News releases

The Anglican Communion Office will share a series of new releases, social media commentary, photos and short film clips during the week. Channels used will include:

The Anglican Communion office website:

<https://www.anglicancommunion.org/communications/press-and-media.aspx>

FB: <https://www.facebook.com/TheAnglicanCommunion>

X: <https://twitter.com/AnglicanWorld>

Anglican Communion News Service:

<https://www.anglicannews.org/>

X: <https://twitter.com/AnglicanNews>

Some news and stories will also be shared on:

IARCCUM website: <https://iarccum.org/>

The Archbishop of Canterbury / Lambeth Palace:

<https://www.archbishopofcanterbury.org/>

FB: <https://www.facebook.com/ArchbishopofCanterbury>

X: <https://twitter.com/JustinWelby>