



The Holy See

ADDRESS OF HIS HOLINESS JOHN PAUL II

TO THE ARCHBISHOP OF CANTERBURY,

DR. GEORGE LEONARD CAREY Tuesday, 5 December 1996 Your Grace,

Dear Brothers and Sisters in Christ,

I greet you in the love which the Holy Spirit pours into our hearts (cf. Rom. 5:5).¹ Thirty years ago, after the conclusion of the Second Vatican Council, Archbishop Michael Ramsey made an official visit to Pope Paul VI. That first official visit to the Holy See by an Archbishop of Canterbury since before the tragic separation of the 16th century was to have great significance for relations between the Anglican Communion and the Catholic Church. It signalled to Catholics and Anglicans that they should, in Christian charity, put conflict behind them and work to re-establish unity. Our predecessors did not underestimate the difficulties involved. Nor did they fail to understand the urgency of the task. They declared their intention to inaugurate a serious theological dialogue, which continues today, especially through the Anglican-Roman Catholic International Commission (ARCIC).² In the years since Archbishop Ramsey's visit some of the fruits hoped for have begun to appear. There has been above all a rediscovery of the degree of *real though imperfect communion* which exists between Anglicans and Catholics. In many parts of the world there is a new spirit of co-operation between us: we have joined more fervently in prayer for the gift of unity; we have begun to work together, to bear witness together, whenever possible, on the basis of so much that is common in our heritage. The *Final Report* of the first stage of our international dialogue has highlighted points of convergence and even agreement not thought possible before ARCIC began its work. The path ahead may not be altogether clear to us, but we are here to recommit ourselves to following it. The Commission's current study of *teaching authority in the Church* can be of great help in the face of new areas of disagreement which have emerged in recent years. Sadly, these difficulties seem to loom large on the way to the reconciliation which the dialogue intended to promote. My particular responsibility as the Successor of Peter for the faith and unity of the Church leads me to invite my brothers and sisters of the Anglican Communion to reflect on the motives and reasons of the positions I have expressed in the exercise of my teaching office. Our shared desire to respond to the Lord's will cannot fail to lead us to a common understanding of the mind of Christ in every crucial aspect of the constitution of the Church.³ The approach of a new Christian Millennium, with its preparations to celebrate in a more intense way the mystery of our Saviour's Incarnation, constitutes a unique context for *our ecumenical dialogue*. In fact, the dialogue with which we are concerned is primarily "directed towards the One who, as the Redeemer of the world and the Lord of history, is himself our Reconciliation": it is the dialogue in which "Christ, the source of the Church's unity, can effectively act, with all the power of his Spirit, the Paraclete" (cf. John Paul II, *Ut Unum Sint*, 35). My brother in Christ, dear friends: may this be the subject of our prayer when we gather together again this afternoon in the Church of Saint Gregory on the Caelian Hill. © Copyright 1996 - Libreria Editrice Vaticana

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