

Meeting of Catholic Bishops Conference Committee for Christian Unity with Diocesan Ecumenical Representatives

January 14th-15th 2011

Focolare Centre, Welwyn Garden City

The meeting opened with Msgr Andrew Faley acting as chairman in the absence of Bishop Michael Evans who is terminally ill. The bishop's moving letter to his diocese (http://www.catholiceastanglia.org/bishop/index.php?module=pagemaster&PAGE_user_op=view_page&PAGE_id=3&MMN_position=78:78) relating to his health was read as part of the opening prayer.

After apologies had been received it was announced that Bernadette Haskins had resigned from membership of the CCU due to a change in her responsibilities.

Archbishop Bernard Longley of Birmingham had become chair of the Catholic Bishop's Conference Dept. of Dialogue and Unity. He had also been appointed co-chair of ARCIC III, English ARC and the URC-RC Dialogue as well as becoming a member of the recently formed Pontifical Council for the New Evangelisation.

Archbishop Kevin McDonald, Archbishop Longley's predecessor, would remain chairing the Committee for Catholic-Jewish Relations, Committee for Relations with Other Religions and the Catholic – Oriental Orthodox Forum.

Andrew Faley announced that he would be stepping down as Assistant General Secretary at the Catholic Bishops Conference and returning to his diocese of Hexham & Newcastle sometime in the middle of the year.

Churches Together in England

Bill Snelson, former CTE General Secretary, is currently undertaking a review relating to the position and functioning of the intermediate bodies in England.

Another training course was being run for recently appointed ecumenical officers at Loyola Hall, Rainhill, Merseyside 1st – 3rd March 2011.

A letter from David Cornick, CTE General Secretary, had been received announcing the formation of a CTE Co-ordinating Group on Urban Mission which would be supporting mission and ministry in inner-city areas.

English ARC

Msgr William Steele is standing down as a member of English ARC after many years of service on this body.

ARCIC

Following the announcement of ARCIC III, preliminary talks have been held by members of the Commission when they met in Rome in December 2010.

The ARCIC agreed statement on *Mary Grace and Hope in Christ* will be debated at the CoE General Synod on February 8th 2011. Bishop George Stack, auxiliary in Westminster, will address the Synod. It is anticipated that the document will be subject to critical reaction from parts of the General Synod.

Other Bilateral Dialogues

The Catholic-Oriental Orthodox Forum did not meet in 2010. A national Catholic-Baptist Group is planned to be established in the near future.

CTE Co-ordinating Group for New Housing Areas

A meeting at Milton Keynes had taken place. Christian presence in new housing areas is often in the form of house groups. The co-ordinating group is trying to ascertain if Catholic clergy have a presence in such developments and whether they work ecumenically.

Five Churches Ecumenical Officers Meeting, Swanwick October 2010 Review

The papers presented at this conference had still not been made available on the CTE website. One observation made was that the Catholic representation at the meeting was predominantly lay whereas all the other churches representatives were overwhelmingly clerical. There had been no space in the timetable for the representatives from each church to meet together in their own denomination. The eastern churches were absent and barely a consideration by those from the non-Catholic traditions. Those who have attended similar events over the years noted that they were meeting with almost the same set of people and there was little new blood. In the plenary session there was a disproportionate amount of time dealing with problems of LEP's especially those between Anglicans and Methodists. The problem of clergy very often not being ecumenically minded and therefore being an obstacle to ecumenical cooperation was highlighted. A corollary to this was that whereas the exchange of those in Anglican and Catholic priestly formation to spend a period of time in each other's seminaries and theological colleges was oversubscribed in the early years of the scheme, it is now difficult to find sufficient individuals from each tradition to fill the allotted places.

Apostolic Constitution *Anglicanorum Coetibus*

It was stressed that the erection of the ordinariate was an ecclesial process not an ecumenical one in that the shape of the Catholic Church was being changed to accommodate a group from the Anglican Communion. It was a response by Pope Benedict to requests which enhances the diversity within the full communion of the Church. A planned meeting of Anglican and Catholic bishops on 4th April 2011 to discuss IARCCUM will now also include a discussion on the ordinariate at the request of the Anglican bishops. An overseeing group of Anglican and Catholic bishops is to be formed to deal with pastoral oversight issues ranging from the use of properties to ordinariate clergy involvement in local ecumenical contexts. At present ten Catholic dioceses will have ordinariate congregations in their territories.

There followed an extensive discussion at which a number of questions were asked. On the Catholic Bishop's Conference website there is a frequently asked question and answer format available at <http://www.catholic-ew.org.uk/Catholic-Church/Ordinariate/Background-Information> . When asked what the feeling was in the CoE towards the erection of the ordinariate Msgr. Faley said that it had sharpened the ache that already existed arising from the tension between the different traditions within the CoE. He also felt that it had broken any sense of anti-Catholicism that residually existed in the CoE institution, namely, the episcopate. In answer to a question about what constituted the Anglican patrimony that the ordinariate would bring, it was stated that this did not include synodical government which is inimical to the mode of governance in the Catholic Church.

An observation was made that some of the norms drawn up for the ordinariate were not consistent with existing canonical norms within the Code of Canon Law or with certain articles in the Constitutions and Decrees of Vatican II.

Given that requests which led to the erection of the ordinariate came from groups in North America and Australia why was the first ordinariate group being formed in England? The response given was that as England is the location of the mother church of the Anglican Communion it was right and fitting that the initial ordinariate group should be located in the same territory.

Papal Visit

Four diocesan reports were received on ecumenical reactions to Pope Benedict's UK visit. From an ecumenical perspective there has been an overwhelmingly positive response from other Christian traditions to the papal visit. It was quite palpable that Pope Benedict and the papal entourage, unfamiliar with non-Catholic liturgy, had been very impressed by the liturgy and music of the ecumenical vespers at Westminster Abbey. The sight of CoE and Catholic bishops mingled together also sent a powerful signal of the fraternal relations that exist between the two churches. A day conference will be held to reflect on the impact of the papal visit. A suggestion has been made to the bishops that encouragement be given to reciting a prayer for Christian unity regularly once a month,

e.g. third Friday of the month, in every community of the Catholic Church and other Christian traditions. Following composition of the prayer it would be disseminated through the auspices of CTE.

***Harvesting the Fruits* by Cardinal Walter Kasper**

Msgr Mark Langham, formerly administrator at Westminster Cathedral and now working at the Pontifical Council for Promoting Christian Unity in Rome, [gave a paper](#) on Cardinal Kasper's recent book *Harvesting the Fruits – Aspects of Christian Faith in Ecumenical Dialogue*. It was a rich commentary on this publication.

A symposium based on the book has taken place in Rome. There still remains the question of reception of the book's contents. Cardinal Kasper is amazed at the degree of theological agreement that has been achieved, but the challenge remains of how to communicate this to the wider faithful at both the leadership, i.e. episcopate, and grass roots levels. There needs to be an explanation of theology and why we do theology in different ways. The concept of receptive ecumenism is important. A focus on mission would prevent excessive navel gazing. More tangible suggestions include a call for a common translation of the scriptures and a formulation of a common ecumenical declaration which every Christian can use and own.

During the presentation the issue of the Petrine Ministry in an ecumenical context was mentioned in connection with the bilateral dialogues. A question was asked regarding the response to Pope-John Paul's request in *Ut Unum Sint* to other Christian churches on how this ministry might be exercised. Msgr. Langham confirmed that a number of responses had been received but they would not be published by the Vatican. He added that the current climate in Rome is not conducive to any debate on the exercise or questioning of the operation of the Petrine Ministry. There is a view in certain Roman circles that we have now passed the historical moment when the request was made and, consequently, the question is no longer pertinent. When asked why Cardinal Kasper's book was published by Continuum and not by the in-house publisher of the Holy See, Msgr. Langham said that was the only way for the book to have appeared in timely fashion, otherwise it would have been caught up in the CDF system with the possibility that it might never have appeared or a significantly edited version published. In a follow up question as to whether it was a private publication of an individual or had official status Msgr. Langham replied that given the position Cardinal Kasper held before he retired it could be regarded that the book has quasi-official status.

Any Other Business

A brief summary of recent meetings of the Methodist Anglican Panel for Unity and Mission (MAPUM) was provided by Catholic observers on this body.

The meeting was apprised of the current situation in Wales with regard to CYTUN.

The next CCUDER's meeting is 17th/18th June 2011 at the Focolare Centre, Welwyn Garden City.