

*Catholic Church. Pope (1963-1978: Paul VI)
- Joint statement on Christian unity
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JOINT STATEMENT ON CHRISTIAN UNITY

Issued in Rome on March 24, 1966

by

Pope Paul VI and Anglican Archbishop
Michael Ramsey of Canterbury

In this city of Rome, from which St. Augustine was sent by St. Gregory to England and there founded the cathedral See of Canterbury, toward which the eyes of all Anglicans now turn as the center of their Christian communion, His Holiness Pope Paul VI and His Grace Michael Ramsey, Archbishop of Canterbury, representing the Anglican Communion, have met to exchange fraternal greetings.

At the conclusion of their meeting they give thanks to Almighty God who by the action of the Holy Spirit has in these latter years created a new atmosphere of Christian fellowship between the Roman Catholic Church and the Churches of the Anglican Communion.

This encounter of March 23, 1966, marks a new stage in the development of fraternal relations, based upon Christian charity, and of sincere efforts to remove the causes of conflict and to re-establish unity.

In willing obedience to the command of Christ, who bade His disciples love one another, they declare that, with His help, they wish to leave in the hands of the God of mercy all that in the past has been opposed to this precept of charity, and that they make their own the mind of the Apostle which he expressed in these words: "Forgetting those things which are behind, and reaching forth unto those things which are before, I press toward the mark for the prize of the high calling of God in Christ Jesus" (Phil. 3:13-14).

They affirm their desire that all those Christians who belong to these two communions may be animated by these same sentiments of respect, esteem and fraternal love, and in order to help these develop to the full, they intend to inaugurate between the Roman Catholic Church and the Anglican Communion a serious dialogue which, founded on the Gospels and on the ancient common traditions, may lead to that unity in truth, for which Christ prayed.

The dialogue should include not only theological matters such as Scripture, tradition and the liturgy, but also matters of practical difficulty felt on either side. His Holiness the Pope and His Grace the Archbishop of Canterbury are, indeed, aware that serious obstacles stand in the way of a restoration of complete communion of faith and sacramental life. Nevertheless, they are of one mind in their determination to promote responsible contacts between their communions in all those spheres of church life where collaboration is likely to lead to a greater understanding and a deeper charity, and to strive in common to find solutions for all the great problems that face those who believe in Christ in the world of today.

Through such collaboration, by the grace of God the Father and in the light of the Holy Spirit, may the prayer of our Lord Jesus Christ for unity among His disciples be brought nearer to fulfillment, and with progress toward unity may there be a strengthening of peace in the world, the peace that only He can grant who gives "The peace that passeth all understanding," together with the blessing of Almighty God, Father, Son and Holy Spirit, that it may abide with all men forever.

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National Catholic Welfare Conference

1312 Massachusetts Avenue, N. W.

Washington, D. C. 20005