

## **ARCIC AND IARCCUM: AN INTERCHURCH FAMILY PERSPECTIVE**

### **Mississauga**

How do we gather together the fruits of the Anglican-Roman Catholic international theological dialogue (the work of ARCIC) over the period since Archbishop Michael Ramsey's visit to Pope Paul in 1966, and draw out the practical conclusions that should be seen in the life of our two Communion? That was the question that faced the gathering of Anglican and Roman Catholic primates and bishops convened by Cardinal Edward Cassidy, then President of the Pontifical Council for Promoting Christian Unity, and the then Archbishop of Canterbury, George Carey, at Mississauga, Toronto, Canada, in May 2000. Without bringing the theological work of ARCIC to an end, the Mississauga gathering asked for the establishment of a new commission, composed largely of bishops. It was 'to oversee the preparation of a Joint Declaration of Agreement, and promote and monitor the reception of ARCIC agreements, as well as facilitate the development of strategies for translating the degree of spiritual communion that has been achieved into visible and practical outcomes'.

While welcoming the prospect of a Joint Declaration of Agreement, interchurch families had reason to be particularly interested in the practical outcomes that could be drawn for the life of the two Communion from the work of ARCIC. Both the statement issued at the end of the Mississauga meeting, 'Communion in Mission', and also the 'Action Plan' put forward to implement it, contained references to interchurch families. Communion in Mission (no.7) said that:

*'Though interchurch families can be signs of unity and hope, one pressing concern has to do with addressing the need to provide joint pastoral care for them. Sometimes those in interchurch families experience great pain, particularly in the area of eucharistic life.'*

The Action Plan mandated the new Commission, among other things, *'to examine the range of possible ways, within current canon law provisions, to deal generously and pastorally with situations of interchurch marriages involving Anglicans and Roman Catholics.'*

### **The IARCCUM report**

The International Anglican-Roman Catholic Commission on Unity and Mission (IARCCUM) was duly set up, and has now produced its Report. This was published by SPCK early in 2007 as a 64-page booklet: *Growing Together in Unity and Mission: Building on 40 years of Anglican-Roman Catholic Dialogue: an Agreed Statement of the International Anglican-Roman Catholic Commission for Unity and Mission*. It was jointly issued in September 2007 together with a Catholic commentary by Bishop Bernard Longley, Auxilliary Bishop of Westminster, and an Anglican commentary and study-guide by Bishop Paul Richardson, Assistant Bishop in the Anglican diocese of Newcastle.

As the two co-chairs, the Roman Catholic Archbishop of Brisbane and the Anglican Bishop of the Highveld, point out in their Preface, the 'force of events, particularly difficulties in the life of the Anglican Communion, had its impact on the work of the Commission'. Thus the high hopes that resulted from the Mississauga meeting have not all been fulfilled. Instead of a 'Joint Declaration of Agreement' that could be signed at the highest levels of our Communion, Part One of the Report (48 pages) gives us 'The Achievements of the Anglican-Roman Catholic Dialogue' for study. It is however very useful to have this overview of ARCIC's work, with its solid achievements and also the highlighting of issues that need further study. When it comes to Part Two, 'Towards Unity and Common Mission' (8 pages), there are four sections. 'Visible expressions of our shared faith' concentrates on liturgical possibilities. 'Joint study of our faith' recommends joint study of the Scriptures, study of the Agreed Statements of ARCIC,

encouragement of national Anglican-Roman Catholic Commissions, and sharing of theological resources. 'Co-operation in ministry' encourages joint annual meetings of bishops. It advocates considering the association of Anglican bishops with Roman Catholic bishops in their *ad limina* visits to Rome, public acknowledging the fruitfulness of each other's ordained ministries, the strengthening of relations between Anglican and Catholic religious orders, and the sharing of pastoral and spiritual care. 'Shared Witness in the World' covers joint approaches to public life, evangelism, schools, other religions.

### **Interchurch families**

The short paragraph (116) on the sharing of pastoral and spiritual care mentions mutual spiritual direction, and then states:

*'Of particular concern in the area of ministry is the need to develop programmes of joint pastoral care for interchurch families (including marriage preparation) and to find ways to minister to their concerns.'*

We can reasonably ask what has become of Mississauga's specific reference to eucharistic life? And what happened to IARCCUM's mandate given in the Action Plan 'to examine the range of possible ways, within current canon law provisions, to deal generously and pastorally with situations of interchurch marriages involving Anglicans and Roman Catholic'? After seven years, the IARCCUM Report appears to be weaker than Mississauga's recommendations so far as interchurch families are concerned. Did the canon lawyers ever get together?

Far more effort seems to have gone into IARCCUM's 48 pages of theological activity than into the 8 pages on practical outcomes. Still, interchurch families remain on the agenda. It may be that no more can be done on the international level until more has been done nationally and regionally to put into effect the pastoral possibilities that already exist. That is up to the local bishops.

Bishop Bernard Longley's Commentary on this section however will be very welcome to interchurch families; in fact, he develops the proposal of IARCCUM with real pastoral understanding. He says:

*'It is heartening that Growing Together in Unity and Mission singles out interchurch families as especially deserving recipients of shared pastoral and spiritual care. Interchurch families have a particular ecclesial significance, in part because they experience continuously and most intimately both the reality and the imperfections of the communion which Anglicans and Roman Catholics share. So the text is careful to recommend a specific approach: 'Of particular concern in the area of ministry is the need to develop programmes of joint pastoral care for interchurch families (including marriage preparation) and to find ways to minister to their concerns' (116). Such pastoral care and marriage preparation would need to be attentive to the principles set forth in the Ecumenical Directory (143-160). It would help to highlight both the needs of interchurch families, and that much may be learnt from their experiences and insights, if the ecclesial significance of interchurch families could be further explored within our two Communion.'*

Interchurch families will be grateful and happy if this approach is adopted.

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