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Prayer, witness and mission: signs of the common journey of Catholics and Anglicans

“It is a beautiful sign of fraternity to see the Primates of so many Provinces of the Anglican Communion joining Your Grace (the archbishop of Canterbury, Justin Welby) here in Rome”, said the Pope this morning, as he received in the Hall of Popes 35 Primates of this confession, in Rome to commemorate the fiftieth anniversary of the meeting between Blessed Paul VI and Archbishop Michael Ramsey. As the Holy Father recalled, the meeting has produced many fruits, including the opening of the Anglican Centre in Rome, the appointment of the archbishop’s permanent representative to the Holy See, and the beginning of theological dialogue between Catholics and Anglicans, represented by the volume containing five documents from the second phase of ARCIC (Anglican Roman-Catholic International Commission) from 1982 to 2005.

“In sharing together these fruits, we remember that they come from a tree which has its roots in that meeting of fifty years ago”, said Francis. “Reflecting on our continuing common journey, three words come to mind: prayer, witness, mission”.

“Prayer: yesterday evening we celebrated Vespers, and this morning you prayed here at the tomb of the Apostle Peter. Let us never grow tired of asking the Lord together and insistently for the gift of unity”.

“Witness: these past fifty years of encounter and exchange, as well as reflection and common texts, speak to us of Christians who, for faith and with faith, have listened to one another and shared their time and energy. The conviction has grown that ecumenism is never an impoverishment, but a richness; the certainty has deepened that what the Spirit has sown in the other yields a common harvest. Let us treasure this inheritance and know that we are called each day to offer to the world, as Jesus asked, the witness of our love and unity”.

“Mission: there is a time for everything and now is the time in which the Lord challenges us, in a particular way, to go out from ourselves and our own environs, in order to bring his merciful love to a world thirsting for peace. Let us help one another to keep at the centre the demands of the Gospel and to spend ourselves concretely in this mission”.

“And to ask the grace of growing in prayer, in bearing witness and in going out in mission, may I invite you to pray together the Lord’s Prayer”, the Pope concluded.