SALA STAMPA DELLA SANTA SEDE
BOLLETTINO
HOLY SEE PRESS OFFICE BUREAU DE PRESSE DU SAINT-SIÈGE PRESSEAMT DES HEILIGEN STUHLS
OFICINA DE PRENSA DE LA SANTA SEDE SALA DE IMPRENSA DA SANTA SÉ
BIURO PRASOWE STOLICY APOSTOLSKIEJ دار الصحافة التابعة للكرسي الرسولي

N. 0596

Giovedì 23.11.2006

UDIENZA ALL'ARCIVESCOVO DI CANTERBURY, PRIMATE DELLA COMUNIONE ANGLICANA, SUA GRAZIA DR. ROWAN WILLIAMS

Alle 11.30 di questa mattina, il Santo Padre Benedetto XVI riceve in Udienza Sua Grazia il Dr. Rowan Williams, Arcivescovo di Canterbury, Primate della Comunione Anglicana, e il suo Seguito e rivolge loro il discorso che riportiamo di seguito:

● DISCORSO DEL SANTO PADRE

Your Grace,
Dear friends,

Grace and peace to you in the Lord Jesus Christ! Your visit here today brings to mind the important custom established by our predecessors in recent decades. It also reminds us of the much longer history of relations between the See of Rome and the See of Canterbury which began when Pope Gregory the Great sent Saint Augustine to the land of the Anglo-Saxons over 1400 years ago. I am happy today to welcome you and the distinguished delegation accompanying you. This is not our first meeting. Indeed, I was grateful for your presence, and that of other representatives of the Anglican Communion, at the funeral of Pope John Paul II, and again at the inauguration of my pontificate a year and a half ago.

Your visit to the Holy See coincides with the fortieth anniversary of the visit of the then Archbishop of Canterbury, Dr Michael Ramsey, to Pope Paul VI. It was a visit filled with great promise, as the Anglican Communion and the Catholic Church took steps towards initiating a dialogue about the questions to be addressed in the search for full visible unity.

There is much in our relations over the past forty years for which we must give thanks. The work of the theological dialogue commission has been a source of encouragement as matters of doctrine which have separated us in the past have been addressed. The friendship and good relations which exist in many places between Anglicans and Catholics have helped to create a new context in which our shared witness to the Gospel of Jesus Christ has been nourished and advanced. The visits of Archbishops of Canterbury to the Holy See have served to strengthen those relations and have played an important role in addressing the obstacles which keep us apart. This tradition helped give rise to a constructive meeting of Anglican and Catholic bishops in

Mississauga, Canada, in May 2000, when it was agreed to form a joint commission of bishops to discern appropriate ways to express in ecclesial life the progress which has already been made. For all of this, we give thanks to God.

In the present context, however, and especially in the secularized Western world, there are many negative influences and pressures which affect Christians and Christian communities. Over the last three years you have spoken openly about the strains and difficulties besetting the Anglican Communion and consequently about the uncertainty of the future of the Communion itself. Recent developments, especially concerning the ordained ministry and certain moral teachings, have affected not only internal relations within the Anglican Communion but also relations between the Anglican Communion and the Catholic Church. We believe that these matters, which are presently under discussion within the Anglican Communion, are of vital importance to the preaching of the Gospel in its integrity, and that your current discussions will shape the future of our relations. It is to be hoped that the work of the theological dialogue, which had registered no small degree of agreement on these and other important theological matters, will continue be taken seriously in your discernment. In these deliberations we accompany you with heartfelt prayer. It is our fervent hope that the Anglican Communion will remain grounded in the Gospels and the Apostolic Tradition which form our common patrimony and are the basis of our common aspiration to work for full visible unity.

The world needs our witness and the strength which comes from an undivided proclamation of the Gospel. The immense sufferings of the human family and the forms of injustice that adversely affect the lives of so many people constitute an urgent call for our shared witness and service. Precisely for this reason, and even amidst present difficulties, it is important that we continue our theological dialogue. I hope that your visit will assist in finding constructive ways forward in the current circumstances.

May the Lord continue to bless you and your family, and may he strengthen you in your ministry to the Anglican Communion!

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