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JOINT STATEMENT BY THE ARCHBISHOP OF WESTMINSTER AND THE ARCHBISHOP OF CANTERBURY

Today's announcement of the Apostolic Constitution is a response by Pope Benedict XVI to a number of requests over the past few years to the Holy See from groups of Anglicans who wish to enter into full visible communion with the Roman Catholic Church, and are willing to declare that they share a common Catholic faith and accept the Petrine ministry as willed by Christ for his Church.

Pope Benedict XVI has approved, within the Apostolic Constitution, a canonical structure that provides for Personal Ordinariates, which will allow former Anglicans to enter full communion with the Catholic Church while preserving elements of distinctive Anglican spiritual patrimony.

The announcement of this Apostolic Constitution brings to an end a period of uncertainty for such groups who have nurtured hopes of new ways of embracing unity with the Catholic Church. It will now be up to those who have made requests to the Holy See to respond to the Apostolic Constitution.

The Apostolic Constitution is further recognition of the substantial overlap in faith, doctrine and spirituality between the Catholic Church and the Anglican tradition. Without the dialogues of the past forty years, this recognition would not have been possible, nor would hopes for full visible unity have been nurtured. In this sense, this Apostolic Constitution is one consequence of ecumenical dialogue between the Catholic Church and the Anglican Communion.

The on-going official dialogue between the Catholic Church and the Anglican Communion provides the basis for our continuing cooperation. The Anglican Roman Catholic International Commission (ARCIC) and International Anglican Roman Catholic Commission for Unity and Mission (IARCCUM) agreements make clear the path we will follow together.

With God's grace and prayer we are determined that our on-going mutual commitment and consultation on these and other matters should continue to be strengthened. Locally, in the spirit of IARCCUM, we look forward to building on the pattern of shared meetings between the Catholic Bishops Conference of England and Wales and the Church of England's House of Bishops with a focus on our common mission. Joint days of reflection and

prayer were begun in Leeds in 2006 and continued in Lambeth in 2008, and further meetings are in preparation. This close cooperation will continue as we grow together in unity and mission, in witness to the Gospel in our country, and in the Church at large.

London, 20 October 2009

+ Vincent Gerard Nichols

+ Rowan Williams

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