



The Holy See

MESSAGE OF JOHN PAUL II TO THE ARCHBISHOP OF CANTERBURY

TO HIS GRACE

THE MOST REVEREND AND RIGHT HONOURABLE

ROWAN WILLIAMS

ARCHBISHOP OF CANTERBURY I greet you in the name of the "one God and Father of us all", and of his Son, our Lord, Jesus Christ (cf. *Eph 4:5-6*), and with sentiments of joy and cordial esteem I offer my prayerful best wishes on the occasion of your enthronement as Archbishop of Canterbury. The liturgy of your enthronement will be an occasion for you and for the Anglican Communion to celebrate the glory of God, contemplating Saint John's vision of a multitude crying out, "Alleluia! Salvation and glory and power belong to our God" (*Rev 19: 1*). You will ponder the mystery of God, who calls and sends forth those who, like Isaiah, do not consider themselves prepared (*Is 6:5-8*). You begin your ministry as Archbishop of Canterbury at a painful and tense moment in history, a moment nonetheless marked by hope and promise. Marred by long-standing and seemingly relentless conflicts, the world stands on the brink of yet another war. The dignity of the human person is being threatened and undermined in various ways. Whole populations, especially the most vulnerable, are living amidst fear and danger. At times the ardent and legitimate human longing for freedom and security manifests itself through the wrong means, means which themselves are violent and destructive. It is precisely amidst these tensions and difficulties of our world that we are called to serve. We can sincerely rejoice in the fact that, in recent decades, our predecessors have developed an increasingly close relationship, even bonds of affection, through constructive dialogue and close communication. They set the Catholic Church and the Anglican Communion on a path that they hoped would lead to full communion. Despite disagreements and obstacles, we are still on that path, and irrevocably committed to it. Over the past decade, the various opportunities to meet Dr George Carey have been particularly helpful and encouraging, signs of progress on our ecumenical journey. The work of the Anglican-Roman Catholic International Commission, and the more recently formed International Commission for Unity and Mission, continue to move us forward. We are both aware that overcoming divisions is no easy task, and that full communion will come as a gift of the Holy Spirit. That same Spirit prods and guides us even now to continue to seek a resolution to remaining areas of doctrinal disagreement, and to engage more profoundly in common witness and mission. With renewed sentiments of fraternal regard, I invoke upon you the blessings of Almighty God as you take up your lofty responsibilities. Amidst whatever trials and tribulations you may encounter, may you ever know the glory of the Father, the steady guidance of the Holy Spirit, and the merciful face of our Lord Jesus Christ. *From the Vatican, 13 February*

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