



The Holy See

EPISTULA *

AS THE TENTH ANNIVERSARY

Alterum Summi Pontificis ad Suam Gratiam Rev.mum Doctorem Fridericum Donaldum Coggan, Archiepiscopum Cantuariensem, datum rescriptum de mulierum sacerdotio.

PAULUS PP. VI

As the tenth anniversary comes round of your revered predecessor's visit to Rome, we write to reciprocate with all sincerity the gratitude and the hope which, in recalling that historic occasion, you express in a letter recently handed to us by Bishop John Howe.

It is good to know that the resolves taken, the dialogue entered upon tell years ago, have continued and spread to many places, and that a new spirit of mutual consideration and trust increasingly pervades our relations.

In such a spirit of candour and trust you allude in your letter of greeting to a problem which has recently loomed large: the likelihood, already very strong it seems in some places, that the Anglican Churches will proceed to admit women to the ordained priesthood. We had already exchanged letters with you on this subject, and were able to express the Catholic conviction more fully to Bishop John Howe when he brought your greetings. Our affection for the Anglican Communion has for many years been strong, and we have always nourished and often expressed ardent hopes that the Holy Spirit would lead us, in love and in obedience to God's will, along the path of reconciliation. This must be the measure of the sadness with which we encounter so grave a new obstacle and threat on that path.

But it is no part of corresponding to the promptings of the Holy Spirit to fail in the virtue of hope. With all the force of the love which moves us we pray that at this critical time the Spirit of God may shed his light abundantly on all of us, and that his guiding hand may keep us in the way of

reconciliation according to his will.

Moreover, we sincerely appreciate the fact that you have expressed a desire to meet us, and we assure you that on our part we would look upon such a meeting as a great blessing and another means of furthering that complete unity willed by Christ for his Church.

From the Vatican, 23 March 1976.

PAULUS PP. VI

* AAS 68 (1976), pp. 600-601.