

Anglican-Catholic Dialogue Presses On

ARCIC III's Obstacles Greater Than Ever; Ultimate Aim Still Unity

BOSE, Italy, MAY 17, 2011 ([Zenit.org](http://www.zenit.org)).- One might wonder if it's foolish optimism that has gathered 10 Anglicans and seven Catholics of the Anglican-Catholic dialogue commission in northern Italy today, to begin the third session of the decades-long dialogue between the two groups.

The obstacles separating Anglicans and Catholics are steeper than they've been in years, with Anglicans forging ahead on the ordination of women and homosexuals, despite the dismay of some within the Communion. Catholics, meanwhile, have been accused of "fishing in Anglican ponds," since Benedict XVI established a new ecclesial structure for Anglicans to enter Catholic communion en masse.

But, nestled within the ecumenical monastic community of Bose, Italy, the 17 ecumenically minded men and women are, according to the Catholic co-chair of the the Anglican-Roman Catholic International Commission (ARCIC), devoted to an ultimate aim that "must remain the same."

"Both the Catholic Church and the Anglican Communion are committed to working and praying for the full, visible unity of the Church and we see ARCIC as contributing to that end," Archbishop Bernard Longley of Birmingham, England, said in an interview with his press secretary, Peter Jennings.

The archbishop acknowledged that "the climate in which ARCIC III is working is very different from that of ARCIC I or ARCIC II. [...] Of course, we must face the obstacles that make that journey much more difficult."

The commission members will be at Bose for 10 days, following a mandate from Benedict XVI and Anglican Archbishop Rowan Williams when the two met in November 2009.

ARCIC I dates back to 1966, in response to the Second Vatican Council and as a result of the visit of the then-Archbishop of Canterbury, Michael Ramsey, to Pope Paul VI.

This year, Archbishop Longley explained, the group will consider "the nature of the Church as understood by Anglicans and Catholics" and "the way that the Church arrives at authoritative teaching, especially about moral issues."

"On that basis ARCIC III will look at two connected areas of theology," he said, "the Church as Communion, local and universal and how in communion the local and universal Church come to discern right ethical teaching."

In other words, they will be considering the foundations that presuppose any convergence in thinking on such matters as homosexual relationships.

"This phase of ARCIC will recognize the impact of the actions of some Anglican Provinces which have raised the issue of the nature of communion within the Church," Archbishop Longley stated. "We hope ARCIC III can make a contribution to resolving some of the issues that seem so intractable at present."

The commission members spent today getting to know each other, though one member from each side participated in ARCIC II, and the co-chairs are old college friends.

Four women are in the group -- two Catholics and two Anglicans. The Catholic commission includes Janet Smith, professor of moral theology and the Father Michael J. McGivney Chair of Life Issues at the Sacred Heart Major Seminary in Detroit, Michigan; and Sister Teresa Okure of the Society of the Holy Child Jesus, from the Catholic Institute of West Africa, Nigeria.

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