

Office of Information and Communication of the
International Old Catholic Bishops' Conference
Of the Union of Utrecht

Delegation of the International Old Catholic Bishops' Conference (IBC) visit the Archbishop of Canterbury

Archbishop Dr. Joris Vercammen (President of the IBC) and Bishop Fritz-René Müller (Secretary of the IBC) spent from 13th to 14th October on a visit to Dr. Rowan Williams, Archbishop of Canterbury. They had requested a talk, on behalf of the Old Catholic Bishops' Conference, to address above all two important issues of relevance to the relations between both churches.

The first part of their talks covered the co-operation between Anglicans and Old Catholics in Europe. In particular the question of overlapping jurisdictions of the two churches, which are in full communion with one another, on continental Europe was discussed. In some places two or more bishops, who are in full communion with one another, are responsible for the same area. This poses for both churches an ecclesiological problem which is to be addressed through further reflection together. The Archbishop of Canterbury has agreed to encourage the Anglican Bishops responsible for the European Diocese to draw in their fellow Old Catholic bishops in their considerations about the future shape of the 'Diocese in Europe'. To this end it is proposed that a working party of bishops of both denominations soon be established.

The second area of the discussions covered the possibility of co-operation between non-Roman Catholic bishops who have close relations to the See of Canterbury but are not part of the Anglican Church. On this point the two church leaders came to agreement that at the next Lambeth Conference, probably in 2008, they would organise a meeting of these bishops; Anglican bishops of extra provincial dioceses could also be drawn into this meeting. At such a meeting it is proposed to explore whether moves to deepen relations between each other would be generally welcome.

The talks took place in a friendly and constructive atmosphere and have prepared the way for the common future of both churches.

Amersfoort and Bern, October 2005

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