
England and Wales: meeting of Catholic and Anglican Bishops. Mgr. Longley to SIR, “a deep, lasting friendship”

(Norwich) “When you start a friendship, when you are starting to know each other, the two people are focussed on learning who the other is, and the focus of the relationship is on discovering that new friend. However, when the friendship has moved on and got deeper and is well established, we realise that what receive from the other person is a deep look into ourselves, the intuition, in the eyes of that now familiar friend, of what we really are”. Mgr. Bernard Longley, Archbishop of Birmingham, Chair of the Department of Dialogue and Unity of the Catholic Bishops’ Conference of England and Wales, a key figure in ecumenical dialogue between the English Catholic Church and the Church of England, uses this image to take stock of the stage that the journey towards the unity of the two Churches is at, in this early 2024. From Norwich, where the two days’ cohabitation of about fifty fellow Anglican and Catholic Bishops took place, the prelate explains that, “through the mirror of the common journey, thanks to our Anglican brothers, over these sixty years we have learnt a lot on what we are, on our mission and on our role, and there have been lots of opportunities because meetings, especially local meetings, between pastors of the two Churches are frequent”. “I am a close friend of the Anglican Bishop of Worcester, John Inge, and last week we were reminiscing together about our youth, fifty years ago, when our expectations about a full, visible unity were much stronger than they are now”, Archbishop Longley concludes. “However, our commitment has not changed, and what we have learnt is that the Holy Spirit guides us, and it is not up to us to decide the times of this journey towards the accomplishment of that sentence of John Chapter seventeen, ‘that they may be one’. As to obstacles and challenges, they have not weakened our hope, which is still undiminished”.

Valentina Bombelli