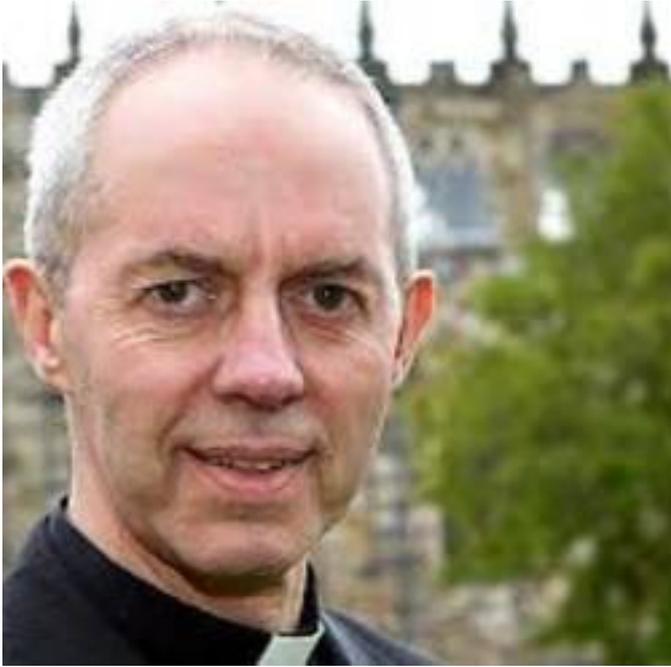


Archbishop of Canterbury to visit Pope Francis in June



The meeting between the two religious leaders on 14 June will be of deep ecumenical significance

Justin Welby, who was enthroned as Archbishop of Canterbury and world leader of the Church of England, in Canterbury Cathedral last 21 March, is to visit Pope Francis in Rome on 14 June.

The Church of England has 80 million faithful across 146 countries.

The news was confirmed by Mgr. Mark Langham of the Pontifical Council for Promoting Christian Unity and Marie Papworth, one of the Anglican Primate's spokespeople, in a statement to England the Italian bishops' press agency, SIR.

“It will be a “short, informal courtesy visit” but “significant” because “it will be the first meeting” of the two leaders: Mons. Langham recalls that Archbishop Welby could not be present alongside other religious leaders at the Mass for the beginning of Pope Francis' pontificate on 19 March 2013 in Rome, because he himself would be sworn in as archbishop of Canterbury with an enthronement ceremony two days later,” SIR reports.

Mgr. Langham said the meeting on 14 June would be an opportunity for Francis and Archbishop Welby “to get to know each other better, more closely.” He added that “Archbishop Welby has a

strong desire to speak with the Pope and, together with him, do something for justice and poverty. They both share the same concerns, so I believe it will be a very fruitful meeting.”

It has been a tradition for the past 50 years for the Archbishop of Canterbury to visit Rome to meet the Pope and Justin Welby is no exception. When Archbishop Welby was enthroned in London on 21 March, Pope Francis sent him a message which read: “I look forward to meeting you in the near future, and to continuing the warm fraternal relations that our predecessors enjoyed.”

The Church of England’s relations with British society are tense, especially now that the government is due to pass a law legalising same-sex marriage. Some are anxious to see the Queen sign the bill as this would raise questions about its legitimacy: agreeing to same-sex marriage would be a betrayal of her promise to respect the Laws of God.

The effects of the split in the Anglican Church when the Synod voted against the ordination of women bishops last autumn are still felt. Meanwhile, questions have been raised over the bishops’ decision to present the proposal again in 2015. These bishops insist that ordaining women bishops is first and foremost a theological choice and not an attempt to follow today’s trends, as many opponents claim it is.

Welby is sensitive - partly thanks to his previous role – to social questions and lost no time in siding with Catholic bishops, especially London’s archbishop, Vincent Nichols, to oppose British prime minister David Cameron’s welfare cuts and sign – along with a number of other religious leaders – the Letter to participants of the G8 summit due open in Ireland on 17 June.

The Archbishop of Canterbury will arrive in Rome on the evening of Friday 14th and on the Saturday he will pray at the tomb of John Paul II in St. Peter’s Basilica. He is expected to meet with the President of the Pontifical Council for Promoting Christian Unity, the Swiss cardinal Kurt Koch, and attend an audience with Pope Francis. After this, the two will share a moment of prayer, followed by lunch in St. Martha’s House.

Vatican Insider - Maria Teresa Pontara