

Pope Francis appreciates the 'pragmatic minority' temperament of English Catholicism



Cardinal Vincent Nichols said this week that he believes Pope Francis appreciates the experience of the English Catholic Church in learning to exist in a culture that does not always agree with it.

The cardinal was speaking following the appointment of Archbishop Paul Gallagher, a priest from the Archdiocese of Liverpool and senior Vatican diplomat, as the Holy See's Secretary for Relations with States.

Asked if the Pope appreciated the English approach, he said: "I think there is something about the English temperament that appeals to Pope Francis. It is a temperament that wants to find solutions, that has been fashioned in a culture in which the Catholic Church is not a dominant minority or not even a hugely strong

Speaking at a press conference at Eccleston Square, London, after the bishops' meeting in Leeds, the cardinal added: "From our earliest days [we have learned] how to live in a situation that doesn't naturally or automatically [bend] to the perspectives and desires that we have."

Cardinal Nichols pointed out, however, that the archbishop's appointment was based on his wide experience as a diplomat.

Partly due to its history as a minority, the Catholic Church in England and Wales has tended to veer away from the "culture wars" and instead to focus on a more pastoral, pragmatic style.

In his address to the bishops' meeting at Hinsley Hall, Leeds, last week Archbishop Antonio Mennini, Apostolic Nuncio to Great Britain, praised the bishops for the way they work together. He reflected on the communion between bishops and quoted Pope Francis on the need for church leaders who were "pastors not princes".

In recent years there have been a large number of new appointments to dioceses in England and Wales. The Diocese of Arundel and Brighton is awaiting a replacement for Bishop Kieran Conry, who resigned earlier this year.

Archbishop Mennini said of future bishops "We must be sure, then, in our assessment of candidates

that we propose pastors who are able to unite the flock of Christ, as opposed to dispersing it, leaving individual sheep lost on the hillsides of our society.”

Christopher Lamb - The Tablet