

From Christopher Ly

To whom?

++ SCA.

3 January 1978

Dear Archbishop,

I am writing to you at the suggestion of David Chaplin of the ACC. I am to be a member of the Anglican/Roman Catholic Consultation concerning the Ordination of Women, meeting at Versailles at the end of February. You may know that the matter we are to consider is "to what extent and in what ways churches with women priests and churches without women priests can be reconciled in sacramental fellowship". I understand that Bishop Valentine of Rupert's Land is to be one of the other Anglicans.

I am particularly interested in the formulation of our subject not only because it means that the Roman Catholics are being positive about the matter but also personally because it relates very closely to some work I recently did for Lukas Wischer which was published in the July issue of the Ecumenical Review on the Ordination of Women in the Anglican Communion and the Ecumenical Debate.

In the course of the work that I did for this article it seemed to me that the clearest message to come out of all our recent toings and froings is that no province intends to break communion with another over this matter and I take the attitude of the central African Bishops in their approach to the Church of Canada, in this respect to be important. As I understand it, at the very time that they pleaded with the Canadian church to delay action until after the Lambeth conference, they also decided to remain in full communion with any Anglican church which did ordain women.

What I am particularly anxious to find is any setting out of a theological argument for this attitude. I recognise that in our own case Anglican churches are extremely reluctant to break communion with each other and that it is a different matter actually to enter into full communion with a church which differs from one on this point. But I am sure that if we are to discuss this with the Romans they will expect us to have a theological rationale for our action. I raise this point with David Chaplin and he suggested you were perhaps the person most likely to have something to say on this. I am therefore being bold enough to write to you and the more so as I believe it is in this area that you made some very significant comments which I quoted in my article. I am not sure what the origin of these comments were "on ecumenical relationships" but they came to me in typescript attached to some Ecumenical paper via The Faith and Order Commission! I do not even seem to have the comment by me: I think I have deposited it with other papers in Church House in London. Forgive me for bothering you and please just pass this letter on to someone else to answer if you wish but I am particularly anxious that at the consultation we should be able to set forth to the Roman Catholics good reasons for our inter-Anglican custom which might possibly be a fore runner of relationships between Communions.

Yours sincerely,

CR AC 33