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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

ANGLICAN, ROMAN CATHOLIC DIALOGUE TAKES UP KEY ISSUES

WASHINGTON--Members of the Anglican Roman Catholic Dialogue in the United States met in St. Augustine, Florida, January 5-8. The meeting was hosted by Bishop John J. Snyder of St. Augustine. Bishop Snyder is a member of the Committee for Ecumenical and Interreligious Affairs of the National Conference of Catholic Bishops and Roman Catholic co-chair of the dialogue.

Major topics under consideration included the Directory for the Application of Principles and Norms on Ecumenism, issued in 1993 by the Holy See's Pontifical Council for Promoting Christian Unity; comparisons between the Anglican Roman Catholic International text Life in Christ: Morals, Communion and the Church (1994) and the papal encyclical Veritatis Splendor; and the Lutheran Episcopal Condordat of Agreement which proposes full communion between these two churches beginning in 1997.

There were also reports on the November, 1994 pilgrimage of U.S. Roman Catholic and Episcopalian Bishops to Rome and to Canterbury; on a conference on ministry in commemoration of the Vatican document on Anglican orders, Apostolicae Curae; and an update on the literature concerning the ordination and the non-ordination of women.

The discussion of the Directory looked at the development of the ecumenical movement from the Decree on Ecumenism of the Second Vatican Council, through the first Directory of 1967, up through

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the revision of the Codes of Canon Law. Presenters were Father George Tavard, who helped draft the first Directory and was an expert at the Second Vatican Council and Dr. Marsha L. Dutton, an Episcopalian lay person.

In a brief statement which will be published with the presentations, Dialogue members said that "ARC-USA recognizes certain aspects of the Directory as offering particular openings for conversation and mutual understanding between the Roman Catholic Church and the Anglican Communion, areas ranging from the theological and sacramental to the practical." The statement also noted certain elements of caution in the Directory that will make it less inviting to some who are not Roman Catholic, or some Catholics who are impatient with the progress of ecumenism.

The results of this discussion will be published in Ecumenical Trends.

In their discussion of Life in Christ and the encyclical Veritatis Splendor, dialogue members noted that while the purpose and audience of these two documents differ, their common intention is to share the unity of the Church in ethical matters. Veritatis Splendor has evoked a large body of literature, including several favorable Anglican commentaries. Life in Christ concludes that even though Anglicans and Roman Catholics differ on the application of common ethical principles in matters such as divorce and contraception, these should not be used to justify continued division. A common statement is planned to be ready after the June, 1995 meeting.

Participants in the pilgrimage to Rome and Canterbury had experienced the importance of coordinating various ecumenical involvements. Both in conversations at the Pontifical Council for Promoting Christian Unity and in talking to the ecumenical officer of the Archbishop of Canterbury at Lambeth Palace, the variety of dialogues and church relationships and the significance of one for the other was reviewed.

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Against this background dialogue members took up the proposal for full communion in 1997 between the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America and the Episcopal Church. Concerns were raised as to how this agreement would affect Roman Catholic relations with each of these churches.

During a report on the literature in the two churches on the ordination and non-ordination of women to the priesthood and the episcopate, participants recalled the words which Pope John Paul II addressed November 7 to the bishops on pilgrimage. The Pope was responding to comments made by Bishop Frank Griswold, Episcopal Co-chair of the pilgrimage, who spoke about disagreement between the Roman Catholic Church and the Anglican Communion over certain issues, not the least of which is the ordination of women.

"We should neither be surprised nor held back by the difficulties involved," Pope John Paul responded. "Among them you have mentioned the serious disagreement between the Catholic Church and the Anglican Communion over the ordination of women to the priesthood. At the same time it is heartening to hear you place this important issue in its proper perspective which sees the Church's first duty as obedience to Christ the Head, a perspective which implies limits to our authority in relation to what is handed down. Only a theological vision inspired by prayerful, contemplative faith will ensure openness to the Spirit's sure guidance as we continue our pilgrimage towards full communion."

The future work of the Anglican Roman Catholic Dialogue in the United States was discussed. Issues of authority and tradition will be taken up in the context of the theological study of the nature of the Church. The experience of these two churches in the United States context will be a particular focus of discussion. It is projected that in the next two years a statement will touch on issues of inculturation, history, specific developments in authority and tradition as a contribution to the understanding

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of the nature of the Church, in the light of the Anglican Roman Catholic International Commission's contributions on ecclesiology to date, and the responses of Lambeth and the Vatican to th Final Report.

During the meeting Bishop Snyder hosted a banquet honoring Father William Norgren, retiring ecumenical officer of the Episcopal Church, for his many years of service to the ecumenical movement.

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