



This is a transcription of the Archbishop's comments delivered to the General Synod.

Thank you so much Archbishop Samy for being with us and speaking with us; and perhaps I could also say how moving it has been to listen to the graciousness and the courtesy with which in my estimation everybody has spoken in this debate.

What the bishops are proposing here, now we get to the main debate, are four things and they need to be understood together. So I want to speak about them very briefly as a totality. First, no change to the doctrine of holy matrimony. Secondly, acknowledging the legal and pastoral reality of two forms of marriage in British society and observing the evident good in the lives of those who have entered into same sex civil partnerships and civil marriages - these couples could now come to church and have that relationship acknowledged, celebrated and the couple received a blessing.

Thirdly (and this is what I really wanted to talk about because we haven't really spoken about this yet), thirdly, no-one has to offer these services and no one will be disadvantaged if they choose not to: it is an option and even if, as I hope we do approve these proposals it will be really, it is really, really important that this reassurance is made abundantly clear. I care, as I think all my sister and brother bishops do, we care so much for the unity of God's church; but for that unity to be maintained there has to be reassurance - the reassurance that I am as much a part of the body of Christ as you. 'If all were a single member' said St Paul, 'Where would the body be?'

So this seems to me to be the missing bit of our conversation, with the exception of three speeches which I have found profoundly moving and helpful. If you can remember back to yesterday afternoon - the speech that Vaughan Roberts made - I found really helpful in beginning to open up this area of debate. Then again Steve Wilcox at some point halfway through the afternoon on an amendment, and then this morning Ed Shaw. All of them spoke about their desire that we would live together with our disagreements, but there needed to be some settled way of assuring that we did have our place within the church.

And it seems to me that what we are doing is putting way too much weight on the pastoral guidance. The pastoral guidance will be issued and will settle some of those questions; that will then replace Issues in Human Sexuality. That will happen, but I think we needed something in addition to that. I think we need to get together, some of us from Synod; that this is not just for the House of Bishops to do on its own; we need to get together and sit down and start talking about so, what kind of reassurance could there be, that I know that I have my place. I'm not even going to say at the table - I have a very high doctrine of the Eucharist - and I would love to say a place at the table, but I am already living, as all of us are, with impaired Eucharistic communion within our church. And I tell you that breaks my heart, that I can't share communion fully with everybody, but I live with it for the greater good of the unity of the church.

I live with it for the greater good that we could tell the world a better story. We had a lot of talk about better stories. Sisters and brothers, the better story I wanted to tell is that disagreement doesn't have to lead to division; that division doesn't have to lead to conflict. We see that all across

our world. Archbishop Samy, I want us to live together in one Anglican Communion. But as was said at the Lambeth Conference, very movingly by Archbishop Justin, in order to do that we need, we need that reassurance and we haven't had a chance to talk about it. And we're not going to, I don't think, for the rest of this debate, but I want to give you this pledge that I won't be able to vote, I won't be able to support commending these prayers when I hope we vote this through today. But I won't be able to support commending these prayers until we have the pastoral guidance and pastoral provision.

And a final thing, I know I'm running out of time now, so I'm going to ask Bishop Sarah - Bishop Sarah knows I'm going to ask this - I'm going to ask Bishop Sarah: could you, on behalf of the House of Bishops give that reassurance to all of us that we will have those discussions about some kind of settlement.

And finally, I want to make a point about identity which is what living in Love and Faith has all been about. But our identity, surely, first of all is our baptismal identity. That is what unites us as the body of Christ. I want to say that water is thicker than blood, and because we belong to one another in Christ we have to have these conversations which can and will hold us together.

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