



The Archbishop of Canterbury welcomed the Coptic Orthodox Pope, His Holiness Pope Tawadros II, to Lambeth Palace today.

His Holiness, the 118th Pope of Alexandria and Patriarch of the See of Saint Mark, paid the courtesy visit to Archbishop Justin Welby during his first pastoral visit to the Coptic Orthodox Church in the UK.

Pope Tawadros, who met HM The Queen at Windsor Castle on Tuesday, was accompanied to Lambeth Palace by His Grace Bishop Angaelos, General Bishop of the Coptic Orthodox Church in the United Kingdom.

The Archbishop and the Pope spent time discussing the situation of the Coptic Church in Egypt, and the challenges and opportunities facing both Coptic and Anglican Christians in the country.



The first time the Archbishop of Canterbury and Coptic Pope have done Confessor.

Welcoming Pope Tawadros to Lambeth Palace this afternoon, the Archbishop said: “Your Holiness, thank you for being here. Thank you that today, we meet together in the presence of the Spirit of Christ, the risen Christ.”

He added: “We have spoken especially about the need to maintain a society in which both Christians and Muslims are able to flourish. We also spoke of the need for unity among the churches, and for good relationships between the churches in Egypt. And we spoke of the threats that come from extremism, and how that is a threat not only to Christians but also to Muslims, and it is a threat that must be met in the short term by strong action, but also in the longer term by good education.”

Speaking ahead of the Evensong service at Westminster Abbey – where the Archbishop and Pope prayed with and for each other, and for the church – the Archbishop said: “In this prayer, we will express our unity as brothers in Jesus Christ, while recognizing that we have differences; but these are differences that we continue to address through our mutual dialogue.”

Archbishop Justin has met with Pope Tawadros in Cairo twice since taking office in 2013.

The first time was shortly after his installation in June 2013, during his first visit to the Middle East as Archbishop of Canterbury.

Read Archbishop Justin Welby's welcome to HH Pope Tawadros II:

Your Holiness, before any formal welcome, I note that this year, by the grace of God, Easter has fallen together and therefore I begin by saying Christ is Risen! It is wonderful, and it has been a difference this year – that for the first time in some years, together we have celebrated the resurrection.

In my recent visit to the Holy Land, amidst the enormous suffering of the peoples of that region – not merely of Palestine and Israel – I was struck time and again when Christians told me their sorrows and then said 'Christ is Risen', and everyone felt that sense of hope that we have through the resurrection of Jesus Christ.

But it is my pleasure, formally today, to welcome you to Lambeth Palace – on this, I believe, your first visit here. It is an ancient palace. It goes back to the very end of the 12th century, to the 1190s, and bits of it are newer and bits of it are older.

I welcome also your brother bishops and clergy from Egypt and from this country. It is not only a pleasure but a great privilege to receive you, and this place is a better place because you are here.

As you know, we have already had an opportunity to talk together privately, and to share matters of concern. We have spoken especially about the need to maintain a society in which both Christians and Muslims are able to flourish. We also spoke of the need for unity among the churches, and for good relationships between the churches in Egypt.

We spoke of the threats that come from extremism, and how that is a threat not only to Christians but also to Muslims – and it is a threat that must be met in the short term by strong action, but also in the longer term by good education.

We live in a world where faith is increasingly important, contrary to the impression taken by some people in this country, and also a world where people of faith can live very dangerous lives.

The experience of the Coptic people in Egypt is not only an example to the body of Christ around the world, but also a profound inspiration. The courage of your people – their constant faith, their steadfastness, their long endurance – brings to life those words we read so often in the epistles of Saint Paul, and we are truly grateful and give thanks to God for you and for your people.

As recently as Palm Sunday you were yourself the victim of a terrorist attack while at worship in Alexandria. During Holy Week I was struck by the outpouring of messages of support for you and for your brothers and sisters, from all over the world. Not only from Christians, but from many other people of good will. I began my Easter sermon this year by speaking of the Christians in Egypt.

Your Holiness, I have been profoundly grateful, during my time as Archbishop, for the fellowship I have enjoyed with His Grace Bishop Angaelos, who has been a great support, and more than a support: an advocate, and a visionary leader in the ecumenical life of the churches of this country. He has been a co-president with me of Churches Together in England, and a good friend to me, to my family and indeed to the whole Church of England.

In a while, we will go to Westminster Abbey for evensong, where we will have an opportunity to pray together for the church and for the world, for each other and for our brothers and sisters throughout the world. In this prayer, we will express our unity as brothers in Jesus Christ, while recognising that we have differences; but these are differences that we continue to address through our mutual dialogue.

I am very pleased to be able to offer you a gift as a souvenir or a reminder of your visit. This pectoral cross, part of the insignia of the bishop in the Western Church, is in the shape known as a Canterbury cross, modelled on a cross from Canterbury Cathedral that dates from the 9th century.

Your Holiness, thank you for being here. Thank you for coming with your colleagues. Thank you that today we meet together in the presence of the Spirit of Christ, the risen Christ.

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