



*Reflecting on the 10th anniversary of the papal inauguration of Pope Francis – and on his first meeting with the Pope – the Archbishop of Canterbury, the Most Revd Justin Welby, said:*

“One of the most astonishing images from the Covid-19 pandemic was the image of Pope Francis, totally alone in the dark and cold of St Peter’s Square, delivering an ‘Urbi et Orbi’ – a blessing ‘to the city and to the world’. In a square that would normally be packed with people, Pope Francis spoke of stormy times to a scattered world. Reflecting in the Gospel story of Jesus calming the storm, the Pope said: ‘We are on the same boat, all of us fragile and disoriented, but at the same time important and needed, all of us called to row together, each of us in need of comforting the other.’ After he spoke, he carried a monstrance holding the holy sacrament aloft into the square, battling through the rain and the wind. It was an extraordinary moment: the presence of Christ in all storms made visible to us by a Pope who, standing alone, brought people together onto the same boat with Jesus.

“I met Pope Francis for the first time almost 10 years ago, a few months after we had become Pope and Archbishop respectively. He said to me, ‘I’m senior to you.’ But before I could respond I saw a glint in his eye – he meant he’d been enthroned three days before me! It was a moment of the humility and humour, of warmth and welcome, which has characterised His Holiness’ papacy.

“Pope Francis makes the life of Christ visible in our turbulent world. He is found with Jesus at the feet of South Sudanese leaders, begging them to make peace. We hear Christ’s call in his encyclicals, urging us to care for the planet and for one another. We find him making Christ’s love and mercy known to the dispossessed, the rejected, the forgotten.

“Please join me in prayer for my dear brother in Christ on the occasion of his 10th year on the Throne of St Peter. May the Lord bless him, may he be the hands and feet of Christ upon this world in the years to come, and may we benefit from his guidance towards Jesus in any storms that we may face.”



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