



The Archbishop of Canterbury this week gave his blessing to the Archbishop's XI cricket team before they head out to Rome later this month to play a Vatican side.

Team members shared the Eucharist with Archbishop Justin Welby, who afterwards wished them success in their second Twenty20 match against the St Peter's Club.

Last autumn, in a historic first match between Vatican and Anglican sides, the Archbishop's XI narrowly triumphed with five balls to spare in a memorable showdown at Kent County Cricket Club ground in Canterbury.

The scoreline, however, was flattering: the Anglicans won by six wickets, but only overhauled the Vatican's low total at the start of the last over.

The match, played in front of a 1000-strong crowd, including Archbishop Justin Welby and the Papal Nuncio, raised money for the Global Freedom Network, a joint anti-trafficking initiative.

Now the Vatican has invited the same team to Rome in October for a rematch.

The Archbishop's XI will travel to Rome on Wednesday 21 October, where it is expected they will meet Pope Francis.

The match itself will take place on the morning of Saturday 24 October at the Capannelle Ground in Rome, coinciding with the conclusion of the Roman Catholic Church's Synod on the Family.

The teams will attend Mass at St Peter's the following morning, where Pope Francis will preside.

The Vatican team comprises seminarians studying in Rome, many of them from India and Pakistan.

The Anglican team is made up largely of ordinands and young priests who answered a search by the Church Times (sponsor of clergy cricket in the UK). Its captain, the Revd Steve Gray, is Chaplain at Bradfield College, Berkshire.

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