

The news of the death of Cardinal Cormac Murphy-O'Connor today represents a loss to his innumerable friends, to the church and to the country.

Cormac was a bishop for four decades but was first and foremost a servant of God and disciple of Jesus Christ. His humility, sense and holiness made him a church leader of immense impact. When he was called from the Diocese Arundel and Brighton to be Archbishop of Westminster, Pope St John Paul II made reference to the fact that he had already been a bishop for a number of years and that it was natural that he should turn to him to succeed Cardinal Hume as Archbishop. It was natural because in Cormac people saw something of Christ.

Cormac was a good friend to Anglicans at home and internationally. As the Catholic co-chair of the second phase of the Anglican – Roman Catholic International Commission (ARCIC II) he lent both his customary good humour and his theological acumen to the production of some of the most influential of ecumenical agreed texts of the twentieth century. At a time when others bemoaned the lack of instant progress in ecumenical relations, Cormac saw the work of ARCIC as an investment and a building block for future closer relations. At home he was notable for his support for interchurch families and, whilst he was Rector of the Venerable English College in Rome, for the support and encouragement of a scheme that is still going giving Church of England ordinands the opportunity to study in Rome. He cared for Anglican leaders he knew, encouraged and supported them, drawing them into the fellowship of Christ.

He will be remembered with thanks and affection by all whose lives he touched. He was a great raconteur and story-teller, amusing, but always with a purpose. His words and his life drew people to God. His genial warmth, pastoral concern and genuine love for those in his care will be missed, but also celebrated with thanks. May he rest in peace and rise in glory.

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