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STATEMENT FROM THE PRIMATE

The Election of a New Pope

March 14, 2013

At evening prayer on March 13th, the day a new Pope was elected, the Church throughout the world was reading Psalm 119:121-144. These few verses spoke to this historic moment:

"I am your servant, grant me understanding that I may know your decrees" v125

"Steady my footsteps in your word" v133

"Let your countenance shine upon your servant" v135

Could there be any more fitting words as the Pontiff made his way to the balcony of the Vatican? With so many others around the world I was moved by the humility of his request for the blessings of the faithful before he raised his hands to give his first Papal blessing.

The new Pope comes from humble beginnings and he is known to have lived modestly throughout his entire ministry. In taking the name of Francis after Francis of Assisi he has already given us some indication of the holiness, simplicity, and courage of gospel conviction he will bring to this new ministry. He also no doubt has in mind that word spoken to Francis of Assisi through a crucifix in the famed Church of San Damiano, "Francis, rebuild my church."

As the new Pope endeavours to call people back to the Faith, to rebuild the Church and to strengthen the integrity of its witness to the Gospel in very diverse global contexts, we join our Roman Catholic sisters and brothers in upholding him our prayers.

For Latin Americans this is a particularly proud moment – a moment of great rejoicing! For from the church there the new Pope carries a passion for evangelism, a stance of solidarity with the poor and a posture of perseverance in the pursuit of peace and justice for all people.

Living the Marks of Mission

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Next week, on March 21, I will attend the enthronement of Justin Welby as the 105th Archbishop of Canterbury. My hope is as the Archbishop and the Pope begin their new ministries within days of one another and on the eve of Holy Week and Easter, that their relationship will be marked by a genuine friendship in Christ, an abiding commitment to the work of The Anglican Roman Catholic International Commission, and a deep desire for our continuing "Growth in Unity, Faith and Mission."

In such moments as these we remember the witness of the church through all the centuries and we pray that in our time we all may work more fervently for the fuller realization of our Lord's Prayer, "that they all be one". (John 17:21)