



THE ARCHBISHOP
OF YORK

Archbishop Stephen gave the Pause for Thought today on Zoe Ball's breakfast show on BBC Radio 2

Last month I visited Rome for the first time.

I walked up the Spanish Steps, round the Colosseum, into the Pantheon, drank many delicious cappuccinos, ate gelato and shed loads of lovely pasta. And also had an audience with the Pope.

I wasn't sure what to expect.

Would it all be over in a few minutes?

Would we shake hands, exchange a few pleasantries, and that would be it?

Well, how wrong can you be. I was greeted warmly. He is a very warm human being.

We sat down and chatted. About the scandal of our disunity as Christians; and we laughed about the need for theologians (and bishops!) to catch up with what the Spirit of God is doing in drawing us together. And about the need for all of us to do what we can where we are to make peace, serve the poor, and live sustainably on the Earth.

‘We must walk together, work together, and pray together,’ said the Pope.

And then we did just that! We prayed the prayer that Jesus taught us. The Lord's Prayer. The prayer that begins, 'Our Father.' He in Italian. I think! Me in English. But both of us speaking the language of the heart which is the language of prayer, the longing for God and the longing to build God's kingdom in the earth.

And as I prayed, I was powerfully struck by that opening word. Our. Not ‘my father’, not ‘my God.’ Not ‘your father’ or ‘your God.’ Ours.

We belong to each other. And when we say this prayer, we defiantly proclaim that belonging.

Despite our divisions, and, despite all the cynical and selfish forces in the world that would drive us apart, we are one humanity, and when we say this prayer, we declare our commitment to each other and to the whole household of God.

Perhaps service sheets in church should carry a health warning. Be careful: this prayer might change you.



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