

PRIME MINISTER

Papal Visit: Service at Canterbury

You are seeing the Archbishop of Canterbury on Monday, 5 April, about his personal letter (attached) urging you to re-consider your decision not to attend the ecumenical service at Canterbury Cathedral on the morning of Saturday, 29 May.

His main points are that this is the sole occasion during the Papal visit when the Pope will be received by the Church of England, that it should be seen as a national and not merely an ecclesiastical event, and that your presence is desirable to demonstrate Government support for the Established Church. The Archbishop is unhappy that your only meeting with the Pope should be under the auspices of the Roman Catholic Church.

The arrangements which you agreed with the Foreign Secretary on 15 March were that Lord Carrington should be at Gatwick to represent the Government when the Pope arrives, and that the Lord Chancellor and the Home Secretary should attend the service at Canterbury. (The Prince of Wales will also be at the service.) The Secretaries of State for Scotland and Wales will be meeting the Pope during his visit to their respective territories.

We understand that your opportunity for any conversation with the Pope would be extremely limited at Canterbury, whereas Cardinal Hume has arranged for you to have a private tête-à-tête during the Reception at his house on the Saturday evening. In reality this is obviously much the better option, but the Archbishop is clearly concerned about the presentational aspects.

You have no other public engagements during Saturday, 29 May, which could be used as a reason for not going to Canterbury, but to make the journey would unfortunately take a large slice out of the day.

2 April 1982

ALC.