



The Bishop of Durham
The Rt Revd Dr N T Wright

PRESS STATEMENT

I am very excited that we have been able to gather such a splendid groundswell of support in the North-East of England for an invitation to his Holiness Benedict XVI to visit Durham as part of his UK tour next autumn, and to give a public lecture in the Cathedral. It is clear that leaders in the major churches of the region, in Durham University, and in local and national government are all enthusiastic for such a visit. We very much hope that our invitation will be accepted.

It is particularly appropriate that we stage such an event in Durham. Quite apart from its unrivalled historic and architectural standing, with the shrines of both Cuthbert and Bede as the jewels in its crown, Durham has in recent years become a major global centre for ecumenical work, including within its Department of Theology and Religious Studies both the famous 'Receptive Ecumenism' project and the recently launched Centre for Catholic Studies. The close interlinking of Cathedral and University means that Durham will be able to host an event simultaneously academic and ecumenical. To have his Holiness here in the North-East will be an enormous boost to the morale of a region which has suffered a good deal in recent decades.

We are all of course aware that from time to time members of many churches, including Anglican and Roman Catholic, decide for various reasons to migrate from one stream of Christian tradition to another. This everyday reality, and the arrangements made from time to time to accommodate such migrations, are matters for the individuals and churches concerned. They have nothing essentially to do with the larger ecumenical task, which involves getting to know one another better, praying together, learning from and with one another, and seeking above all to set forward together the mission of God's kingdom under the sovereignty of the Lord Jesus Christ and in the power of the Holy Spirit. That missionary and ecumenical task, shared across the 'denominations', remains the context in which we are eager to welcome Benedict XVI to Durham in September 2010.

+THOMAS DUNELM:

28th October 2009

This statement has not yet been released. It is being co-ordinated with University, Civic and Roman Catholic Church interests.

John Bell Senior Chaplain