

Cardinal Nichols to take four imams to meet the Pope

Madeleine Teahan, *The Catholic Herald*, 30 March 2017



Cardinal Nichols with imams at a vigil following the terror attack last week (Photo: Mazur/catholicnews.org.uk)

The delegation will meet Vatican officials responsible for interreligious dialogue

Cardinal Nichols is due to travel to Rome with four imams next week for an audience with the Pope.

The meeting is scheduled to take place on Wednesday when, after an audience with the Holy Father, the group will attend a meeting at the Pontifical Council for Interreligious Dialogue which will be addressed by its president, Cardinal Jean-Louis Tauran.

The delegation will then visit the British embassy to the Holy See. It is understood that the meeting with the Pope has long been planned and is not related to the terror attack in Westminster last week.

Cardinal Nichols has a history of commitment to religious dialogue. While he was Archbishop of Birmingham he opened a centre in the city to promote dialogue between Christians and Muslims called Maryam House.

The cardinal told the Italian ANSA news agency: “Next week I will bring four Muslim leaders of Britain to Pope Francis to say that religious leaders want and are committed to building relations.”

He also spoke about last week’s London attack, which left five people dead. He said it had “nothing to do with borders”, explaining: “The attacker was a man born in Britain, who grew up in Britain.”

Speaking to the BBC about the attack last week, the cardinal said: “We have to be very clear about two other things. One is that we utterly condemn and reject this kind of mindless violence it has no justification, it has no credibility, it has nothing to be gained – no kudos to be gained – in this behaviour.

“And also we have to make sure we do not give space in our response to hatred. If we make enemies out of people who are our friends then we are falling into the very trap that the violent people want us to fall into. So there is no space for hatred for those who are our friends.”