

Address of His Grace
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To the Anglican Use Society

In 1959, when Good Pope John announced his desire to convene an ecumenical Council, he emphasized that unity among Christians would be a priority for the discussions of the Council Fathers. In the document *Unitatis Redintegratio*, issued regarding the unity of Christians, the Fathers of the Second Vatican Council stated that “the division among Christians is a scandal to all people...and...moved by a desire for the restoration of unity among all the followers of Christ [they] set before all Catholics guidelines...by which all...[could] respond to the grace of [the] divine call [for unity]”¹ Nearly fifty years later the restoration of unity among

¹ *Unitatis Redintegratio*, 1.

Christians remains a challenging work for the Church.

The meeting of His Holiness, Pope Paul VI and His Grace, Michael Ramsey, Archbishop of Canterbury on March 23, 1966 was indeed an historic moment. The Holy Father and the Archbishop committed themselves to the words of St. Paul, “forgetting those things which are behind, and reaching forth unto those things which are before, I press towards the mark for the prize of high calling of God in Christ Jesus”² and thus they inaugurated what we know as the ecumenical dialogue between Roman Catholics and Anglicans.

The dialogue which has taken place over the years has been quite promising at times. The work of the Holy See has been intensive in conversations with the Anglican Communion. Together they have tried to determine what we hold in common and where we agree. The conversations continue because the Catholic

² Phil. 3:13-14. See also *The Joint Declaration on Cooperation*, AAS 58 (1966) pp. 286-288.

Church believes that the Anglican Communion holds a special place in relationship to her.³

This relationship was stressed in a homily given on the occasion of the Canonization of the English Martyrs on October 25, 1970 by Pope Paul VI. He said:

May the blood of these Martyrs be able to heal the great wound inflicted upon God's Church by reason of the separation of the Anglican Church from the Catholic Church. Is it not one – these Martyrs say to us – the Church founded by Christ? Is not this their witness? Their devotion to their nation gives us the assurance that on the day when – God willing – the unity of the faith and of Christian life is restored, no offence will be inflicted on the honor and sovereignty of a great country such as England. There will be no seeking to lessen the legitimate prestige and the worthy patrimony of piety and usage proper to the Anglican Church when the Roman Catholic Church – this humble 'Servant of the Servants of God' – is able to embrace her ever beloved Sister in the one authentic communion of the family of Christ.⁴

³ Ibid, 13.

⁴ Paul VI, *Omelia del Santo Padre nell'occasione delle Canonizzazione di Quaranta Martiri Dell'Inghilterra e Del Galles*, 25 ottobre 1970.

Even though the relationship and dialogue seem strained at times we are obliged to continue to pray and work for unity, to “press toward the mark,” so that the prayer of our Blessed Lord may be realized that all who profess faith in Him may be one.

Until that unity is achieved the Pastoral Provision serves somehow to close the gap. In the mid 1970’s, the tireless efforts of members of the Episcopal Church in the United States, in conversations with the Apostolic Delegate in Washington, D.C. and the Sacred Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith, brought forth the Pastoral Provision. The Provision, although not the work of ecumenism⁵, is a vehicle through which individuals from the Episcopal Church can be reconciled with the Catholic Church and it also recognizes the “worthy patrimony of piety and usage” to which Paul VI referred.

⁵ See Letter from Sacra Congregatio Pro Doctrina Fidei, Prot. No. 66/77, 22 July 1980. The Holy See made it clear that the Pastoral Provision was not about ecumenism. They referenced number 4 of *Unitatis Redintegratio* which makes clear the difference between ecumenism/unity and individuals who desire reconciliation with the Catholic Church. The Pastoral Provision was created for the latter.

Through the Anglican Use liturgy, individuals from the Episcopal Church who reconcile with Rome have the option to worship in a manner that is familiar to them, which many practiced from childhood, and which has nourished their faith in Jesus Christ. The value of this experience is important. For others, the Use is a welcome place where the beauty of the liturgical action, music, architecture and art enables them to raise their hearts and minds in praise of Almighty God. In some cases the sense of the sacred conveyed in the Anglican Use liturgy has been a vehicle of return for Catholics who had fallen away from the practice of their faith because of liturgical abuses during the implementation of the *Novus Ordo*. The Holy See, through the work of the Pastoral Provision, recognizes that there is a legitimate historical patrimony of the Anglican Communion.

Pope Gregory the Great sent St. Augustine of Canterbury to evangelize the English at the end of the sixth century. Writing to Augustine, Gregory stated: “You are familiar with the usage of the

Roman Church, in which you were brought up. But if you have found customs, whether in the Roman, Gallican, or any other Churches that may be more acceptable to God, I wish you to make a careful selection of them, and teach the Church of the English, which is still young in Faith, whatever you can profitably learn from the various Churches.”⁶ Today, some fourteen hundred years after St. Augustine brought Christianity to England, can we not ask the English, or more appropriately those who have preserved the patrimony of the Anglican Communion, whether there is now something to learn from the Anglican tradition?

We are grateful to the Holy See that the Anglican Use liturgy is an approved Use of the Ordinary Form of the Latin Rite. However, at the same time, we must not forget that the Pastoral Provision was given for an indefinite period of time. It is important that we remember this. As Roman Catholics our obedience lies with the Holy

⁶ See Cardinal Willebrands' Address in Cambridge, England, 18 January 1970.

See; it lies with the direction that the Holy Father sets for us – for this is the way Christ established His Church – upon Peter. This is a grace for us and we have an obligation to preserve unity within our Church. Catholic faithful who worship according to the Anglican Use must never see themselves as different from other Catholics or somehow privileged among other Christian Communion. We are Catholics together, obedient to the Holy Father, to those bishops in communion with him and ever faithful to Magisterial teaching.

The Church welcomes the Anglican Use liturgy because it protects and encourages the spiritual life of many and allows her faithful to grow deeper in their relationship with Jesus Christ by the customs and traditions which historically were an important part of the Anglican Communion.

England has been a place of fervent Catholic faith and the Anglican Communion inherited that faith. Centuries after St. Augustine brought the

Christian faith to England, it was a Wessex-born Anglo-Saxon who became the Apostle of Germany. Our Holy Father, Benedict XVI, publicly expressed his gratitude to the English Christian tradition for the evangelization of his own homeland. Two years before being elected pope, then Cardinal Ratzinger wrote, “Nor can I fail to recall that...Saint Boniface brought the same Christian faith from England to my own forebears in Germany.”⁷

From its earliest days, devotion to the Mother of God always has been an important part of English Catholic life. The tradition of the Holy Scapular of Our Lady of Mount Carmel, given to the universal Church through St. Simon Stock, derives from English soil. The famed medieval shrine to Our Lady of Walsingham and its tradition of pilgrimages is deeply rooted in English history and lives again today. The fervent devotion of England to Mary is exemplified poetically and beautifully in the concept of

⁷ Joseph Cardinal Ratzinger’s Letter to Episcopalians, 9 October 2003.

England as “Our Lady’s Dower,” a devotion that tradition dates to King St. Edward the Confessor.

In the late fourteenth century, Thomas Arundel, Archbishop of Canterbury, reflecting on “Our Lady’s Dower,” wrote: “The contemplation of the great mystery of the Incarnation has drawn all Christian nations to venerate her from whom came the first beginnings of our redemption. But we English, being the servants of her special inheritance and her own dowry, as we are commonly called, ought to surpass others in the fervor of our praises and devotions.”

It would be a tragedy if these examples of faith and pious devotion were lost to the Church and to the faithful and it would be simplistic to dismiss the tradition. I was awestruck when I first experienced the Anglican Use liturgy at the English College in Rome during a pilgrimage last September. Its beauty was incarnated in the devotion manifested in the exquisite celebration of the Eucharist. I was humbled by the devotion of the faithful and I am encouraged by the fervor

of the chapel and parishes that employ the Anglican Use liturgy here in the United States.

The Pastoral Provision has now been in existence for twenty-eight years. I know the journey has not been easy but we continue to persevere with patience. I would like to take this opportunity to congratulate the chapel and parishes of the Anglican Use. In a particular way, I offer heartfelt congratulations to the congregation of Our Lady of the Atonement Parish on the twenty-fifth anniversary of its establishment as a personal parish of the Archdiocese of San Antonio. Yours was the first Anglican Use parish in the United States to be established after the Pastoral Provision came into being. I am certain that Father Christopher Phillips and Joann had no idea what was in store for them when they packed their family in a car and headed into the desert. I had always thought that the road to the Promised Land was supposed to lead out of the desert! However, their faith in

God and perseverance to do His will has brought life in Christ to this great State of Texas.

A quarter-century ago, Archbishop Flores, trusting in God and praying to the Mother of God, chose August 15th, the solemnity of the Assumption of Our Lady, as the day to receive eighteen souls together with their pastor into full communion with the Catholic Church. Mary, Our Mother generously has blessed your efforts over the years. The beautiful Church and the flourishing school of this marvelous parish are ample proof of her bounty and love. All these are signs of what can be accomplished with trust in the Lord, building on faith, constant in prayer and in the desire to do God's Will.

As the Ecclesiastical Delegate for the Pastoral Provision, I want to express my paternal affection for the people who participate in the liturgy according to the Anglican Use. It has been my honor to serve you as Ecclesiastical Delegate. I have greatly appreciated the work of my assistants, Monsignor William Stetson and

Monsignor Robert Wister, and the dedication of all who care for and promote the Use.

Some great strides have been made in the last two years in improving the mechanics of the Pastoral Provision. We are working on expanding the mandate of the Pastoral Provision to include those clergy and faithful of “continuing Anglican communities.” We are striving to increase awareness of our apostolate to Anglican Christians who desire to be reconciled with the Holy See. We have experienced the wonder of several Episcopal bishops entering into full communion with the Catholic Church and we continue to receive requests from priests and laity about the Pastoral Provision. I also take this opportunity to thank the Anglican Use Society for their work under the Pastoral Provision, and for the invitation to address this conference.

I know that some of you experienced difficulty and anxiety at the time you made the decision to leave what was so dear to you when you felt the Lord calling you to come to the Catholic Church.

In some regard your journey has been heroic. The Church is enriched by your struggles for our Lord.

John Cardinal Newman, who is numbered among the more famous of former Anglicans to reconcile with Rome, was no stranger to such struggle. He felt he was abandoning family, abandoning friends and colleagues. People and places who were dear to him, full of memories and tradition, speaking the same language of faith – how would it be possible to leave such things?

The struggle is real. The choice is not always easy. However, the Holy See's allowance of the Anglican Use liturgy for now might help to make the burden a little easier for some to bear. The mark toward which we press as Catholics and as Christians is Jesus Christ. He is our goal and we can only find Him through the Church he founded on Peter. The sentiments which Newman expressed in his poem *Lead Kindly Light* speak eloquently of how we bear the difficulties we experience in our faith lives and the Venerable

**Newman teaches us that the ultimate goal is
Christ and it is His will, not our own, that we seek:**

Lead, kindly light, amid the encircling gloom,

Lead Thou me on!

The night is dark, and I am far from home –

Lead Thou me on!

Keep Thou my feet; I do not ask to see

The distant scene, - one step enough for me.

I was not ever thus, nor prayed that Thou

Shouldst lead me on.

I loved to choose and see my path; but now,

Lead Thou me on!

I loved the garish day, and, spite of fears,

Pride ruled my will: remember not past years!

So long Thy power hath blessed me, sure it

still

Will lead me on.

O'er moor and fen, o'er crag and torrent, till

The night is gone;

**And with the morn these angel faces smile
Which I have loved long since, and lost
awhile.⁸**

Indeed, we are uncertain of the future and how details will be worked through. Therefore, we can only place our trust in Christ. Only through our prayer will we experience Him leading us, and He is our hope. He is the mark toward which we press. This is why the patrimony of the Anglican Use is so important. It is the way you can touch Christ here on earth.

G.K. Chesterton put his stirrings for conversion in this way; he desired “not a Church that will *move with the world* but a Church that will *move the world*.”⁹ The goal of finding Christ through His Church. It is this notion we hold out to society, hoping that those who are confused or misguided may find through Peter, Jesus Christ and His Church.

⁸ See Jean Honore, *The Spiritual Journey of Newman*, pp. 100-101.

⁹ See Sheldon Vanauken in *The New Catholics*, p. 126.

It is a blessing to be here with you today. I ask your prayers as I continue to serve you and together may we assist in some small way, those from the Anglican Communion who seek reconciliation with the See of Peter. May the Light, which is Christ, enable those who are lost in the dark to see through the struggles and challenges of our time. May they know that only Christ can bring them “holy rest and peace at last”¹⁰.

Please stand and allow me to end with a prayer for the Church that Christians may find peace among themselves and unity in faith and mission.

Let us pray:

Almighty Father, whose blessed Son before his passion prayed for his disciples that they might be one, even as thou and he are one: Grant that thy Church, being bound together in love and

¹⁰ Prayer of John Henry Newman, “May he support us all the day long, till the shadows lengthen and the evening comes and the busy world is hushed and the fever of life is over and our work is done – then in his mercy – may he give us a safe lodging and a holy rest and peace at last.”

obedience to thee, may be united in one body by the one Spirit, that the world may believe in him whom thou didst send, the same thy Son Jesus Christ our Lord; who liveth and reigneth with thee, in the unity of the same Spirit, one God, now and for ever. AMEN.¹¹

July 11, 2008

¹¹ *The Book of Divine Worship*, Prayer For the Unity of the Church, p. 496.