

Anglican bishop expects new wave of converts to join Catholic Church

LONDON – A traditionalist Anglican bishop has called on the Catholic Church to accommodate a potential new wave of converts following the decision by the Church of England to allow the ordination of women bishops.

“What we must humbly ask for now is for magnanimous gestures from our Catholic friends, especially from the Holy Father, who well understands our longing for unity, and from the hierarchy of England and Wales,” wrote Anglican Bishop Andrew Burnham of Ebbsfleet, England, in the July 11 edition of *The Catholic Herald*, a London-based weekly newspaper.

“Most of all we ask for ways that allow us to bring our folk with us,” said the bishop, who is a provincial episcopal visitor of the Canterbury Archdiocese, or “flying bishop,” who ministers to Anglicans who will not accept women priests.

Bishop Burnham predicted there would be defections among Anglo-Catholic clergy and laity because of the July 7 ruling by the General Synod of the Church of England, the mother church of the Anglican Communion, to move ahead with plans to allow the ordination of women bishops. Anglo-Catholics are those whose customs and practices within Anglicanism emphasize continuity with Catholic tradition.

The bishop recently traveled to Rome to discuss the reception of large numbers of dissenting Anglican traditionalists with Cardinal William J. Levada, head of the Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith, and Cardinal Walter Kasper, president of the Pontifical Council for Promoting Christian Unity.

He was joined by Anglican Bishop Keith Newton of Richborough, England, also a flying bishop of the Canterbury Archdiocese.

As many as 1,300 clergy threatened to leave the Church of England if special arrangements were not made to guarantee they would be under the authority only of male bishops.

Bishop Burnham said the time had come when Anglo-Catholics had to decide whether to stay or leave.

“Leaving isn’t quite so easy as it sounds,” he said in his article. “You don’t become a Catholic, for instance, because of what is wrong with another denomination or faith. You become a Catholic because you accept that the Catholic Church is what she says she is, and the Catholic faith is what it says it is. In short, some Anglo-Catholics will stay and others will go.”