

Anglicans entering Catholic Church should blend well, cardinal says

KINGSTON, Ontario - Groups of Anglicans entering into communion with the Catholic Church will not be absorbed the way "a teaspoon of sugar would be lost in a gallon of coffee," said Cardinal William Levada, prefect for the Congregation of the Doctrine of the Faith.

Instead, Anglicans will provide a distinct sound within the church, the way the different instruments in an orchestra blend in a symphony, Cardinal Levada told a fundraising dinner for Catholic Christian Outreach and the Queen's University Newman Center March 6.

"People long for discordant tones to be harmonized, united," he said. "And when an individual or, indeed, a community, is ready for unity with the church of Christ that subsists in the Catholic Church, it would be a betrayal of Catholic ecumenical principles and goals to refuse to embrace them, and to embrace them with all the distinctive gifts that enrich the church, that help her approach the world symphonically, sounding together or united."

Pope Benedict XVI's historic offer for groups of Anglicans to enter into full communion with the Catholic Church is "the logical outcome" of 45 years of ecumenical dialogue, Cardinal Levada.

The Vatican's offer came November 9 with the publication of Pope Benedict's apostolic constitution "Anglicanorum Coetibus" ("Groups of Anglicans") along with specific norms governing the establishment and governance of "personal ordinariates," structures similar to dioceses, for former Anglicans who become Catholic.

Cardinal Levada described the apostolic constitution as "one of the fruits" developing out of the statements issued by the Anglican Roman Catholic International Commission - commonly known as ARCIC - on the Eucharist, ministry and ordination, and authority.

Levada traced the history of talks between the two churches that were launched after a historic 1966 meeting in Rome between Pope Paul VI and then-Anglican Archbishop Michael Ramsay of Canterbury. They issued a joint declaration that spoke of the commitment to achieve full, visible unity between “sister” churches, “united but not absorbed.”

“It would be a betrayal of Catholic ecclesiology not to embrace (Anglicans) with all the gifts they bring,” Levada said, explaining that those gifts include a distinct spirituality, liturgy and spiritual discipline.

But the cardinal also stressed the continued hope and commitment to work toward “full corporate unity” with the worldwide Anglican Communion. He cited the announcement of a third Anglican Roman Catholic International Commission that came after last November’s meeting between Pope Benedict XVI and Archbishop of Canterbury Rowan Williams.

ARCIC III will focus on the relationship between the local and universal church, and also on women’s ordination, same-sex unions and actively homosexual clergy.

The cardinal spoke of the upheaval that the ordination of women has caused within the Anglican Communion.

He also outlined the Catholic Church’s repeated warnings of the negative effect that the ordination of women would have on unity. The male priesthood is not “merely praxis,” he explained, but “doctrinal in nature.” He said the male priesthood lies at the heart of the Eucharist and “cannot be relegated to the periphery.”

He also described the issues concerning homosexuals that confront Anglicans as “another church dividing issue.”

Anglican communities in Australia, United Kingdom, the United States and other countries already have sent requests to the Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith to establish personal ordinariates within the Catholic Church.

Archbishop John Hepworth, primate of the Traditional Anglican Communion, attended the dinner. Archbishop Hepworth, who is based in Australia, has been meeting with Traditional Anglican Communion bishops around the world and was in

Canada for visits to churches in Nova Scotia, Ontario, Alberta and British Columbia.

Archbishop Hepworth said he expects a request will come within weeks from Traditional Anglican Communion bishops in Canada.

Before arriving in Canada, Archbishop Hepworth met with Anglican Church of America representatives, Anglican Use parishes that are already part of the Roman Catholic Church in the United States, and Forward in Faith, a group of Anglicans still in communion with Canterbury who oppose women bishops and women's ordination.

The Traditional Anglican Communion and representatives of Anglican Use parishes have issued a joint request for an ordinariate in the United States. The Traditional Anglican Communion and Forward in Faith in the United Kingdom and Australia have made similar joint requests.