

Episcopal bishop and wife return to Catholic Church

ALBANY, N.Y. – Bishop Daniel W. Herzog, recently retired Episcopal bishop of Albany, and his wife, Carol, have left the Episcopal Church and re-entered full communion with the Catholic Church. Both were raised as Catholics and joined the Episcopal Church as adults.

In a letter to his successor, Bishop William H. Love, Bishop Herzog said his decision was a result of the decision of the 2003 General Convention of the U.S. Episcopal Church to affirm the election and ordination of an openly gay man, Bishop Gene Robinson, as bishop of New Hampshire.

Referring to the turmoil that action caused in the church, he said, “That turmoil was not merely external. It also caused a lot of hidden tears.”

In his view, he said, the power the convention claimed in taking its action “negated any previous authority on which I had relied. It caused me to engage in a fresh examination of apostolic teaching and authority.”

In a letter to Presiding Bishop Katharine Jefferts Schori he resigned from the House of Bishops and asked to be removed from ordained ministry in the Episcopal Church. She said March 28 that she would undertake the canonical procedures to do so.

Episcopal News Service said Bishop Herzog “is apparently the third bishop in the history of the Episcopal Church to become a Roman Catholic.” It said Bishop Levi S. Ives of North Carolina left the denomination to become a Catholic in 1853 and Bishop Frederick Kinsman of Delaware did so in 1919.

Bishop Clarence C. Pope Jr. of Fort Worth, Texas, attended Catholic services for a while after his retirement in 1994 but subsequently returned to the Episcopal Church, it said.

The ordination of Bishop Robinson has provoked worldwide controversy in the Anglican Communion, to which the U.S. Episcopal Church belongs.

This February the primates of the communion's 38 provinces around the world called on the U.S. House of Bishops to make "an unequivocal common covenant" that they will not authorize the blessing of same-sex couples and to affirm clearly that they will not consent to the ordination of any other candidate for bishop who is living in a same-sex relationship unless some new consensus on that issue emerges throughout the communion.

The primates warned the Episcopal Church that communion with other Anglicans would be at least damaged if it did not meet their conditions by the end of September.

Bishop Herzog said he delayed his departure from the Episcopal Church until after his retirement so that he would not "walk away from my office and leave vulnerable this diocese which I love." He had headed the Albany Diocese since 1998.

News of Bishop Herzog's decision came less than a month after the people of the Albany Diocese learned that their newly retired Suffragan (Auxiliary) Bishop David J. Bena had recently requested and received permission from Bishop Herzog to transfer to the Anglican Province of Nigeria, whose primate, Archbishop Peter Akinola, has been among the world leaders in fighting Anglican acceptance or blessing of same-sex unions.

Since he was simply transferring from one province of the Anglican Communion to another, Bishop Bena said, "I am neither renouncing my orders as a bishop nor am I abandoning the communion of the church."

In a letter to Albany Episcopalians Bishop Love said that unlike Bishop Bena, who remains an Episcopal bishop in good standing, "Bishop Dan's decision has necessitated the resignation of his orders as bishop, priest and deacon. As such he will not be able to function in an ordained capacity within the diocese or larger Anglican Communion."

"Dan and Carol have been and continue to be good friends of the Diocese of Albany and will always be welcome at all functions in the diocese," Bishop Love wrote. "Their decision to return to Rome was not and should not be seen as an attack or lack of love or concern for the Diocese of Albany."

Bishop Herzog, 65, was ordained an Episcopal priest in 1971 and a bishop in 1998. He grew up Catholic and, according to the Albany Times Union, graduated in 1964 from St. Bonaventure University, a Franciscan-run institution in St. Bonaventure, N.Y.