

# Pope sets up structure for former Anglicans; three ordained priests

LONDON – Almost immediately after he was ordained a Catholic priest along with two other former Anglican bishops, Father Keith Newton was named head of the new ordinariate for former Anglicans in England and Wales.

The Vatican announced Jan. 15 that the Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith had erected the Personal Ordinariate of Our Lady of Walsingham “for those groups of Anglican clergy and faithful who have expressed their desire to enter into full visible communion with the Catholic Church.”

Father Newton, who is a 58-year-old married man and former Anglican bishop of Richborough, was ordained to the Catholic priesthood earlier Jan. 15 by Archbishop Vincent Nichols of Westminster. Also ordained Catholic priests during the Mass in Westminster Cathedral were former Anglican Bishop John Broadhurst of Fulham and former Anglican Bishop Andrew Burnham of Ebbsfleet.

The world’s first personal ordinariate for former Anglicans is dedicated to Mary, Our Lady of Walsingham, who is venerated by both Catholics and Anglicans in England. The medieval Shrine of Our Lady of Walsingham in East Anglia was destroyed during the Protestant Reformation, but restored a century ago by Anglicans and Roman Catholics.

Pope Benedict XVI announced in November 2009 his decision to erect personal ordinariates for former Anglicans who wanted to enter into full communion with Rome while preserving liturgical and other elements of their Anglican heritage, including a certain amount of governing by consensus.

The ordinariate is a structure designed “to balance, on the one hand, the concern to preserve the worthy Anglican liturgical, spiritual and pastoral traditions and, on the other hand, the concern that these groups and their clergy will be fully integrated into the Catholic Church,” said a Vatican statement Jan. 15.

The statement noted that while under certain conditions married men may be

ordained priests in the Latin rite of the Catholic Church, married men may not be ordained bishops. However, the head of the ordinariate does not necessarily have to be a bishop, although some of his authority is similar to a bishop's.

The Vatican said Fathers Newton, Broadhurst and Burnham "will oversee the catechetical preparation of the first groups of Anglicans in England and Wales who will be received into the Catholic Church together with their pastors at Easter" and will "accompany the clergy preparing for ordination to the Catholic priesthood around Pentecost."

Church leaders in England have said they expect about 50 former Anglican clergy and hundreds of laypeople to enter the Catholic Church in the spring.

The three former Anglican bishops who led the way had resigned their Anglican ministries on Dec. 31, were received into the Catholic Church Jan. 1 and were ordained to the transitional diaconate Jan. 13.

A capacity congregation of about 1,500 worshippers filled Westminster Cathedral in London for their ordination to the Catholic priesthood.

The Mass began with the reading of a message from U.S. Cardinal William Levada, prefect of the doctrinal congregation, who described the priestly ordinations as an "occasion of great joy" and said the establishment of the ordinariate marked a "unique and historic moment in the life of the Catholic community" of England and Wales.

In his homily Archbishop Nichols said, "Many ordinations have taken place in this cathedral during the 100 years of its history. But none quite like this."

He thanked the Anglican Church of England for recognizing the sincerity of the three new Catholic priests and thanked Anglican leader Archbishop Rowan Williams of Canterbury for his "generosity of heart and spirit."

He then thanked Pope Benedict for "the courageous leadership he gives in establishing the first personal ordinariate."

Pope Benedict's intentions, he said, are to "contribute to the wider goal of visible

unity between our two churches by helping us to know in practice how our patrimonies of faith and living can strengthen each other in our mission today.”

Father Newton issued a statement saying he was “humbled” to be appointed as the first head of the ordinariate in England and Wales.

“This is not an honor I have sought or expected, but I pray that God will give me the wisdom and grace to live up to the trust the Holy Father has placed in me,” he said.

“My wife and family have been a great support to me throughout my ministry and I know they will continue to do so,” he said.

*Contributing to this story was Cindy Wooden at the Vatican.*