

The controversial issue of this week is the special provision for Anglicans wishing to become Catholic while maintaining Anglican liturgical and disciplinary practices. A number of people sent news articles describing the provision. I have selected two and followed them with commentaries by Sr. Christine Schenk and Kenny Moore.

Anglicans 'welcomed' by Catholics:

Dr. Williams said relations between the churches would not be damaged

(BBC) Anglican clergy and worshippers can join the Roman Catholic church but maintain a distinct religious identity under changes announced by the Pope.

The Vatican said it approved a new Apostolic Constitution in response to requests from Anglicans wanting to join but retain their liturgical heritage.

It comes amid splits within the global Anglican communion over homosexuality.

Archbishop of Canterbury, Dr. Rowan Williams, said he did not think it was a "commentary on Anglican problems".

Some within the worldwide Anglican communion have become disillusioned by the election of openly gay bishops and the blessing of same-sex unions.

And there has also been discord in recent years over the ordination of women.

Under the terms of the new church structure, groupings of Anglicans would be able to join "personal ordinariates".

This would allow them to enter full communion with the Catholic church, but also preserve elements of the Anglican traditions including the possible use of Anglican prayer books.

Speaking at a news conference held jointly with the Most Rev Vincent Nichols, leader of Roman Catholics in England and Wales, Dr Williams rejected the idea that the new arrangement would damage relations between the two churches.

He said: "I do not think this constitution will be seen as in any sense a commentary on Anglican problems offered by the Vatican.

The Vatican has had ongoing discussions with the Anglican church
"It is a response to this range of requests and inquiries from a very broad variety of people, either Anglican or of Anglican heritage, in that sense it has no negative impact on the relations of the communion as a whole to the Roman Catholic church as a whole."

In a statement issued by Lambeth Palace, the archbishop said the move "brings to an end a period of uncertainty for such groups who have nurtured hopes of new ways of embracing unity with the Catholic Church".

He said the Apostolic Constitution "is further recognition of the substantial overlap in faith, doctrine and spirituality between the Catholic Church and the Anglican tradition".

The archbishop's statement went on: "Without the dialogues of the past 40 years, this recognition would not have been possible.

"With God's grace and prayer we are determined that our ongoing mutual commitment and consultation on these and other matters should continue to be strengthened."

NEW YORK TIMES

Offer Raises Idea of Marriage for Catholic Priests

By RACHEL DONADIO

ROME — In making it easier for traditionalist Anglicans to become Catholic, Pope Benedict XVI once again revealed the character of his papacy: to reach out to the most fervent of like-minded believers, even if they are not Catholic. Yet some observers wonder whether his move could paradoxically liberalize the church — or at least wedge it open — on a crucial issue: celibacy.

In a momentous move on Tuesday, the Vatican said it would help Anglicans uncomfortable with female priests and openly gay bishops join a new Anglican rite within the Catholic Church.

The invitation also extends to married Anglican clergy. And so some have begun to wonder, even if the 82-year-old Benedict himself would never allow it, would more people in the Roman Catholic Church begin to entertain the possibility of married Catholic priests?

"If you get used to the idea of your priests being married, then that changes the perception of the Catholic priesthood necessarily," said Austen Ivereigh, a Catholic commentator in London and a former adviser to Cardinal Cormac Murphy-O'Connor of Westminster.

"We face the prospect in the future of going to a Catholic church in London and it being normal to find a married Catholic priest celebrating at the altar, with his wife sitting in the third pew and his children running up and down the aisle," he said.

It remains unclear how many Anglican priests will make the transition to the church. At a news conference announcing the new structure on Tuesday, Cardinal William Levada, the Vatican's chief doctrinal officer, said only that 20 to 30 Anglican bishops had inquired about becoming Catholics, although priests far outnumber bishops.

Married priests are permitted in the eastern Catholic rites, and one of Benedict's central goals is full communion with the Orthodox — and they, too, allow priests to marry. Anglican priests, married or not, are already permitted to become Catholic priests, but on a case-by-case basis. The new dispensation would for the first time allow in groups of married priests.

"Now we're opening up a whole structure within the Latin rite, within the Western rite, which will allow married priests to function," said Thomas Reese, a senior fellow at the Woodstock Theological Seminary at Georgetown University and a liberal Catholic commentator.

Mr. Reese raised a series of intriguing hypothetical questions: Would unmarried Anglican priests who want to become Catholic priests have to take a vow of chastity?

(The answer is presumably yes.) Could a Catholic man convert to Anglicanism, be ordained as an Anglican priest, then rejoin the Catholic Church under the new Anglican rite? (The Vatican spokesman, the Rev. Federico Lombardi, dismissed that idea as “a trick.”)

The overture toward the Anglicans speaks to a central theme in Benedict’s papacy: his desire to bring in traditional believers at all costs to help Catholicism become a “creative minority” in increasingly secular Europe.

Many saw it in line with the pope’s decision in January to revoke the excommunication of four schismatic bishops from the ultratraditional Society of St. Pius X, including one, Bishop Richard Williamson, who had denied the scope of the Holocaust. Aimed at healing a rift within the church, the move created global outrage and led a significant number of Catholics in Benedict’s native Germany to leave the Catholic Church.

Despite the outrage and a bumpy start toward reconciliation, the first formal meeting to bring the schismatic group, already pardoned by Benedict, back into the church will take place next week.

“Today more than ever, with Joseph Ratzinger as pope, the ecumenical path seems not to be a march toward modernity, but a return to the land of tradition,” Sandro Magister, a veteran Vatican reporter in Italy, wrote on his blog on Tuesday.

Many liberal Catholics in the United States lamented that the decision over the Anglicans again demonstrated that Benedict reached out only to the most conservative elements on the Catholic spectrum, not the more progressive ones.

And many experts noted that the decision also reflected a similar tendency inside the Vatican: as in the case with the schismatic bishops, the arrangement with the Anglicans was hammered out by doctrinal offices, generally staffed by more conservative clergy, without close consultation with the office responsible for ecumenical dialogue, whose staff members tend to be more moderate. Many saw it as yet another sign that the true power of Benedict’s papacy lies in the Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith, the doctrinal office, which he oversaw for two decades before becoming pope.

Coincidence or not, the Vatican announced the creation of the structure for Anglicans only after Cardinal Murphy-O’Connor, a strong voice for ecumenical dialogue, had retired, and when Cardinal Walter Kasper, the director of the Pontifical Council for Promoting Christian Unity and the Vatican’s main point person for relations with the Anglicans, was out of town.

Last Thursday, Cardinal Kasper said at a news conference that the Vatican did not intend “to fish in Anglican lakes,” that the aim of its dialogue with the Anglicans was not conversion. On Tuesday, Cardinal Levada said he had asked people involved in ecumenical dialogue to attend the Anglican news conference, but they were not in Rome.

He did acknowledge the complication of allowing married priests into the church.

“I think for some people it seems to be a problem, because as you know there have been many Catholic priests who have left the priesthood to get married,” Cardinal Levada said. “And the question arises, ‘Well, if these former Anglicans can be married priests, what about us?’ ”

But he said there were differences between Anglicans seeking to convert to Catholicism and Catholic men who commit to a celibate priesthood and then decide “that they want to leave the priesthood in order to have a married life.”

"I don't think it's an insurmountable problem," Cardinal Levada said.

For liberal groups, usually ignored by the church hierarchy, the Anglican ruling was a rare, if mixed, moment of hope. Allowing married priests, liberals noted, could go a long way to overcoming the deep shortages of priests in the developed world.

"I think it's very interesting and probably somewhat encouraging, in the sense of 'yes, there is a flexibility, there is an openness,'" said Sister Christine Schenk, the executive director of Future Church, a Catholic group based in Cleveland that favors married clergy.

Laurie Goodstein contributed reporting from New York.

Catholics Request Married Priests for Everyone, Not Just Anglican Converts

Worldwide Priest Shortage Requires Vatican Discussion of Optional Celibacy

[Cleveland] "We're surprised and pleased to see Vatican flexibility in permitting married priests for Anglican converts, but we need the option of a married priesthood in the Latin rite of the Catholic Church too," said FutureChurch Executive Director, Sr. Christine Schenk.

"Parishes in Europe, the United States and the United Kingdom are closing, while thousands of Catholics in the developing world have virtually no access to Mass and the sacraments because of too few celibate priests, said Schenk. "According to a 2007 article in the *New York Times*, 80% of all Sunday celebrations in Brazil are led by lay leaders because there are no priests."

"I think this may be painful news for married Catholic priests who are not permitted to serve the Church, said FutureChurch board member Bill Wisniewski, himself a married Catholic priest. "It's past time for Rome to welcome back the nearly 110,000 priests around the world who left the active ministry to marry. We must also work to enfranchise the tens of thousands of women ministering in the Church."

"I'm just wondering how its going to work to have Catholic seminarians who cannot marry, study next to Anglican seminarians who will presumably be able to marry," said Mary Lou Hartman, a FutureChurch board member from Princeton, New Jersey. "I'm guessing more than a few Catholic seminarians may just decide to join the Anglican branch." Hartman was referring to a statement by Cardinal Levada issued Oct. 20 "*The seminarians in the Ordinariate are to be prepared alongside other Catholic seminarians, though the Ordinariate may establish a house of formation to address the particular needs of formation in the Anglican patrimony.*"

http://212.77.1.245/news_services/bulletin/news/24513.php?index=24513&lang=it

Four years ago, FutureChurch lobbied the Vatican's International Synod on The Eucharist asking for open discussion of mandatory celibacy and women deacons. Four of the synod's twelve working groups wanted to study married priests. "At the synod there was much talk of allowing "viri probati" ("tested men") to perform priestly functions," said Schenk. "So perhaps that conversation helped prepare the way for yesterday's announcement that Rome will make special adaptations for married Anglican priests and bishops to join the Church."

Last June FutureChurch launched a new initiative: Optional Celibacy: So All Can Be At the Table. The international electronic and paper postcard campaign asks Cardinal

Hummes at the Congregation for the Clergy in Rome begin “discussion at the highest levels of the Church about the need to return to our earliest tradition of permitting both a married and celibate clergy.” To date over 2000 postcards have been sent from the US and scores of organizing packets have been downloaded from the FutureChurch website. An international campaign will begin in November with electronic postcards in German, French and Spanish.

Because of the priest shortage, U.S. dioceses will be forced to reconfigure parishes for the foreseeable future. According to the Center for Applied Research in the Apostolate, 75% of the 18,000 active diocesan priests in the U.S. are over 55 years old, but the U.S. is only ordaining about 350 new diocesan priests each year. In 20 years, presuming ordinations remain constant, the U.S. could have as few as 11,500 active diocesan priests for our 19,000 parishes. At the same time, numbers of deacons and paid lay ministers have increased significantly to 14,000 and 30,000 respectively. Presently “parish life coordinators” are pastoring an estimated 600 U.S. parishes.

Between 1975 and 2005 the world’s Catholics increased by fifty-seven percent from 709.6 million to 1.115 billion, but the number of priests increased only four-tenths of one percent (0.4%). (Center for Applied Research in the Apostolate (CARA))

In June, the president of Paraguay, Fernando Lugo, who is a former bishop, said the church should rethink its stance on celibacy. Lugo created a sensation when he admitted to fathering a child after he resigned as a bishop but before being laicized. His remarks prompted archbishop Eustaquio Cuquejo Verga of Asuncion to say the Catholic Church has no reason to reconsider celibacy for Latin-rite priests. This, despite a February 2008 petition from some 18,000 South American priests asking to change celibacy rules.

For more information about FutureChurch’s international Optional Celibacy campaign, *Official Catholic Directory* statistics for every U.S. diocese, and results of our survey of priests in 57 U.S. dioceses visit www.futurechurch.org

Catholics and Anglicans: Some Unintended Consequences

Kenny Moore is a former Catholic priest and co-author of “The CEO and the Monk: One Company’s Journey to Profit and Purpose.” You may read more of his brilliant material at: www.kennythemonk.com.

For the last twenty years, I’ve worked in corporate America. Prior to that, I spent fifteen years in a monastic order as a Catholic priest. Oddly enough, the work has proven to be quite similar, though the Incentive Plans varied greatly. I left the monastery because I wanted to get married. Now that I’m married and raising two teenagers ... I’d like to go back. And presently it seems all I need do is join the Anglican Church. According to the recent announcement from Rome, I’ll even be able to bring my wife along. Unfortunately, there’s still the problem of the kids. The monks often said that the Almighty has a wicked sense of humor.

With one wave of the Vatican’s almighty hand, Anglicans who don’t like women bishops or gay priests are now welcome in the Catholic Church. Even their married clergy can come along. But there might be one small difficulty. These disenfranchised Anglicans will now be sharing the pew with a growing number of disenfranchised Catholics: folks who are increasingly pushing for women’s ordination and a more Christian response to the gay community. And don’t be

surprised if the priest celebrating Mass is himself gay. They haven't disappeared, you know. They've only gone underground to survive the Witch Hunt of the present Administration.

When the Bishops recently requested that Catholics start returning to the confessional, it didn't seem to improve the numbers. Likewise, their PR program "Welcome Home" hasn't moved the masses to return to the fold. Perhaps the broader Catholic community knows more than the hierarchy. The Church leadership continues to be hostile to gays, indifferent to women and intolerant of the meddling laity. The recent sex scandals have only confirmed the people's suspicions: the hierarchy is not to be trusted. Bishops believe it's better to have a diocese declare bankruptcy, as Wilmington, Delaware and others have recently done, than release documents revealing their ethical malfeasance. A growing number of the laity is looking to leave, but hasn't had a place to go. This may all be changing.

What the Vatican may not have realized is that in opening the door to the Anglican Church, that door swings both ways. Why wouldn't our gay Catholic priests switch to a religious group that treats them with dignity and respect? Even the straight priests might be willing to cast their lot with a liturgical tradition that at least allows them to marry and have the support of their wives, since they seem to get so little of it from their Bishops. Women, who continue to make up the vast majority of church-goers, might also stop complaining to an all-male clergy for equal rights, and embrace the Anglican way of celebrating their gifts as a valid ministry? The Pope's recent decision could just prove to be the "Law of Unintended Consequences" played out in a divinely mischievous way.

And wouldn't it be refreshing for Catholic couples to finally find a religion that allows them to be in harmony with their Church's teaching on birth control without having to wait for the onset of menopause?

While Rome's at it, how about inviting those disenfranchised Mormon polygamists over to our side as well? The number of their kids alone would boost Catholic school enrollment tremendously.

And what about extending another free pass to those bonus-laden Wall Street Execs? The Vatican could always use some help with its cash flow, and buying Indulgences might be just what's needed to reinvigorate our faltering global economy.

I'm sure we could get President Obama to endorse it as part of his Stimulus Package. Even Tom Friedman might cast a favorable vote. I'm less sure about the Dalai Lama.

While I've never been a big fan of Rome, I'm already liking this Anglican thing a lot. It may be one of the few Papal pronouncements I'm willing to support.

Would Rome be as laid back as Canterbury if the Anglicans offered liberal Catholic

priests, bishops and congregations the invitation to join Anglican ordinariates? Would the Vatican look at this reciprocal offer as a positive step in the ecumenical process?

Please share your comments, and pass along articles you feel are important. Send them to tony@tonyercolano.com