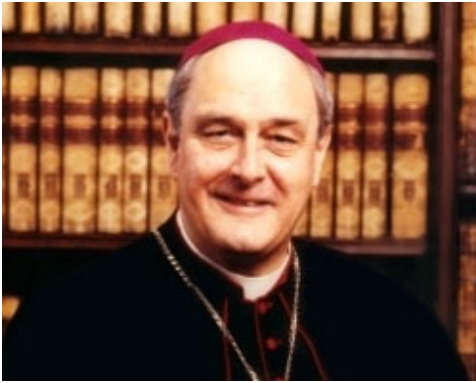


The Ordinariate

By Bishop Alan Hopes



I have been appointed by the Catholic Bishops' Conference as the Episcopal Delegate for the implementation of the Ordinariate in England and Wales. This appointment seems to reflect my own spiritual journey into full communion with the Catholic Church in the early 1990s – my bishops hoped that I would be able to represent them in the discussions and implementation with sensitivity and charity;

equally, those who were seeking to enter into full communion with the Church through the Ordinariate were confident that they were being supported and affirmed in their journey, and presented to the Church in England and Wales with fairness and generosity.

I am only too aware that for some members of the C of E the establishment of the Ordinariate of Our Lady of Walsingham in England and Wales will have caused division and pain. Some Anglicans have found it a big challenge as they seek to discern God's will for them in their journey of faith. For some it has been the very thing they have been waiting for and they are now able to step forward in faith and hope. For others it has been a Papal act of aggression. As for Catholics, I think most are still trying to understand how it will all work out in practice with so many new priests and so few people at the moment (61 priests and 950-odd lay people).

It was in October 2009 that the Holy Father Pope Benedict XVI issued his Apostolic Constitution *Anglicanorum Coetibus*. It represents a unique moment in the life of the Catholic Church across the world and especially so in England and Wales. The Constitution was the Pope's response to the continual and persistent requests he was receiving from those bishops, clergy and people of the Church of England who were finding it increasingly difficult to live the Catholic life within in the Church of England. They were looking for ecclesial communion and a magisterium which has continuity, authority and authenticity. It was also in response to the more traditional breakaway bodies of the C of E such as the Traditional Anglican Communion (TAC) and other ecclesial communions which have been seeking to enter into full communion with the Catholic Church.

It might have seemed that Papal tanks had arrived on the lawns of Lambeth Palace, as one of the media correspondents put it, but when it is put into its right context the initiative is seen to be a development which is wholly new, prophetic and stunning. So that is what I want to do now – put *Anglicanorum Coetibus* into its correct context.

First, at the beginning of the Apostolic Constitution, the Holy Father writes the following: *The Church, a people gathered into the unity of the Father, Son and Holy*

Spirit, was instituted by.....Christ as a sacrament.....a sign and instrument, that it, of communion with God and of unity among all people. Every division among the baptised in Jesus Christ wounds that which the Church is and that for which the Church exists: in fact such division openly contradicts the will of Christ, scandalises the world and damages.....the preaching of the Gospel to every creature.

The Constitution is not a hostile confrontation on the part of the Vatican. It is quite simply an ecumenical gesture – a pastoral response from the Holy Father to those who sought his help and guidance. The key word at the heart of *Anglicanorum Coetibus* is *communio* – communion. For communion must be at the heart of the Church's life. It comes from God himself – from the Holy Trinity, a communion of persons, the source of all communion and unity. It is, of course, what Jesus Christ prayed for at the Last Supper.

At the beginning the Church gathered around the Apostles and they lived in communion together, faithful to the teaching of the apostles, to the brotherhood, to the breaking of bread and the prayers. Communion as a visible reality therefore depends on bishops who are the successors to the apostles. As you know, the bishop is the centre of *communio* for the clergy and people of each particular church. The bishop does not exist in isolation. He has to be in communion with the other bishops, in a communion of shared faith and order. He is part of that apostolic band which stretches back to the original college of the Twelve.

And, of course, the particular Church is in communion with the other particular churches across the world. And the communion of the Church around the world is guaranteed in the person of Peter and his successors – the one who, as the Holy Father said in Westminster Abbey last year, *is charged with a particular care for the unity of Christ's flock.*

In the Constitution the Holy Father repeats the teaching of the Second Vatican Council: *The single Church of Christ which we profess in the creed as One, Holy, Catholic and Apostolic, "subsists in the catholic Church, which is governed by the successor of Peter and by the bishops in communion with him.....but many elements of sanctification and of truth are found outside her visible confines."* Since these are gifts properly belonging to the Church of Christ they are forces impelling us towards Catholic unity.

This understanding of *communio* lies at the heart of the Holy Father's Constitution where he is establishing a distinct ecclesial community for former Anglican clergy together with those of ecclesial communions associated with them in the past, and their groups of people within the Roman Rite of the Catholic Church. The new Ordinariate will be part of that *communio* – in full communion with Peter and the universal Church. All priests, all people of the Ordinariate through Mgr Newton, their Ordinary, appointed directly by the Holy Father himself, are part of the communion which is the Catholic Church in England and Wales. They are in communion with the

local bishop in whose diocese the Ordinariate exists, and with the priest and people of the local Catholic Church where each group is set up.

Each one of the sixty-odd priests who came from the Church of England has gone through an intensive period of formation right from the beginning of Lent up to the time that they were ordained around Pentecost, and for the next two years they will be continuing that formation. There are centres at Maryvale and Buckfast Abbey. Each clergyman coming from the Church of England has to be ordained as a deacon and ordained as a priest in the Catholic Church.

An important distinction to make is that this is an Ordinariate and *not* a Uniate Church, of the kind which are included within the Eastern Catholic Churches; among the larger examples of these are the Maronite Catholic Church and the Ukrainian Greek Catholic Church. The Ordinariate is not seen as an aberration, something at best on the periphery of the local Church, doing its own thing. It is, as it were, a *quasi diocese* without boundaries. There are some similarities to military ordinariates which were defined by Pope John Paul II in his apostolic constitution *Spirituali militum cura* in 1986 – membership is on a personal rather than a territorial basis. But the structures are substantially different.

The Personal Ordinariate is for former Anglicans - but Anglicans who converted some years ago can, if they so wish, say that they would like to become members of the Ordinariate. There is that dual possibility. The decision-making body is the Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith (CDF). They are the people who will be the final arbiters in any questions that might arise. There are points in the Constitution that will have to be fleshed out.

The Holy Father's initiative is saying something prophetic about Anglicans and associated ecclesial communions and Catholics as a whole – that there is a distinctive place for these other traditions in an integrated space within the Catholic Church. But he is actually saying something more about Christian unity in general; it is the development of a Catholic tradition which would open up unique spaces to enable those who share in the apostolic faith to be integrated into the *communio* of the Church. So an important principle for all those who are coming into full communion with the Catholic Church this year through the Ordinariate is that they should not switch off their ecumenical instincts. They will have to become, as the Holy Father exhorts them, actual *instruments* of unity with other Anglicans, and indeed other Christians – to be a bridge for them. They have to become a people who, in a seemingly impossible situation, align the awareness of the community of the Catholic Church to the command of Christ to be one. They must be ready to join the Catholic Church wholeheartedly in the work of promoting Christian unity with the very people they might have been at odds with until recently.

The second context in which the Holy Father has placed *Anglicanorum Coetibus* is that of Mission. This move will help to proclaim the gospel of Jesus Christ with a

greater confidence, integrity and strength. Last year the Holy Father also set up a new pontifical council for the promotion of what he calls the *new evangelisation*. He is extremely concerned that even in those countries and places where the Christian gospel has historically shaped an entire culture and civilisation there has recently developed, as he puts it, *an entire eclipse of the sense of God*. Religion is put out to grass into the private and personal realm. It is banned from attempting to influence the state or society in any way. It is claimed to have nothing to say to modern man. It is also clear that entire groups of those who have been baptised have lost their sense of faith and no longer consider themselves as part of the Church; they live lives which are far removed from Christ and his teaching. The Holy Father calls for a new proclamation of the Gospel in these countries. Such a country is ours. A new vitality, confidence and sensitivity are required to propose afresh that the great gift of Christian faith, which serves the whole of humanity, is not a problem to be solved but a gift to be welcomed and embraced.

Anglicanorum Coetibus must be seen in this context. All the groups that come into full communion will be part of this new evangelisation to the masses of unbelievers and those disconnected from their Christian roots. Members of the Ordinariate must become part of that missionary outlook and of that desire to teach the faith and win people for Christ. Anglican experience in this field is a gift for the Catholic Church as she seeks to help men and women of this country to discover anew what it means to be a Christian and how we work out our faith in our lives.

Communion and mission: the Catholic Church offers the great gift of communion with Peter and with the universal church. It is envisaged that Ordinariate groups will bring their gifts and enthusiasm to the new evangelisation and to engagement with secular society. This is the new reality coming from the Holy Father – diversity within true communion is also a gift to be cherished and welcomed.

At the end of the *Ad Limina* visit of our bishops to the Holy Father last year he asked us to be generous in implementing the provision of the Apostolic Constitution.....”so as to assist those groups who wish to come into full communion with the Catholic Church. I am convinced,” he said to us, “that if given a warm and open-hearted welcome such groups will be a blessing for the entire Church.”

We live in extremely challenging times – but they are *exciting* times: they always become moments of opportunity for the Church. We have been given a new *Beato* – John Henry Newman. I am sure that with the help of his prayers, and through his teaching and example, he will help us all to grow into a deeper sense of communion as the Church; he will help the Ordinariate to be a force for mission, spirituality and good practice; and he will help the Church to explore continually the road which leads eventually to the unity of the Church – that day when there will indeed be the one flock under the one Shepherd.

The Holy Father sees that there is a distinctive Anglican spirituality and a distinctive Anglican sense of mission. All this can be described as a patrimony that can be brought to bear in the Catholic Church. It is a door that people can come through to help them into full communion. As for the future, it may be God's will that it should be the present structure, but maybe in 50 years' time the Ordinariate will become fully integrated into the Catholic Church. Who knows? We must just wait and see.

I conclude with these words of the Holy Father: *The journey to this unity must be perceived as a moral imperative, a response to a specific call from the Lord.....we must passionately continue the journey towards this goal, through serious and rigorous dialogue to develop our shared theological, liturgical and spiritual heritage; through reciprocal knowledge; through the ecumenical formation of new generations; and, above all, through conversion of heart and prayer.*

Bishop Alan Hopes, an auxiliary bishop of the Diocese of Westminster, and Episcopal Delegate for the implementation of the Ordinariate in England and Wales, spoke at a meeting of the Ealing Newman Circle in October 2011

Background Notes

The creation of personal ordinariates for Anglicans was announced on 20th October 2009.

On 4th November 2009 *Anglicanorum Coetibus* (which can be translated as Groups of Anglicans) was published.

On 15th January 2011 the CDF established the first ordinariate, named the Personal Ordinariate of Our Lady of Walsingham. It embraced the territory within the jurisdiction of the Catholic Bishops' Conference of England and Wales; Scotland and Ireland are being treated separately.

Bishop Alan Hopes was a priest in the Church of England until 1994 when he converted to the Roman Catholic Church, becoming ordained as a Catholic priest in 1995. He became a bishop in 2003. In October 2010 he was given responsibility for the Ordinariate on behalf of the Catholic Bishops' Conference.

The former Anglican bishop Keith Newton was received into the Catholic Church on 1st January 2011, and ordained a Catholic priest on 15th January. Now, as Mgr Keith Newton, he is the Ordinary of this new structure and chair of its Governing Council.

Separate steps are being undertaken to establish ordinariates in those other parts of the world where the Anglican communion is strongly represented. In the US there have been "Anglican Use" parishes in existence since the 1980s, representing a rather looser connection between Episcopal churches and Rome, and the creation of an ordinariate is now well under way. There have also been initiatives in Canada and Australia.