

THE MISSION OF THE ORDINARIATE

Symposium | Ordinariate of the Chair of St. Peter
St. Mary's Seminary, Houston, Texas
February 2, 2013

The Call to Communion: *Anglicanorum coetibus* and Ecclesial Unity



Most Rev. Gerhard Ludwig Müller

Prefect

Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith

Thank you, Monsignor Steenson, for the invitation to participate in this symposium on the first anniversary of the establishment of the Personal Ordinariate of the Chair of St. Peter. I bring with me the greetings and prayers of our Holy Father, Pope Benedict, and I begin by saying to you, the clergy and faithful of the Ordinariate, congratulations and happy anniversary!

I want to acknowledge the presence of Cardinal Donald Wuerl. We will have the opportunity later today to properly express our gratitude to him for his excellent service as the Holy See's delegate for the implementation of *Anglicanorum coetibus*. Thank you, Your Eminence, for being with us today and for addressing us on the New Evangelization, a very important topic in these times.

Cardinal Daniel DiNardo has welcomed us all to the Archdiocese of Galveston-Houston, and we thank him both for his hospitality and for his unwavering support for the Ordinariate. It is especially appropriate that we are holding this symposium at St. Mary's Seminary as the formation program for Ordinariate clergy based here is a tangible sign of the support of this local Church in implementing the Holy Father's vision expressed in *Anglicanorum coetibus*.

I offer a warm welcome to my brother bishops and priests. Many of you have played an important role in laying the groundwork for the establishment of the Ordinariate and guiding it in this first year. I would like also to thank Bishop Kevin Vann, the Holy See's Delegate for the *Pastoral Provision* for taking part in this symposium. We look forward to a fruitful collaboration between the Ordinariate and the *Pastoral Provision*.

It is indeed a great honor for me to address you, the clergy and faithful of the Ordinariate of the Chair of St. Peter. In responding to the Holy Father's invitation in *Anglicanorum coetibus*, each of you has demonstrated great courage and deep faith. I am aware that, for most of you, this has been a journey into the unknown and has called for considerable personal sacrifice. In expressing my admiration for your courage, I want you to know that the Holy Father is following with great interest the establishment and development of the Ordinariate. Last year, Cardinal William Levada, my predecessor as Prefect of the Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith, told the clergy of the Ordinariate of Our Lady of Walsingham that *Anglicanorum coetibus* was very much "the Pope's project." I have come to understand how true that is. You are very much in his thoughts and prayers.

Christ's prayer "that they all might be one" underscores the imperative of seeking full visible unity among Christians. The Ordinariate of the Chair of St. Peter serves this vision of unity by making it possible for groups of Anglicans to enter into communion with the Catholic Church while preserving elements of the distinctive Anglican spiritual and liturgical patrimony. It can certainly be said that, in creating this new structure, the Holy Father was responding to a movement of the Holy Spirit. It is the Spirit that draws the disciples of the Lord together, fashioning them into the ecclesial Body of Christ.

Today, I propose to reflect on the great gift of communion to which the Spirit calls us. I will begin by developing some theological principles which inform and direct the vision for unity expressed in *Anglicanorum coetibus*. With these principles in mind, we can then examine the canonical structure of the Ordinariate as a concrete expression of ecclesial communion. Upon the theological and canonical foundation of the Ordinariate we may construct a “culture of communion,” and that will be the third part of my presentation.

God, the Source of our Communion

At the very heart of the Christian faith is the revelation of the Blessed Trinity: God is Father, Son, and Holy Spirit, three Persons united in the one Godhead. The revelation of the Trinity is not one doctrine among others, but it is God’s very self-manifestation in which God does not just impart some abstract knowledge about himself, but rather draws us in to the depths of the mystery of his life and love so that we might be saved, healed, and restored to relationship with him. The revelation of the Trinity encompasses the whole of the Christian faith, and therefore will be a helpful context for our reflection on unity. The communion of the Church flows from the communion of the Blessed Trinity, which is a model of unity not based on uniformity, nor is it a unity without substance.

The Father is the source and author of all life. He reveals himself, that is to say, he gives himself to the World in giving his Incarnate Son and he pours forth the Holy Spirit with the Son so that every aspect of this revealing self-gift might be illuminated and life-giving. The Church, receiving the gift of the Son and being vivified by the Spirit, responds in Eucharistic praise, offering back to the Father for the sake of the world the very gift she has received. This the Church does in the power of the Holy Spirit who effects the transformation of the Church’s gifts into the Body and Blood of Christ, the only acceptable sacrifice which brings salvation to the whole world.

The encounter with Divine Revelation and the dynamic of inter-Personal love in God characterizes the most basic shape of the Church which stands before the Father, in the Son, through the Holy Spirit. Through our Eucharistic sharing in the death and resurrection of Christ, we, the many, are made one in Christ Jesus. This communion with Christ fashioned by the Spirit allows us access to the Father. Indeed, the greatest prayer of the Church is the one our Lord gave us in which we call God not only his Father, but “Our Father.”

From the perspective of the world, this is indeed a new kind of unity different from all other human attempts at oneness. The history of the world demonstrates again and again that human beings often go about trying to construct unity by enforcing uniformity. When we think of how this has played out in governments and societies, particularly in the totalitarian regimes of the last century, we see that there is an inherent danger in this conception. Uniformity tends toward the elimination of those who do not conform or comply. Conversely, another way the world tries to achieve oneness is by simply overlooking or ignoring the differences that do exist, even to the point of allowing contradictory claims to truth. But this kind of liberal expansiveness, which is rather a hallmark of “latitudinarian” Anglicanism, brings about a unity that is naïve and ephemeral and is, in fact, unity in name only. It is relativism in the absolute and erodes the very foundation of truth upon which true ecclesial communion is built.

True communion is rooted in the unity of the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit, a communion in which the diversity of the Persons is constituted and sustained by their essential relations. The Father is not the Son and the Spirit is neither the Father nor the Son, and yet each divine Person is who he is in relation to and in perfect communion with the other. This communion in difference is the key insight

as we consider our participation as Church in the Trinitarian mystery. We are all called to discipleship and grafted onto the ecclesial Body of Christ through Baptism. Our unity with one another as members of the one Body does not destroy our distinctiveness. Clergy and lay, religious and secular, married and single, male and female, we all share an equal dignity and are formed into one Church through the profession of “one Lord, one faith and one Baptism.” Our distinctiveness and interdependence is a blessing for the Church and a source of its vitality.

The unity of the one and the many is a key insight of *Anglicanorum coetibus*. The unity of the Church is an image of the eternal unity of God, and according to that heavenly pattern, unity is not achieved by an elimination of distinctiveness. The unity of faith, therefore, permits a diversity of expression of that one faith. This is what is meant in the Apostolic Constitution when it says that groups of Anglicans can enter into communion with the Catholic Church while preserving elements of the distinctive Anglican spiritual and liturgical patrimony. The diversity in liturgical expressions, in some governance structures and in parochial culture does not threaten ecclesial communion. The overarching structure which holds together these expressions is the faith of the Church, ever ancient and ever new, and expressed eloquently in the *Catechism of the Catholic Church*.

This year, the Church celebrates the Year of Faith. A sustained reflection on the faith of the Church by the clergy and faithful of the Ordinariate is, I am convinced, the best way to set the “Pope’s project” on the firmest foundation for future growth. Give yourselves, therefore, in this Year of Faith to a serious engagement with the faith by renewing your personal relationship with Jesus Christ, the only Savior, and by studying the *Catechism* and perhaps too the beautiful encyclical letters of Blessed Pope John Paul II and Pope Benedict XVI.

We are established in our Catholic communion by our common faith, not by eliminating our diversity, but by the appreciation of the Spirit’s gifts in one another so as to better realize that our being in the Church depends on communion with God and with one another. This is the reconciling fruit of our Lord’s cross and a powerful insight for your own communities to share with the whole Church.

Personal Ordinariates: Why this Structure?

In light of this theological reflection on unity and diversity, I think it would be helpful to explain somewhat the canonical structure of the Ordinariates. This is, after all, the concrete means by which the Holy Father has decided to receive communities of Anglicans into full Catholic communion. The first thing to affirm is that the Apostolic Constitution *Anglicanorum Coetibus* does not create a wholly new structure within the current canonical norms of the Church. Rather, the Holy See has chosen the structure of Personal Ordinariates, originally envisioned for the pastoral care of members of the armed forces.ⁱ Because of their different purposes, there are differences between Military Ordinariates and those like the Ordinariate of the Chair of St. Peter established for clergy and faithful coming from Anglicanism. But at heart of the matter, we are dealing with structures created by the Church which express a pastoral concern in specific and exceptional situations arising from the needs of the faithful. The creation of juridical structures specifically adapted to the spiritual good of the faithful demonstrates in a very helpful way the *flexibility* of the Church’s canonical norms, not an attribution one is used to hearing in reference to Canon Law!

A complicating factor when describing the structure of the Ordinariate is that Personal Ordinariates and Military Ordinariates were not specifically foreseen in the Code of Canon Law when it was promulgated in 1983. For that reason, both *Anglicanorum coetibus* and the Apostolic

Constitution establishing Military Ordinariates have to spell out in some detail the nature and functions of these entities. In both documents, the Ordinariates are described as being juridically similar or comparable to dioceses.ⁱⁱ This has several implications. On the one hand, the Personal Ordinariates cannot be considered as Particular Ritual Churches since the Anglican liturgical, spiritual and pastoral tradition is a reality which develops entirely within the Latin Church. On the other hand, these Personal Ordinariates are not to be thought of as a type of religious order or even as Personal Prelatures.

The intention in *Anglicanorum coetibus* is to create a structure which accommodates the equal membership of the clergy and laity alike. What is involved in this provision, therefore, goes beyond what was envisioned in the *Pastoral Provision* approved by John Paul II in 1980. Whereas those who entered the Catholic Church through the *Pastoral Provision* would be members of the Diocese in which they lived, those who enter under the Apostolic Constitution *Anglicanorum coetibus* are properly members of a Personal Ordinariate. Like a Diocese, then, the Ordinariates have the freedom to embrace faithful from every state of life: laity, priests and consecrated religious.

A careful reading of the Apostolic Constitution and the Complementary Norms published by the Holy See shows that the establishment of Personal Ordinariates responds to two needs: the need to maintain Anglican liturgical, spiritual and pastoral traditions within the Catholic Church, and the need to integrate those groups and individuals coming from Anglicanism fully into the life of the Catholic Church. The way in which the Apostolic Constitution concretely addresses these two needs corresponds to the dual principle of corporate reunion. First, communities coming into communion are to be fully Catholic, both in faith and in the manner in which they participate in the life of the larger Catholic Church in their local dioceses. Secondly, their preservation of distinctive Anglican liturgical and spiritual patrimony is to be a hallmark of their parochial life, which is itself a contribution to the vitality of the Catholic Church.

Let us first consider how the structure of the Personal Ordinariate safeguards and guarantees the distinctiveness of Anglican patrimony. This is demonstrated perhaps most clearly in Article Three of *Anglicanorum coetibus* which grants the faculty to celebrate the Eucharist and the other sacraments, the Liturgy of the Hours and other celebrations according to the liturgical books proper to the Anglican tradition. But this is not the only example of the canonical structure allowing space for the incorporation of Anglican patrimony in the Catholic Church. The Ordinary may determine specific programmes of formation for seminarians of the Ordinariate living in a diocesan seminary, or may establish a house of formation for them, thus ensuring that seminarians are exposed to and formed by elements of their tradition.ⁱⁱⁱ Similarly, the fact that the Ordinary may establish personal parishes, ensures that the distinctive identity of these groups can be maintained at the local level, even while participating fully in the life of the local Catholic diocese.

Out of respect for the synodal tradition of Anglicanism, the Apostolic Constitution specifies that, in the future, the Ordinary will be appointed by the Holy Father based on a *terna* of names presented by the Governing Council. A Pastoral Council is obligatory to ensure the participation of the lay faithful in the decisions facing the Ordinariate.^{iv} Finally, a unique feature of the Ordinariate structure is the Governing Council. This Governing Council fulfils the duties established in the Code of Canon Law for the Presbyteral Council and the College of Consultors, while also exercising duties specified in the Complementary Norms which include giving or withholding consent or expressing a deliberative vote in certain cases.^v

The other principle of corporate reunion, namely, the integration of communities into the fullness of Catholic life is also well expressed in the canonical provisions of the Ordinariates.

According to these norms, the *Catechism of the Catholic Church* is to be considered the authentic expression of the faith of the members of the Ordinariate.^{vi} Both the Constitution and the Complementary Norms specify several instances in which the local bishop or the Episcopal Conference or even the Holy See must be consulted before a decision is made. This is more than just a communications strategy; it is a concrete expression of ecclesial communion as the Church's Pastors work together for the good of the Church.

The responsibility for fostering communion extends to the priests of the Ordinariate as well. While the priests are incardinated directly into the Ordinariate, they are obliged to cultivate bonds of fraternal unity with the presbyterate of the Dioceses in whose territory they exercise their ministry. They are to encourage joint initiatives and pastoral and charitable activities, which may be regulated by agreements between the Ordinary and the Diocesan Bishop.^{vii} The Complementary Norms also foresee the possibility of mutual pastoral assistance between priests of the Ordinariate and those incardinated into the local Dioceses. Again, the overarching concern is the unity of the Church and the pastoral care of souls. A particularly clear example of this shared concern is the provision that candidates for Holy Orders in the Ordinariate will be formed together with other seminarians, especially with regard to doctrinal and pastoral formation.

Let me make a final observation on the canonical structure of the Ordinariates. One feature of the Ordinariates that some might think anomalous is that the responsibility for their establishment and oversight has been given to the Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith. One reason for this is that the Congregation has always had the responsibility for healing the rift of schism and addressing requests for corporate reunion with the Catholic Church. This is the reason, for example, that the Congregation was also deeply involved in the establishment of the *Pastoral Provision* in 1980. Additionally, many doctrinal questions were considered during the long discussion which has borne fruit in *Anglicanorum coetibus* and undoubtedly such questions will continue to arise. In any case, as specific issues emerge, each Ordinariate will be subject not just to the Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith but also to the other Congregations of the Roman Curia according to their specific responsibilities. The Apostolic Constitution mentions that the Ordinary must make a visit to Rome *ad limina Apostolorum* every five years where he must consult with the various offices of the Roman Curia. This ensures open lines of communication and collaboration between the Ordinariate and the Congregations which assist the Holy Father in the task of governance in the Church.

The Clergy and Faithful of the Ordinariate: Architects of Communion

We have discussed the theological foundations for ecclesial unity and then considered how this unity is expressed in the canonical structure of the Personal Ordinariates. I would now like to turn to a perhaps more subtle but no less important consideration: creating what I will call a “culture of communion” in our Ordinariate communities. Theology and Canon Law are very important tools in the life of the Church, but the concrete living out of ecclesial communion is accomplished by men and women, clergy and laity, committed to using those tools as an expression their discipleship and fidelity to the Lord Jesus.

It is perhaps easier to think of ecclesial communion in the abstract, as a concept to which I give my assent but one which has little concrete impact on my life. For those recently entering the Catholic Church, particularly when the lack of papal primacy and the Magisterium are experienced as an ecclesial deficit motivating the desire for full communion, it is natural to focus on unity at the macro level: communion with the Holy Father and the See of Peter. But the development of a *culture* of communion in the Ordinariates implies also that equal attention be given to communion with the

bishops of the Church, communion with the local diocese and parishes, communion with the Catholic faithful, and bonds of charity and friendship with those still separated from the Church.

We are celebrating this weekend the first anniversary of the establishment of the Ordinariate of the Chair of St. Peter. The Ordinariate of Our Lady of Walsingham in England and Wales is entering its third year of existence while the Ordinariate of Our Lady of the Southern Cross is just beginning. In many respects, these first years are key moments in the foundation of the Ordinariates, engaging the important questions of faith formation, structures, buildings and finances. But in these early days, Ordinariate communities will bear scrutiny from many quarters and because the unity of the Church is the ostensible reason for their establishment, effective communion will be a principle measure against which Ordinariate communities will be judged.

By scrutiny I do not just mean media interest. That is often passing and only interested in a few attention-grabbing headlines rather than the slow, often hidden process of developing the life of faith. But the interest and attention from other groups is more enduring. Anglicans will be interested in what kind of reception you receive and how well you are able to make a home in the Catholic Church that is more than just assimilation. Catholics will want to know that you are here to stay, strengthening our ecclesial cohesion rather than setting yourselves apart as another divisive grouping within the Church. It is safe to say that all eyes are now on you and your parish communities! For you who represent the leadership in the Ordinariate, it is your delicate but all-important task both to preserve the integrity of your parish communities and, at the same time, help your people integrate into the larger Catholic community. Your decision to “put out into the deep” in favor of the unity of Christ’s Church must be developed and extended in the promotion of a culture of communion of which you are the architects.

Building this culture of communion begins with advancing a narrative to explain to Catholics and non-Catholics alike the abiding value of unity, the integrity of the faith, and loyalty to the Holy Father and to the Church’s Magisterium. In other words, you must propose ever anew the *raison d’être* of the Ordinariate or, in the words of St. Peter himself, “Always be prepared to give to anyone who asks a reason for the hope that is in you” (1 Pt. 3:15). Sadly, many people see the world through the polarized lens of division and political factions, and so numerous articles have appeared about *Anglicanorum coetibus* which describe the Holy Father as an ecumenical poacher and characterize those who seek communion as disgruntled reactionaries. It falls to us as architects of communion to provide the correct interpretation of the Ordinariate as the fruit of a trajectory towards unity which began over 150 years ago in the Oxford Movement through great figures like Blessed John Henry Newman. The right narrative about the great adventure of fidelity and about the Ordinariate as an eloquent expression of ecumenism is too important to leave to others to write for us.

I am well aware that many of you have experienced conflict and division in the years leading up to your decision to seek full communion with the Catholic Church. Indeed, many of the clergy dossiers which we have read in Rome contain moving accounts of defending orthodox faith and practice in the midst of painful, even scandalous situations of fracture. We must be reflective about these experiences, discerning carefully that they do not overly influence our attitudes toward ecclesiastical authority or Church life. A culture of communion will not take hold if our default position is defensive or contentious. Unity is easily undermined by a culture of suspicion.

Communion must be fostered and expressed also in the manner in which we relate to one another. While the explosion of so-called “new media” has revolutionized human communication and offers many opportunities for advancing the New Evangelization, blogs especially have a way of promoting un-reflected speech. Judgment and criticism are certainly not bad things in themselves, but

when opinions are advanced on an internet forum unbridled from charity or an adequate knowledge of the facts, they can undermine the very foundation of ecclesial communion which is love.

Again, the Church is watching what we are building here in the Personal Ordinariates. The openness of the wider Catholic community to the rich Anglican patrimony which you bring will be encouraged when they experience in your communities the joyful and peaceful embrace of our common faith. Constructing a culture of communion will require wisdom, humility, and a firmness of intention to avoid divisiveness. In a world marked by division and discord, a culture of communion can be an especially eloquent witness to the truth of our faith and in fidelity to our Lords prayer “that they might be one.” I can think of no better patrimony to share with the Church, and no better structure within the Church to promote such a rich patrimony than the Ordinariates.

Conclusion

By way of conclusion, I want to return to the affirmation that, for many of you, the movement into full communion has been an exercise of great courage. Again and again, it has meant leaving behind what is familiar and comfortable in order to put out into unknown and deep waters. And yet you have undertaken that journey, supported by your orthodox Christian faith and guided by the vision of unity—the very unity for which our Lord fervently prayed on the night before he died. I cannot promise you that your arrival in the “safe harbor” of Catholic communion means that the time for displaying great courage is behind you. Actually, it takes a great deal of courage to be Catholic and so I say to you: be courageous!

Be courageous in posing a serious countercultural response to the spirit of relativism and godless secularism. The modern age challenges the very foundations of the Christian faith by denying the very existence of objective truth. But the ultimate sterility of relativism is exposed by the witness of men and women joyfully living their faith—a witness which is even more eloquent by you who have made the journey toward Catholic communion as a positive affirmation of the truth of biblical Christianity. You see, truth is not just an idea. Its foundation is the self-revelation of a loving God made incarnate in our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ. Our courage in this regard leads to the discovery that conforming our lives to the One who is Truth is by no means an affront to our freedom, but is the only sure path to true happiness and liberation.

Be courageous in maintaining the vibrancy and orthodoxy of your faith in the Catholic Church. From time to time, you will encounter cynics or those whose faith has grown lukewarm which might tempt you to think that you have simply exchanged one dysfunctional ecclesial home for another. Your loyalty to the Holy Father and your commitment to seeking the truth has brought you this far and will sustain you, and will also serve as a powerful encouragement to those “born” into the Catholic Church to rediscover her beauty and the consistency of her teaching. Your “youthful enthusiasm” is a great gift.

Be courageous pioneers of communion, placing the diversity of your gifts at the service of the universal Church. The distinctiveness of your traditions and manner of prayer and worship are no obstacle to true unity in the Church. But courage in maintaining these traditions also recognizes that, for them to be a true enrichment to Catholic life, you will need to win the trust and confidence of the local Catholic community. A robust engagement with the pastoral and charitable initiatives of your Catholic and Anglican neighbors will not only redound to the glory of God and actually strengthen your Ordinariate parish, but provides an example of diversity grounded in the unity of faith which furthers the New Evangelization.

Courage, after all, is a gift of the Holy Spirit, the same Spirit which “has moved groups of Anglicans to petition repeatedly and insistently to be received into full Catholic communion” and “who is the principle of the unity of the faithful in the teaching of the Apostles, in the breaking of the bread and in prayer.”^{viii} We can be confident, therefore, in the presence and action of Holy Spirit, guiding the development of the Ordinariate and bringing this good work of yours to fulfillment. For my part, I assure you of my prayers, my blessing, and the full support of the Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith.

Thank you very much.

ⁱ Cf. Pope John Paul II, Apostolic Constitution *Spirituali militum cura*, 21 April 1986.

ⁱⁱ Cf. Apostolic Constitution *Spirituali militum cura*, I § 1; Apostolic Constitution *Anglicanorum coetibus*, I § 3.

ⁱⁱⁱ Cf. Apostolic Constitution *Anglicanorum coetibus*, VI § 5; *Complementary Norms* Art. 10 § 2.

^{iv} Cf. Apostolic Constitution *Anglicanorum coetibus*, X § 2.

^v *Ibid.* Cf. also *Complementary Norms* Art. 12.

^{vi} Cf. Apostolic Constitution *Anglicanorum coetibus*, I § 5.

^{vii} Cf. Apostolic Constitution *Anglicanorum coetibus*, VI § 4; *Complementary Norms* Art. 3.

^{viii} Cf. Apostolic Constitution *Anglicanorum coetibus*, Preamble. Cf. Acts 2:42.