

VATICAN COMMENTARY ON NEW NORMS FOR ANGLICANS

Father Gianfranco Ghirlanda Explains Significance

VATICAN CITY, NOV. 9, 2009 ([Zenit.org](http://www.zenit.org)).- Here is the official Vatican commentary on the significance of the apostolic constitution "Anglicanorum Coetibus." Both the constitution and the commentary were published today by the Holy See, along with the constitution's complementary norms.

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The Apostolic Constitution "Anglicanorum Coetibus" of November 4th 2009, provides the essential norms which will govern the erection and the life of Personal Ordinariates for those Anglican faithful who wish to enter, either corporately or individually, into full communion with the Catholic Church. In this way, as it says in the Introduction, the Holy Father Benedict XVI – Supreme Pastor of the Church and, by mandate of Christ, guarantor of the unity of the episcopate and of the universal communion of all the Churches – has shown his fatherly care for those Anglican faithful (lay, clerics and members of Institutes of Consecrated life and of Societies of Apostolic Life) who have repeatedly petitioned the Holy See to be received into full Catholic Communion.

The Introduction to the Apostolic Constitution lays out the ratio legis of the provision emphasizing a number of things which it might be useful to point out:

-- The Church, which in its unity and diversity is modelled on the Most Holy Trinity, was instituted as "a sacrament – a sign and instrument, that is, of communion with God and of unity among all people" (Lumen gentium, 1). For this reason every division among the baptized wounds that which the Church is and that for which the Church exists, and constitutes, therefore, a scandal in that it contradicts the prayer of Jesus before his passion and death (cf. John 17:20-21).

-- Ecclesial communion, established by the Holy Spirit who is the principle of unity in the Church, is, by analogy with the mystery of the Incarnate Word, at the same time both invisible (spiritual) and

visible (hierarchically organized). The communion among the baptized, therefore, if it is to be full communion, must be "visibly manifested in the bonds of the profession of the faith in its entirety, of the celebration of all of the sacraments instituted by Christ, and of the governance of the College of Bishops united with its head, the Roman Pontiff".

-- Although the one Church of Christ subsists in the Catholic Church governed by the Successor of Peter and the Bishops in union with him, there are also elements of sanctification and of truth to be found outside her visible confines, in the Churches and Christian Communities separated from her, which, because these elements are gifts properly belonging to the Church of Christ, are forces impelling towards Catholic unity.

Those Anglican faithful who, under the promptings of the Holy Spirit, have asked to enter into full communion with the Catholic Church have been moved towards unity by those elements of the Church of Christ which have always been present in their personal and communal lives as Christians.

For this reason the promulgation of the Apostolic Constitution *Anglicanorum coetibus* by the Holy Father, together with what will follow from this, indicate in a particular way the movement of the Holy Spirit.

The juridical means by which the Holy Father has decided to receive these Anglicans into full Catholic communion is the erection of Personal Ordinariates (I § 1).

The competence of erection has been given to the Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith. The reason for this is that during the long process which has finally borne fruit in this Apostolic Constitution many doctrinal questions have had to be addressed, and such questions will continue to arise as the time comes for the erection of particular Ordinariates and for the incorporation of groups of Anglican faithful into full Catholic communion through the Ordinariates. In any case, as specific issues emerge, each Ordinate will be subject not just to the Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith but also to the other Dicasteries of the Roman Curia according to their competences (Ap. Cons. II). For example: for associations of the Faithful, the Pontifical Council for the Laity will have competence; for the formation and life of priests, the Congregation for the Clergy; for the various forms of consecrated life, the Congregation for Institutes of Consecrated Life and Societies

of Apostolic Life, etc. For the visit ad limina Apostolorum, which the Ordinary is obliged to make every five years, the Apostolic Constitution specifically mentions that the Ordinary must consult not only with the Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith but also with the Congregation for Bishops and the Congregation for the Evangelization of Peoples (Ap. Cons. XI).

The possibility for the erection of Personal Ordinariates for Anglicans entering into full communion with the Catholic Church which is envisioned in the Apostolic Constitution *Anglicanorum Coetibus* does not create a new structure within the current canonical norms, but rather, uses the structure of Personal Ordinariates, originally created for the pastoral care of members of the armed forces, in the Apostolic Constitution of John Paul II *Spirituali militum cura* of April 21, 1986. Notwithstanding the similarities between these two types of Personal Ordinariates, it is clear that given their different purposes, one for the Military and the other for those coming from Anglicanism, there are also significant differences between them. What we are dealing with are structures created by the Church in order to deal with specific situations which arise from the needs of the faithful, and which are, by definition, exceptional. The pastoral concern of the Church and the flexibility of her canonical norms permit the creation of juridical structures which are specifically adapted to the spiritual good of the faithful, while not contradicting the foundational principles of Catholic ecclesiology.

Just as the Military Ordinariates were not envisioned in the Code of Canon Law, so also Personal Ordinariates for Anglicans entering into full communion with the Catholic Church were not specifically foreseen. However, just as the Military Ordinariates are described in the Apostolic Constitution *Spirituali militum cura* as specific ecclesiastical jurisdictions which are similar to dioceses (Ap. Cons. I § 1), so also the Apostolic Constitution *Anglicanorum coetibus* describes Personal Ordinariates for the faithful coming from Anglicanism as juridically similar to dioceses (Ap. Cons. I § 3).

These Personal Ordinariates cannot be considered as Particular Ritual Churches since the Anglican liturgical, spiritual and pastoral tradition is a particular reality within the Latin Church. The creation of a Ritual Church might have created ecumenical difficulties. Nor can these Personal Ordinariates be considered as Personal Prelatures since, according to can. 294, Personal Prelatures are composed of secular priests and deacons and, according to can. 296, lay people may simply dedicate themselves to the apostolic works of Personal Prelatures by way of agreements. Members

of Institutes of Consecrated Life or of Societies of Apostolic Life are not even mentioned in the canons concerning Personal Prelatures.

The Ordinariates for the faithful coming from Anglicanism are therefore personal structures in as much as the jurisdiction of the Ordinary, and consequently also of parish priests, is not geographically defined within the territory of an Episcopal Conference like a particular territorial Church, but is exercised "over all who belong to the Ordinariate" (Ap. Cons. V). Moreover, one or more Personal Ordinariates can be erected within the territory of the same Episcopal Conference, according to necessity (Ap. Cons. I § 2).

It is clear from a careful reading of the Apostolic Constitution and of the Complementary Norms published by the Apostolic See that the provision of erecting Personal Ordinariates is intended to respond to two needs: on the one hand the need "to maintain the liturgical, spiritual and pastoral traditions of the Anglican Communion within the Catholic Church, as a precious gift nourishing the faith of the members of the Ordinariate and as a treasure to be shared" (Ap. Cons. III); on the other hand the need to fully integrate into the life of the Catholic Church groups of faithful, or individuals, coming from Anglicanism.

The enrichment is mutual: the faithful coming from Anglicanism and entering into full Catholic communion receive the richness of the spiritual, liturgical and pastoral tradition of the Latin Roman Church in order to integrate it into their own tradition, which integration will in itself enrich the Latin Roman Church. On the other hand, exactly this Anglican tradition – which will be received in its authenticity in the Latin Roman Church – has constituted within Anglicanism precisely one of those gifts of the Church of Christ, which has moved these faithful towards Catholic unity.

What is involved in this provision, therefore, goes beyond what was envisioned in the Pastoral Provision adopted by the Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith and approved by John Paul II on June 20, 1980. Whereas the Pastoral Provision foresaw that the faithful coming from Anglicanism would be members of the Diocese in which they were domiciled, although receiving special care from the diocesan Bishop, the Apostolic Constitution *Anglicanorum coetibus* considers them as members of a Personal Ordinariate and not of the Diocese in which they are domiciled. Furthermore these Ordinariates will be composed of faithful from every state of life (laity, priests and members of Institutes of Consecrated Life and of Societies of Apostolic Life) coming from Anglicanism either in

groups or individually, or receiving the sacraments of initiation within the Ordinariate itself (Ap. Cons. I § 4).

Priests will be ascribed to the Personal Ordinariate by incardination, regulated according to the Code of Canon Law (Ap. Cons. I § 3), while lay people and Institutes of Consecrated Life and Societies of Apostolic Life must manifest their desire to enter and become part of the Ordinariate in writing (Ap. Cons. IX). The Complementary Norms (= CN) state that such lay people and Institutes of Consecrated Life and Societies of Apostolic Life must be inscribed in an appropriate register of the Ordinariate (Art. 5 § 1). Thus, while one is a member of a particular territorial Church by virtue of one's domicile or quasi-domicile, one is a member of the Personal Ordinariate in virtue of the objective fact of having previously adhered to Anglicanism, or because one has come to the Catholic faith through the Ordinariate. In this sense, inscription in the appropriate register substitutes for the fact of domicile or quasi-domicile, which in relation to membership in a Personal Ordinariate is irrelevant.

This Apostolic Constitution wishes above all to provide a means to re-establish full communion, in some way "corporately", for groups composed of people in various states of life. Personal Ordinariates for such groups appear to be the most suitable canonical structure by which the spiritual, liturgical and pastoral tradition, developed within Anglicanism and recognised as authentic by the Catholic Church, can be protected and nourished. All of which does not exclude the possibility of membership in the Ordinariate for individuals coming from Anglicanism, or for individuals who come to the Catholic faith through the pastoral or missionary work of the Ordinariate and who receive the sacraments of initiation within the Ordinariate. The Pastoral Provision was not suitable for the new situation to which that the Holy See was called upon to respond.

The Ordinary, to whom the pastoral care of the faithful who belong to the Ordinariate is entrusted, exercises ordinary vicarious authority (*potestas ordinaria vicaria*) in the name of the Roman Pontiff (Ap. Cons. V.b). He enjoys legitimate autonomy with respect to the jurisdiction of the Diocesan Bishops in which the faithful of the Ordinariate have their domicile and is, therefore, better able to ensure that those faithful are not simply assimilated into the local Dioceses in a way which would lead to the loss of the richness of their Anglican tradition – which would be an entire impoverishment of the entire Church. On the other hand, the Ordinary in the exercise of his

vicarious authority must ensure the full integration of the Ordinariate into the life of the Catholic Church, making sure that it does not evolve into an isolated community.

The safeguarding and nourishing of the Anglican tradition is guaranteed:

1. by the concession to the Ordinariate of the faculty to celebrate the Eucharist and the other sacraments, the Liturgy of the Hours and other liturgical celebrations according to the liturgical rites proper to the Anglican tradition and approved by the Holy See, without, however, excluding liturgical celebrations according to the Roman Rite (Ap. Cons. III);

2. by the fact that 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 (Ap. Cons. VI § 5; CN Art. 10 § 2); the seminarians must come from a personal parish of the Ordinariate or from Anglicanism (CN Art. 10 § 4);

3. by the concession that those who were married Anglican ministers, including bishops, may be ordained priests according to the norms of the Encyclical Letter of Paul VI *Sacerdotalis coelibatus*, n. 42 and of the Declaration *In June*, while remaining in the married state (Ap. Cons. VI § 1);

4. by the possibility that, following a process of discernment based on objective criteria and the needs of the Ordinariate (CN Art. 6 § 1), the Ordinary may also petition the Roman Pontiff, on a case by case basis, to admit married men to the priesthood as a derogation of CIC can. 277, § 1, although the general norm of the Ordinariate will be to admit only celibate men (Ap. Cons. VI § 2);

5. by the fact that the Ordinary may erect personal parishes, after having consulted with the local Diocesan Bishop and having obtained the consent of the Holy See (Ap. Cons. VIII § 1);

6. through the capacity to receive into the Ordinariate Institutes of Consecrated Life and Societies of Apostolic life coming from Anglicanism, and of erecting new ones;

7. by the fact that, out of respect for the synodal tradition of Anglicanism: a) the Ordinary will be appointed by the Roman Pontiff from a terna of names presented by the Governing Council (CN Art. 4 § 1); b) that the Pastoral Council will be obligatory (Ap. Cons. X § 2); c) that the Governing

Council, composed of at least six priests, apart from fulfilling the duties established in the Code of Canon Law for the Presbyteral Council and the College of Consultors, will also exercise those duties specified in the Complementary Norms which include in some cases giving or withholding consent or of expressing a deliberative vote (Ap. Cons. X § 2; CN Art. 12).

The integration of the Ordinariate into the life of the Catholic Church is assured by those norms which govern the profession of faith and the relationships of an Ordinariate with an Episcopal Conference, and with individual Diocesan Bishops. According to these norms:

1. the Catechism of the Catholic Church will be considered the authentic expression of the faith of the members of the Ordinariate (Ap. Cons. I § 5);
2. a Personal Ordinariate will be erected by the Holy See within the territorial confines of an Episcopal Conference, after having consulted with that Episcopal Conference (Ap. Cons. I § 1);
3. the Ordinary will be a member of his respective Episcopal Conference and will be obliged to follow its directives, unless they are incompatible with the Apostolic Constitution *Anglicanorum coetibus* (CN Art. 2);
4. the ordination of ministers coming from Anglicanism will be absolute, on the basis of the Bull *Apostolicae curae* of Leo XIII of September 13, 1896. Given the entire Catholic Latin tradition and the tradition of the Oriental Catholic Churches, including the Orthodox tradition, the admission of married men to the episcopate is absolutely excluded (NC Art. 11 § 1);
5. the priests incardinated into an Ordinariate constitute its presbyterate, but 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 or Bishops concerned (Ap. Cons. VI § 4; NC Art. 3). The Complementary Norms envisage the possibility of mutual pastoral assistance between priests incardinated into the Ordinariate and those incardinated into Dioceses in which there are faithful of the Ordinariate (NC Art. 9 §§ 1 and 2);

6. the priests of the Ordinariate are eligible for election to the Presbyteral Council of the Dioceses in whose territory they exercise the pastoral care of the faithful of the Ordinariate (NC Art. 8 § 1);

7. the priests and deacons of the Ordinariate are eligible to be members of the Pastoral Council of the Dioceses in whose territory they exercise their ministry (NC Art. 8 § 2);

8. the authority (potestas) of the Ordinary is exercised together with the Diocesan Bishop in the circumstances envisioned in the Complementary Norms (Ap. Cons. V; NC Art. 5 § 2);

9. candidates for Holy Orders will be formed together with other seminarians, especially with regard to doctrinal and pastoral formation, even though particular programmes or houses of formation may also be established for them (Ap. Cons. VI § 5; CN Art. 10 § 2);

10. before establishing a personal parish the Ordinary must listen to the opinion of the Diocesan Bishop of the area (Ap. Cons. VIII § 1);

11. the Complementary Norms establish when the rights and duties proper to a parish priest of the Ordinariate are to be exercised in mutual pastoral cooperation with the parish priest of the territory in which the personal parish has been erected (Ap. Cons. VIII § 2; CN 14 § 2);

12. the competent tribunal for judicial cases regarding the faithful of the Ordinariate is that of the Diocese in which one of the parties has domicile, presuming that the Ordinariate has not constituted its own tribunal (Ap. Cons. XII).

It is clear that the Apostolic Constitution *Anglicanorum coetibus* provides norms which establish the nature and, in general, regulate the life of Personal Ordinariates erected specifically for Anglicans who wish to enter into full communion with the Catholic Church. In this way a flexible canonical structure has been instituted. Moreover, it is foreseeable that what is contained in the present Apostolic Constitution and Complementary Norms may be adapted in the Decrees of Erection of each individual Ordinariate in the light of particular local situations. As the Holy Spirit has guided the preparation of this Apostolic Constitution, so may he also assist in its application.