

Catholic Church Welcomes Anglicans

By Steve Norman
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Pope Benedict XVI has unveiled a new Roman Catholic Church initiative which will let Anglicans, often known as Episcopalians in the United States, practice Catholicism while keeping many of their Anglican-style prayers and rituals. In 1982, Pope Benedict's predecessor, Pope John Paul II, opened the door to Anglicans allowing priests and bishops to become Catholics on a case-by-case basis.

Pope Benedict's new pastoral provisions will let whole groups of Anglicans to enter the Roman Catholic Church all at once. Until now, the only case of an entire Anglican diocese becoming Catholic was that of Amritsar, in the Indian region of Punjab. That occurred in 1975.

In an unprecedented move, 12 nuns in Catonsville, Maryland, recently left the Episcopal Church to become Catholics. The members of the *All Saints Sisters of the Poor*, which came to the area in 1872, vowed to continue their lifestyle of poverty and chastity as a new religious order of the Roman Catholic Church. The superior of the order, Mother Christina Christie, who became a nun in 1966, said the group knew it was drifting away from the more liberal Episcopal Church and the Catholic Church offered a better fit with their beliefs.

In his Internet blog for the *National Catholic Register*, Tim Drake, criticized the secular media for using "unsavory terms" to describe Pope Benedict's welcoming of Anglicans. He wrote on October 22, 2009, that some media had described "the (Catholic) Church as 'poaching' and conducting a 'hostile takeover'." Drake also wrote: "While the media would like to see the Church as predator and the Anglicans as prey, there's nothing of the sort here. In fact, the move, which has taken years to happen, occurred only because such a large number of Anglicans petitioned the Vatican to find a way to make it happen."

Pope Benedict's decision was announced in a joint statement by the Catholic Archbishop of England, Vincent Nichols, and the head of the (Anglican) Church of England, Archbishop Rowan Williams. The statement said: "The announcement of this Apostolic Constitution brings to an end a period of uncertainty for such groups (of Anglicans) who have nurtured hopes of new ways of embracing unity with the Catholic Church."

The Vatican

The Vatican

Longtime Vatican reporter and theologian, Sandro Magister, wrote on his Internet blog: "This kind of harmony makes one think how close reconciliation would be today between the Catholic Church and the Anglican Communion, if only the latter had not allowed the ordination of women and practicing homosexuals to the priesthood and the episcopate, with the ensuing dramatic divisions between those who agree and those who do not."

Conservatives say they have become disaffected from the Anglican Church because of these kinds of practices which are officially opposed by the Catholic Church.

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