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**What is Uniatism?**  
**An exploration of the concept of uniatism**  
**in relation to the creation of the Anglican Ordinariates**

By Rev. Ronald G. Roberson, CSP  
With a Response by Rev. James Massa

In this seminar Fr James Massa and I will be looking at the theme, “The Anglican Ordinariates: A New Form of Uniatism?” This has to do with the Apostolic Constitution *Anglicanorum Coetibus* of November 2009, in which Pope Benedict XVI provided for the establishments of personal ordinariates for former Anglicans that will retain elements of the Anglican patrimony. After the document was released, some claimed that this was a new form of uniatism, which has long been a major stumbling block in relations between Catholics and Orthodox. There was a fear that these new structures might seriously set back relations between Catholics and Anglicans as well.

So my first task here will be to answer the question, “what is uniatism?” It’s a concept that until now has been used exclusively in the context of the Christian East, and more specifically with regard to the Eastern Catholic Churches. To get a handle on this very complicated concept, I will first examine the historical circumstances in which these Eastern Catholic churches came into existence. With that in mind, we can then clarify what is meant by the term “uniatism,” both in ordinary usage and as it was defined by the international Catholic-Orthodox dialogue. I will conclude with some questions and let Fr Massa have the pleasure of answering them.

The origins of what is now called uniatism can be found in the divisions that took place among Christians during the first millennium. In the fifth century the major divisive issue was Christology. The Assyrian Church of the East, centered in the Persian Empire, did not accept the teachings of the Council of Ephesus in 431, and thus fell out of communion with the rest of the Church. Then large parts of the Christian world did not accept the Christological definition of the Council of Chalcedon in 451, leading to what is now the Oriental Orthodox family of churches. And then the slow but deepening estrangement between the Latin and Byzantine Churches led to a definitive break traditionally dated in 1054 with the exchange of excommunications between the papal legate and the Patriarch of Constantinople.

It’s very important to emphasize that after the schism with the Byzantine Church in 1054 and following, there began a period of about 500 years in which, from a Catholic perspective, the Latin Patriarchate and the Catholic Church were the same thing. True, there were some unions that took place during the Crusades, but they did not last long. So there developed an almost total identify between the Church and the Latin Tradition.

This began to change in the period following the Council of Trent. There was a strong trend towards what is often called “soteriological exclusivism” in the sense that no one could be saved outside the communion of the Catholic Church, and under the pastoral care of the Roman Pontiff. This gave rise to the “theology of return,” which saw Christian unity as achievable only by the “return” of everyone else to the Catholic Church. All this provided the theological foundation, for the first time, to send Catholic missionaries to work among separated Orthodox faithful. This activity was carried out in all areas in the East where Catholic missionaries were free to function. Groups of Orthodox were now able to become Catholic but retain most of their liturgical, theological and spiritual traditions. At the same time, there was a clear understanding in Rome that those eastern traditions were to be tolerated for pastoral reasons, making it easier for former Orthodox to be in full communion with the Catholic Church. There was still the hope that eventually these Catholics would be absorbed into the Latin Church whose traditions were seen as more perfect and secure as means of salvation. This way of thinking would persist in the Catholic Church right up to the Second Vatican Council which, in its decree *Orientalium Ecclesiarum*, stated clearly that the various eastern and western traditions “are consequently of equal dignity, so that none of them is superior to the others” (n. 3).

Still, it should be kept in mind that not all of the present day Eastern Catholic Churches are the result of Catholic missionary activity. Perhaps the prime example is the Maronite Catholic Church in Lebanon which has no Orthodox counterpart, and a strong tradition that it was never formally out of communion with Rome in spite of centuries of isolation. There are other examples – in particular the Union of Brest in 1596 which gave rise to today’s Ukrainian Greek Catholic Church, and also the Greek Catholics in Bulgaria, where Orthodox Christians decided for their own reasons to petition for full communion with the Catholic Church. Thus the history of these unions is extremely complex, and it is very difficult to generalize about them.

By and large, however, most of these unions resulting from Catholic missionary activity can be grouped into three basic models. By far the most successful one was employed within the Hapsburg Empire in central Europe. Here whole Orthodox dioceses or ecclesiastical provinces were received into the Catholic Church. Such was the case in the unions that led to the creation of today’s Romanian, Ruthenian, Croatian and Slovak Catholic Churches. In this model, a Catholic monarchy supported the work of Catholic missionaries among its Orthodox subjects and provided certain incentives for them to become Greek Catholic.

According to the second model, more typical of the Middle East, Catholic missionaries would try to create a sizeable pro-Catholic party within a local Orthodox church, and then work to secure the election of bishops and even a Patriarch with these views. The Popes of this period hoped to achieve union with entire Orthodox churches in this way, but they did not anticipate how strong the Orthodox reaction would be. In each of these cases, the Orthodox party then elected its own Patriarch, thus establishing a parallel hierarchy and splitting the church. This is what happened in the Greek Orthodox Patriarchate of Antioch in 1724, and earlier in the non-Chalcedonian Syrian Orthodox Church.

The third model was the least successful, but caused the strongest Orthodox reaction. It called for Catholic missionaries to work outside the Orthodox churches, setting up Byzantine Catholic counterparts to draw Orthodox faithful away from them. The hope was that by a gradual process of attrition, the Orthodox Churches would be entirely replaced by Byzantine Catholic ones. This

was the method adopted by French Assumptionist priests who established a mission in Constantinople in 1895, right under the nose of the Ecumenical Patriarch. These French Roman Catholic priests learned Greek, adopted the Byzantine rite and wore Orthodox clerical dress on the street consciously for the purpose of facilitating the reception of Orthodox faithful into the Catholic Church.<sup>1</sup>

Most of the members of the Constantinople community moved to Athens in the 1920s as part of the exchange of populations between Greece and Turkey. But Orthodox Archbishop Chrysostomos of Athens took a very dim view of the presence of this group in the Greek capital, and managed to express himself with great clarity in a letter to Bishop George Calavassy, then the head of the Greek Catholic community, dated September 15, 1928:

Some true and authentic Greeks, our fellow citizens of Athens, loyal Latin priests, wear Latin attire. But your Frenchmen "of the Greek rite" wear the attire of Orthodox priests! What confusion, what a monstrous mixture! But why not tell the truth? You do not differ in anything from the other subjects of the Pope of Rome, you are westerners and Latins. But for the simple Greek refugees, you pose as being "of the Greek rite," in order to show them that, in uniting with the Pope, they will keep everything they have as Orthodox, while in fact they are losing their Orthodoxy.... We do not consider the system of the Unia to be honest. It is a deceitful, hypocritical, and opportunistic system, a bridge leading to papism, which permits all the things that you and your subordinates are doing, and wish to do, in order to conceal your propagandistic aims.<sup>2</sup>

While it's true that the Byzantine Catholic community in Constantinople and Greece was always very small (today it numbers about 2,500 served by 11 priests), the location of this activity in the heart of the Orthodox world would color Orthodox perceptions of Eastern Catholicism right down to the present day, especially in the Greek speaking churches. In 1991, for example, a Greek theologian named Elias Fratsea published an article in the journal *Synaxi* entitled "The Unia: The West in the East," and called one section of his article Ουνία: Ἡ Μεγάλη Ἀπάτη, which could be translated as "The Unia: The Great Deceit," or "The Great Fraud."<sup>3</sup> And as late as 1995, the Holy Synod of the Church of Greece called uniatism "a medieval, dishonest and deceptive Roman Catholic method of proselytism among the Orthodox."<sup>4</sup> This perception is very strong, and stems from a firmly held conviction among the Greeks in particular that they have been the victims of a deceptive kind of proselytism by Catholics.

So, in a nutshell that's the history. But the question remains, what part of all this can properly be called "uniatism"? Well, the origins of the term have been traced to the period immediately after the Union of Brest (1596) which gave rise to today's Ukrainian Greek Catholic Church. This new reality was called the "unia" in Polish, Russian and Greek, and was used by the Orthodox to describe what they viewed as an unacceptable method of achieving unity that included strong

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<sup>1</sup> For a description of this "Eastern Apostolate" by one of the Assumptionists involved in the Constantinople foundation, see Fulbert Cayré, "Les méthodes d'apostolat oriental," *L'Union des Églises* 2 (1923) 195-198, 228-230, 260-261.

<sup>2</sup> Letter of Archbishop Chrysostomos of Athens to Bishop George Calavassy of July 5, 1927, in Hiéromeine Pierre, *L'union de l'Orient avec Rome: Une controverse récente*. Orientalia Christiana Vol. XVIII, (Rome: Pontifical Oriental Institute, April 1930) 131. My translation.

<sup>3</sup> Fratsea, Elias, "Ουνία: Ἡ ἐν τῇ Ἀνατολῇ Δύση," *Συναξη* 40 (October-December 1991) 23-46.

<sup>4</sup> Ἐκκλησιαστικὴ Ἀλήθεια 393 (16 January 1995).

political factors. Later, the term “uniate” and still later “uniatism” was used to refer in a pejorative way to all the Orthodox communities that had entered the Catholic Church. The Catholic orientalist Cyril Korolevsky wrote in 1927 that “uniatism” was a neologism, of very recent origin. He himself used the word uniatism to refer to an unacceptable mixing of eastern and Latin liturgical traditions.

Even in our own day the term uniatism has been used to mean different things. The *Encyclopaedia Britannica* defined “Uniate Churches” as “a pejorative term for Eastern rite Churches in communion with Rome, coined by the opponents of the Union of Brest from the Slavic word “uniya” (union). Uniatism implies hybridism or the tendency toward latinization, and hence a betrayal of ancient and nationalistic tradition.”<sup>5</sup>

Most recently, Fr Edward Farrugia, SJ, editor of the Italian language *Encyclopedic Dictionary of the Christian East*, published by the Pontifical Oriental Institute in 2000,<sup>6</sup> defined uniatism as a “term used also in the documents of the Catholic Church to designate the reality of Eastern Churches that are united with Rome. [...] Among the Orthodox the term “uniatism” is used in a negative way. But some Eastern Catholic Churches refuse to be defined as ‘uniate’ since they did not result from a separation from the Orthodox Church; these are the Maronite and Italo-Albanian Churches. The term uniatism used in a negative way presupposes proselytism or forced conversion, or Latinization.”

So as you can see, “uniatism” can mean different things: sometimes it refers to the existence of any eastern church in full communion with Rome, sometimes only to those churches that originated in Orthodoxy, sometimes to a deceitful method of proselytizing, and sometimes to the process of Latinization that took place in most of these churches. But clearly, the most common meaning refers to the existence of the Eastern Catholic Churches.

It was with this rather confused background that the international dialogue between the Catholic and Orthodox Churches met at Freising, Germany, in 1991. Several Eastern Catholic Churches had re-emerged from hiding after the collapse of communism and ugly confrontations with the Orthodox were taking place. In view of the gravity of the situation on the ground, they agreed to set aside the theological text that had been prepared for examination, and to issue instead a hastily composed statement<sup>7</sup> at the end of the meeting.

In the Freising statement, the members of the dialogue offered their own definition of uniatism:

The term “uniatism” indicates here the effort which aims to bring about the unity of the Church by separating from the Orthodox Church communities or Orthodox faithful without taking into account that, according to ecclesiology, the Orthodox Church is a sister Church which itself offers the means of grace and salvation. In this sense and with reference to the document issued by the Vienna sub-commission, we reject “uniatism” as a method of unity opposed to the common Tradition of our Churches.

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<sup>5</sup> As quoted by Vittorio Peri in “Considerazioni sull’Uniatismo,” *Oriente Cristiano* 31 (1991) 14-15.

<sup>6</sup> “Uniatismo” in E. Farrugia, *Dizionario Enciclopedico dell’Oriente Cristiano* (Rome: Pontifical Oriental Institute, 2000) 791-792. My translation.

<sup>7</sup> For a commentary on this text, see André de Halleux, “Uniatisme et communion: Le texte catholique-orthodoxe de Freising,” *Revue théologique de Louvain* 22 (1991) 3-29.

Where “uniatism” has been employed as a method, it failed to achieve its goal of bringing the Churches closer together; rather it provoked new divisions. The situation thus created has been a source of conflict and suffering, and these have deeply marked the memory and the collective consciousness of the two Churches. On the other hand, for ecclesiological reasons, the conviction has grown that other ways must be sought out.

Today, when our Churches meet on the basis of the ecclesiology of Communion between sister Churches, it would be regretful to destroy the important work for the unity of the Churches accomplished through the dialogue, by going back to the method of “uniatism.”<sup>8</sup>

So notice here that the Freising statement did not define uniatism as the existence of Eastern Catholic Churches, but as a method used by Catholics in the past to draw Orthodox faithful away from their churches based on an outdated ecclesiology.

The international dialogue dealt with this issue in more depth when it met in Balamand, Lebanon, in June 1993. The members adopted an agreed statement entitled, “Uniatism: Method of Union of the Past, and the Present Search for Full Communion.” In the text, they look at the history of the unions that led to the creation of the Eastern Catholic Churches. “This took place,” the text reads, “not without the interference of extra-ecclesial interests,” and only inflamed relations between the churches. In the following centuries both churches engaged in missionary activity to attract members of the other church, and increasingly each of them claimed to be the exclusive means of salvation. But we are now in a new situation, the text affirms, which leads to this conclusion:

Because of the way in which Catholics and Orthodox once again consider each other in their relationship to the mystery of the Church and discover each other once again as Sister Churches, this form of “missionary apostolate” described above, and which has been called “uniatism”, can no longer be accepted either as a method to be followed nor as a model of the unity our Churches are seeking.<sup>9</sup>

So as you can see, the international dialogue has defined uniatism in a very specific way. It does not use the word in reference to the existence of the Eastern Catholic Churches, but as a method of proselytism that had been used in the past, and that is no longer acceptable in view of the fact that Orthodox and Catholics accept one another as sister churches with valid sacraments.

And so to conclude, it seems to me that the establishment of Anglican Ordinariates raises two basic questions:

## **1. Is the establishment of the new Ordinariates a new form of uniatism?**

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<sup>8</sup> “Sixth Plenary Meeting of the Joint International Commission for Theological Dialogue between the Roman Catholic Church and the Orthodox Church,” *Information Service* 73 (1990/II) 52-53.

<sup>9</sup> “Uniatism, Method of Union of the Past, and the Present Search for Full Communion,” *Information Service* 83 (1993/II) 96-99.

It seems to me that, if we accept the standard and more common definition of uniatism as the existence Catholic counterparts to other churches, the answer is yes. After all, the Ordinariates are to be counterparts to the provinces of the Anglican Communion that share many elements of the Anglican patrimony while accepting the authority of the Bishop of Rome. This would seem to be a very close parallel to the Eastern Catholic Churches even if the ordinariates will not enjoy the same level of autonomy.

However, if we accept the definition of uniatism put forth by the international dialogue, the question becomes more complex. It seems clear that the dialogue's rejection of uniatism as a method of achieving unity is based on the fact that Catholics and Orthodox recognize one another as churches – even sister churches -- rather than as ecclesial communities. Does the fact that the provinces of the Anglican Communion, strictly speaking, are ecclesial communities rather than churches give Catholics a theological reason to pursue among Anglicans the method of uniatism as defined by the Orthodox dialogue? Do they have any reason not to?

## **2. Is the establishment of the new Ordinariates anti-ecumenical?**

This question is linked to the Greek perception of the entire phenomenon of Eastern Catholicism as proselytistic and anti-ecumenical by its very nature. Even if it was not the intention of the Holy See, does not the very existence of such ordinariates implicitly include a standing invitation to Anglicans to leave their communion and join the Catholic Church? There can be no doubt that more conservative Anglicans who are unhappy with recent decisions about the ordination of women or active homosexuals will find the ordinariates to be a new option that merits serious consideration. Certainly the ordinariates will make it easier for such disaffected Anglicans to pass into the Catholic Church with little change in their liturgical life. To be sure, there is no organized effort to send Catholic missionaries to proselytize among Anglicans. But could not the existence of the ordinariates have a similar effect?

This leads to perhaps the most fundamental question of all: Is there not a sense in which the establishment of the Ordinariates represents an abandonment of the ecumenical commitment of the Catholic Church since the Vatican Council, which has been marked by an effort to achieve full communion with other Christian bodies through dialogue and not by partial unions like those that involved Eastern Christians in the past? Could not our Anglican brothers and sisters be forgiven for understanding the new Ordinariates as an enticement for them to leave their church and become Catholics based on the old “theology of return” rather than the ecumenical vision of the Second Vatican Council?

### *Anglican Ordinariates in Ecumenical Perspective*

*A Response by Fr. James Massa*

Father Roberson's paper raises several important questions about the ecumenical implications of Anglican Ordinariates. Are these new ecclesial structures a throwback to forms of incorporation into the Catholic Church that have been abandoned in the post-Vatican II age? Are ordinariates inherently anti-ecumenical because they exploit divisions within another communion in order to

gain Catholic “converts”? How well does the claim hold up that these new structures are actually the fruit of Anglican-Roman Catholic dialogue over the past forty-five years?<sup>10</sup>

Prior to answering these questions, I want to recall an address delivered at the first ecumenical encounter between Catholic and Anglican officials since the Reformation. In the Malines Conversations (1921-1927), Cardinal Désiré Joseph Mercier presented a paper called “L’Eglise Anglicane Unie Non Absorbée (The Anglican Church, United Not Absorbed).” Written by the Benedictine liturgist Dom Lambert Beauduin, the paper examined the position of the Eastern Catholic Churches in the early twentieth century and suggested that there could be a similar type of arrangement for Anglicans. Canterbury would become within such a scheme the seat of a patriarchate in communion with Rome, with its own liturgy and canonical structures.

However visionary Mercier’s proposal was at the time, it could only be understood within the framework of a “theology of return” that found official formulation in the 1928 encyclical *Mortalium animos*. Against new modes of dialogue and cooperation recommended by the ecumenical movement, Pope Pius XI made it clear that any accommodation made by the Catholic Church to Orthodox, Anglican and Protestant Christians would be in the context of unqualified submission to Roman obedience. For Pius XI reunion meant movement in only one direction: “Let [the separated brethren] therefore return to their common Father [i.e. the Roman Pontiff], who, forgetting the insults previously heaped on the Apostolic See, will receive them in the most loving fashion” (no. 11).<sup>11</sup> What “loving fashion” meant for Pius and for the Catholic Church at the time were forms of reception that tolerated the proselytistic strategies of the first two types of uniaticism discussed in Father Roberson’s paper.

Yet the apostolic constitution *Anglicanorum coetibus* (October 20, 2009) does not envision for these groups anything like the patriarchal or ritual “sister” churches found in Eastern Catholicism. They are Christians of the Latin Church who adhere to the spiritual, liturgical and pastoral traditions of Anglicanism. The new canonical structure designed for corporate reunion is meant to honor and safeguard their freedom to maintain Anglican practices within the framework of the Latin Catholic Church.<sup>12</sup> Hence, they are *personal* ordinariates created by the Roman Pontiff so that he can guarantee their freedom. The Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith (CDF) consults with the local Episcopal Conference before establishing them, but they are not subordinate to any Latin diocese or collective episcopal authority in the region in which they exist. Anglican ordinariates are analogous to the military ordinariates, which are also non-territorial and yet have many of the features of a diocese.<sup>13</sup> As in the case of their military parallel, ordinariates overlap

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<sup>10</sup> In their Joint Statement of October 20, 2009, the Archbishop of Canterbury, Rowen Williams, and the Archbishop of Westminster, Vincent Nichols said that the Constitution “is one consequence of ecumenical dialogue between the Catholic Church and the Anglican communion.” However, both leaders stressed that ongoing official dialogue provides “the basis for our continuing cooperation.”

<sup>11</sup> See Mary Reath’s discussion of the Malines Conversation in *Rome & Canterbury: The Elusive Search for Unity* (Lanham, U.K.: Rowman & Littlefield Publ., 2007), pp. 34-35: “The working Roman assumption continued to be that any future connection with Anglicans would mean some time of a ‘return to Rome,’ and all the Anglican thinking was that they were very broadly exploring all possible forms of closer international Christian unity.”

<sup>12</sup> As Father Gianfranco Ghirlanda, S.J. explains in the official Vatican commentary released along with the constitution, ordinariates “cannot be considered as Particular Ritual Churches since the Anglican liturgical, spiritual and pastoral tradition is a particular reality within the Latin Church”;

<http://www.ewtn.com/library/curia/signifanglocoet.htm>

<sup>13</sup> *Anglicanorum coetibus*, no. 1, par. 1;  
[http://www.vatican.va/holy\\_father/benedict\\_xvi/apost\\_constitutions/documents/hf\\_ben-xvi\\_apc\\_20091104\\_anglicanorum-coetibus\\_en.html](http://www.vatican.va/holy_father/benedict_xvi/apost_constitutions/documents/hf_ben-xvi_apc_20091104_anglicanorum-coetibus_en.html).

with the Latin dioceses in a number of senses. Their clergy have the prerogative of celebrating the liturgies of the Latin Rite, and may offer their services to local diocesan parishes and agencies. The faithful who join the ordinariate through a process of inscription benefit from the services available through the dioceses, such as sacramental ministries, faith formation programs, marriage tribunal, etc.

A close examination of *Anglicanorum coetibus* and its Complementary Norms shows that the new structures differ in significant ways from Cardinal Mercier's proposal ninety years ago. They are a pastoral solution resulting from years of dialogue between the Holy See and groups of Anglicans, some within the Anglican communion and others from various groups identified with the Anglican tradition. Ordinariates exist for Anglican Christians who have made, or are prepared to make, a profession of faith that includes adherence to the Catechism of the Catholic Church. While adapting the Book of Common Prayer and synodal forms of administration found in Anglicanism (e.g. the Governing Council made up of presbyters<sup>14</sup>), the new structure affirms Anglican identity within the broader Catholic communion of faith and order. Ordinariates are not like the symbolic patriarchal sees of the Latin Catholic Church (Jerusalem, Venice, Lisbon, and East Indies), nor are they like the Eastern Catholic Patriarchates which have a high level of autonomy (those of the Copts, Syrians, Melkites, Maronites, Chaldeans, and Armenians).

Of course one could ask whether ordinariates could *evolve* over time into patriarchates or semi-autonomous ritual churches. Would such a development, absent all forms of coercive proselytism, then correspond to Father Roberson's third category of Uniatism—that is, the “mere existence” of churches within the Catholic Church that have corresponding “rites” in other communions? No less a theological authority than Joseph Ratzinger once envisioned the emergence of new western rites and corresponding patriarchal churches taking shape within post-conciliar Catholicism. Writing around the time of Vatican II, Ratzinger foresaw new patriarchates in Africa, Asia and elsewhere evolving within the context of a local church ecclesiology that continues to look to Rome as the final arbiter of faith and “coordinating center” of a worldwide communion: “It is to be regarded as a task for the future to distinguish more clearly the actual office of Petrine succession and the patriarchal office, and, where it is necessary, to create and to arrange from the Latin churches new patriarchates.”<sup>15</sup> If the Anglican ordinariates are on a trajectory to becoming true “sister Churches” within the Catholic communion, then attributing this third sense of uniatism may be justified.

Yet where “uniatism” refers in the Balamand declaration to methods of winning converts through the creation of parallel ritual churches or structures, *Anglicanorum coetibus* does not apply. These new structures are not a covert means of proselytizing either Anglicans or other west-

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[http://www.vatican.va/holy\\_father/benedict\\_xvi/apost\\_constitutions/documents/hf\\_ben-xvi\\_apc\\_20091104\\_anglicanorum-coetibus\\_en.html](http://www.vatican.va/holy_father/benedict_xvi/apost_constitutions/documents/hf_ben-xvi_apc_20091104_anglicanorum-coetibus_en.html)

<sup>14</sup> See *Complementary Norms*, No. 4, par. 1 which notes that among the Governing Council's synodal functions is to provide the terna from which the Pope appoints the Ordinary. Other functions of the Council include approving candidates for priestly ordination and the establishment of new parishes within the ordinariate; [http://www.vatican.va/roman\\_curia/congregations/cfaith/documents/rc\\_con\\_cfaith\\_doc\\_20091104\\_norme-anglicanorum-coetibus\\_en.html](http://www.vatican.va/roman_curia/congregations/cfaith/documents/rc_con_cfaith_doc_20091104_norme-anglicanorum-coetibus_en.html).

<sup>15</sup> Joseph Ratzinger, *Das neue Volk Gottes. Entwürfe zur Ekklesiologie*. Düsseldorf: Patmos Verlag, 1969), p. 142. During the debates at Vatican II, Archbishop (later Cardinal) Franjo Šeper of Zagreb, Croatia also raised the question of whether western patriarchates might emerge as a positive outgrowth of the council's emergent ecclesiology. Ratzinger would succeed Šeper in 1981 as Prefect for the Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith upon the latter's death.

ern Christians. The opening line of the constitution makes clear that it is a *pastoral response* to groups that petitioned “repeatedly and persistently” for corporate reunion with the Catholic Church. Cardinal William Levada, in an address last year at Queens University in Kingston, Ontario, locates the initiative not apart from but within the Catholic Church’s commitment to the unity of all Christians. In fact, for these Anglican Catholics the creation of such a new space within Catholicism is a “logical development of the official dialogues between the Anglican communion and the Roman Catholic Church during the 45 year period since the end of the Second Vatican Council.”<sup>16</sup>

For the CDF Prefect, the Anglican-Roman Catholic International Commission’s two phases of dialogue, ARCIC I and II, served to draw out different understandings of authority that facilitated for many of these Anglicans the transition to the Catholic Church. Decisions made by the Anglican provinces in the United States and Canada to ordain bishops in same gender unions, along with the mother Church of England’s pledge to ordain women to the Episcopate, put in relief conflicts within Anglicanism over the fundamental nature of the Church and how it teaches the word of God. This theological crisis has led to ever deepening fracture within the global communion, and here in the United States to the emergence of competing jurisdictions between communities belonging to The Episcopal Church and Anglicans in fellowship with provinces in the global south. *Anglicanorum coetibus* is a response to those who have borne these painful tensions within worldwide Anglicanism, while gratefully acknowledging the fruits of the official dialogues begun in 1966 by Pope Paul VI and Archbishop Michael Ramsey of Canterbury.

Of course many Anglicans and Catholics are not at all sanguine about the new structures. Father Russell Murray, OFM of the Washington Theological Union views personal ordinariates as a “new form of the methodology of uniatism, which is a wineskin for the ecclesiology of *Mortalium animos*, not that of *Unitatis redintegratio*.”<sup>17</sup> Bishop Christopher Epting of The Episcopal Church calls ordinariates “a unilateral action on the part of the Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith which flies in the face of the slow, but steady progress made in the real ecumenical dialogue over forty years.”<sup>18</sup> University of Cambridge historian G. R. Evans sees in the new structures “a degree of ecclesiological hybridization which seems bound to lead to conflict and uncertainty.” He likens the apostolic constitution to the failed agreements that came out of the Council of Florence (1431-1445) which sought to restore unity between Rome and the separated Eastern Churches.<sup>19</sup> All these critics appear to concur that ordinariates presupposes a vision of unity that relies on the concept of “return” to the Church of Rome, and are therefore antiquated and possibly injurious to ecumenical relations.

The word “return” when used in this context is fraught with historical baggage that makes it doubtfully serviceable in ecumenical discourse. Yet the theology of return has never entirely lost its purchase in the field of Catholic dogmatics. Vatican II, in both the Constitution on the Church and in the Decree on Ecumenism, speaks of the unity that subsists within the Catholic Church

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<sup>16</sup> Cardinal William Joseph Levada, “Five Hundred Years After St. John Fisher: Benedict’s Ecumenical Initiatives to Anglicans” (March 6, 2010); <http://www.catholicculture.org/culture/library/view.cfm?recnum=9266>.

<sup>17</sup> Russell Murray, “A New Ecumenism: Is Rome’s Anglican Outreach a Step Backward?” in *Commonweal* Online (January 25, 2010); <http://commonwealmagazine.org/print/5146>.

<sup>18</sup> Christopher Epting in *Episcopal Life Online* 16 (November 2009); cited in [http://www.episcopalchurch.org/79425\\_116893\\_ENG\\_HTML.htm](http://www.episcopalchurch.org/79425_116893_ENG_HTML.htm).

<sup>19</sup> G. R. Evans, “*Anglicanorum Coetibus*: Ecumenical Implications” in *One in Christ* (2010) vol. 44, no. 1: 49-55, at 54 and 55.

alone “as something that she can never lose.”<sup>20</sup> This unity exists in the Church at Pentecost, and continues as the ever-present gift of the Holy Spirit in the visible Catholic Church until the Parousia. A “return to”—or better, an *embrace of*—this unity for Orthodox, Protestant, Pentecostal, and Evangelical Christians is an essential aspect of the healing of broken communion, as Catholics understand it.

Of course the pilgrimage of unity entails mutual conversion and transformation. Catholic doctrines will need to undergo reformulation, and Catholic ecclesial structures—including the papacy, as Blessed John Paul II indicated in *Ut unum sint*<sup>21</sup>—will need to be reshaped to meet the needs of legitimate diversity in the faith, life and witness of believers. In addition, the transformation required entails Catholic leadership and faithful traveling along a common path of penitence. Blessed John Paul II wedded to ecumenism a program of reconciliation in the lead up to the Jubilee that is now a permanent feature in the Church’s unity task. Pius XI and other precconciliar exponents of “return” theology could not have imagined the liturgical confession of sins and the “healing of memories” that have accompanied the Catholic Church’s entrance into the third millennium. Today Catholic ecumenists should properly speak of “mutual return” to the one source of Pentecost, even as they look with hope to a future in which churches and ecclesial communities may be able to retrieve elements of Catholic belief and practice that were abandoned during or after the break with Rome centuries ago. If Catholics hold out to other Christians the hope of their embrace of the subsistent unity made visible in the Eucharist celebrated in communion with the Pope, then they must also confess repeatedly the wounds that they have inflicted, and continue to inflict, on the body of Christ which makes that embrace less proximate. Subsistent unity in Christ and the possession of the full means of salvation constitute together the original gift of the Holy Spirit to the Catholic Church. Yet that gift can only bear fruit when it is humbly shared with others, and not fearfully hoarded or triumphalistically paraded.

Today we understand the pilgrimage of Christian unity as a gift-exchange between believers and ecclesial communions. Blessed John Paul II said that communion among Christians is made fruitful by the exchange of gifts between the Churches “insofar as they complement each other.”<sup>22</sup> *Anglicanorum coetibus* is premised on the belief that Anglican gifts complement the gifts present in the Catholic communion since the Reformation. Father Gianfranco Ghirlanda, S.J. sees a kind of mutual resonance and reception between the two spheres of the Latin Church: “[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.”

The Anglican patrimony has much to offer the rest of the Latin Church, certainly in the areas of hymnography and the liturgy derived from the Book of Common Prayer.<sup>23</sup> Yet there are other implications to having a limited number of married presbyters who serve the ordinariate and the

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<sup>20</sup> *Unitatis redintegratio*, no. 4: [http://www.vatican.va/archive/hist\\_councils/ii\\_vatican\\_council/documents/vat-ii\\_decree\\_19641121\\_unitatis-redintegratio\\_en.html](http://www.vatican.va/archive/hist_councils/ii_vatican_council/documents/vat-ii_decree_19641121_unitatis-redintegratio_en.html).

<sup>21</sup> *Ut unum sint*, nos. 88-96; [http://www.vatican.va/holy\\_father/john\\_paul\\_ii/encyclicals/documents/hf\\_jp-ii\\_enc\\_25051995\\_ut-unum-sint\\_en.html](http://www.vatican.va/holy_father/john_paul_ii/encyclicals/documents/hf_jp-ii_enc_25051995_ut-unum-sint_en.html).

<sup>22</sup> *Ut unum sint*, no. 57.

<sup>23</sup> See Mark Woodruff, “Anglican Offerings that Enrich the Church” in *The Tablet* (November 21, 2010): 12.

local Latin dioceses, not to mention synodal styles of governance that have been less present in post-Tridentine Catholicism. Such cross-fertilization is not typically associated with the relationships between the Latin Roman Catholic Church and the Eastern Catholic Churches. Ordinariates are part of a historically unprecedented experiment within Latin Catholicism that will have to be assessed in terms of its benefits for the growth in communion among the Catholic faithful and between the latter and their brothers and sisters in Christ. Whether such a structure should be considered a onetime solution, or should instead be replicated for Christians of other confessional traditions within western Christianity remains an open and sensitive question. How would Rome respond to Lutherans who are prepared to make a Catholic profession of faith while asking that their own patrimony be in some way preserved? Would an ordinariate be the appropriate structure?

Within the emerging ecumenical context, the Catholic Church should be prepared for future replications of her own liturgical, spiritual and pastoral forms by other families of Christians. A western Rite Vicariate already exists within the Antiochian Orthodox Church in the United States, with a liturgy that resembles the Roman Rite.<sup>24</sup> We sometimes hear of historic Protestant and Pentecostal churches in Latin America introducing elements of Marian devotion into their congregations. Catholic bishops have complained about such practices as an artificial transposition of Catholic devotions. Yet if we believe that the path of unity necessarily involves the “exchange of gifts,” should we be surprised at such borrowings of Catholic spiritual treasures? While the importation of such elements into one’s own ecclesial community can never be justified as a means of enticement that hide real confessional differences, Catholics too have to acknowledge that sometimes Christians who leave one ecclesial family to join another bring with them the gifts of their previous home.

For certain, ordinariates and other forms of corporate reunion between groups leaving one ecclesial body and joining another are no substitute for the patient and painstaking work of ecumenism. The normative path for achieving unity in faith, worship and ministry is and will remain dialogue. Whenever extraordinary means are employed, church leadership should exercise discretion, transparency and true Christian love with their ecumenical partners. And of course, the greatest of these virtues—in that long journey toward the fullness of communion for which Christ prayed: “*Ut unum sint*”—is love.

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<sup>24</sup> The Very Rev. Fr. Edward W. Hughes of Brooklyn is its vicar. <http://www.westernorthodox.com/index.html>.