

## The Lord Christ, in the Midst of the Brethren

When the Pope comes calling, where shall he sit?

Ordinarily, the reply is probably, *Wherever he chooses*, but in 1982 His Holiness made a visit during which this was quite a significant question. John Paul II was making a historic, first Papal visit to England, and he was received most graciously at Canterbury Cathedral by the Archbishop of Canterbury, the Most Rev'd and Right Honourable Robert Runcie. The best Chair in the house was the Chair of Saint Augustine – the Archbishop's throne.

A bishop's throne, or *cathedra*, is a central symbol of a cathedral. Ordinarily, only the Archbishop would occupy this one; but the Pope was the successor of Saint Gregory the Great, the Pope who sent St Augustine of Canterbury to England over a millennium before. Who gets the Chair?

The answer was a typically gracious Anglican one. The Pope and the Archbishop, the Bishop of Rome and Patriarch of the West and the Primate of all England, occupied two dignified chairs on either side of the ancient Chair of Saint Augustine.

And on the Chair was enthroned the ancient Gospel Book of Canterbury, which had been brought from Rome to England by Augustine and his monks. There was the Gospel Book, symbol of the Lord Christ, in the place of honor, with these two brothers in Christ flanking it. They had been brought together in the love of Christ. They were each reaching out to the other in fraternal love, reaching out to bridge a tragic, five century history so often marred by separation, bitterness, violence, misunderstanding, and a lack of sympathy wholly at variance with the sentiments of the Lord Who, on His last night in this mortal life, had prayed *that they may be one, even as Thou, Father, art in Me, and I in Thee* (Jn 17:20)

It was a lovely, gracious moment which surely must have gladdened the Heart of Jesus. And it is in this spirit that we address these comments to our brothers and sisters in the Anglican Communion, in the Continuing Anglican churches, and in other bodies seeking to live the Gospel of the Lord Jesus outside of the full Communion of the Catholic Church. We address ourselves to you as our friends in the Lord, loving our Catholic Faith deeply, and deeply respectful, as our Church calls us to be, of the various traditions which have served as vessels of grace for

you, and from which, in so many ways, we have learned and derived inspiration and edification.

We are the Anglican Use Society. We are an organization founded by a group of Roman Catholics who share a deep regard and affection for the traditions of Anglicanism. Some of us were Anglicans, clergy and laity, before being received into the full Communion of the Catholic Church; others are “cradle Catholics” who came to know and respect the unique tradition of Anglicanism.

Of course, none of us are really “cradle” anything! We share in common the great Gift of Holy Baptism, the Sacrament by which the Lord Jesus made us His own. *We receive this Child into the congregation of Christ's flock, and do sign him + with the sign of the Cross, in token that hereafter he shall not be ashamed to confess the faith of Christ crucified* are words of the *Book of Common Prayer* with which we all identify, whether we were baptized in the Roman or Anglican Church. We reach out to you mindful of all that we share in the immeasurable riches of Christ Jesus our Redeemer, and in our common Baptism.

We wish to describe for you a pastoral initiative of the Catholic Church, approved by the Pope and supported by the highest authorities of the Catholic Church, with the hope that we may better understand each other, and that you will regard this as a respectful, fraternal invitation.

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Its story begins in the latter half of the 1970's, in the wake of the 1976 General Convention (GC) of the Episcopal Church (ECUSA), although really it is rooted in the faithful lives lived by generations of Anglo-Catholics who were committed to living the life of their Church as deeply as possible, but always keeping in mind the goal of reunion with the Holy See.

The decision of *GC1976* to authorize the ordination of women to the Priesthood was a profound blow to all who cherished the hope of the reunion of Anglicans and Roman Catholics. Those who remember the heady day in 1966 when, meeting in the Basilica of St Paul Outside-the-Walls in Rome, Archbishop Michael Ramsey of Canterbury and Pope Paul VI shared in a prayer service and, in a moving, hopeful moment, Pope Paul deliberately took off his episcopal ring and placed it on the Archbishop's finger know that there were great hopes at that time for the progress of mutual understanding towards reunion. *GC1976* had placed a seemingly impossible obstacle to that process, just a decade later.

Many Episcopalians left ECUSA to form the Continuing Church movement. But some resolved to approach the Holy See. The Fathers of the Second Vatican Council, while speaking appreciatively of the genuine elements of piety of other Christian traditions, had singled out the Anglican Communion for special mention as a rich tradition with which Catholics felt a kinship. Those approaching Rome were interested in preserving the elements of Anglican life which could be preserved within the Catholic Church.

Careful discussions followed, and in 1980 Pope John Paul II approved a pastoral provision for Anglicans who sought to be received into the full Communion of the Catholic Church. Married Priests of the Anglican Church could seek consideration for ordination as married Priests of the Roman Catholic Church (this provision has been applied to clergy of other traditions as well).

Another part of this arrangement provided for groups of Anglicans coming into full Communion. The Vatican Council (1962-1965) had recognized that elements of their “patrimony of piety” could find a home in the Catholic Church. Years later, Pope John Paul provided for this.

Today, we have congregations of “Anglican Use” Catholics. They are fully member congregations of their local Roman Rite dioceses. They worship according to the provisions of *The Book of Divine Worship*, a version of the 1979 American *Book of Common Prayer* carefully revised to conform to the tradition of the Roman Rite. It contains Mass and Office in the traditional Rite One, the contemporary English Rite Two, traditional and contemporary Psalters, and a version of the Roman calendar. Any Anglican, entering one of these churches, would recognize the familiar prayers and hymns of the Anglican tradition.

The Catholic Church makes this provision recognizing that our Anglican brothers and sisters, coming into full Communion with us, enrich the life of the Catholic Church with their patrimony of piety. The promulgation of the Anglican Use was a great day in the Catholic Church: we welcomed a precious gift.

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We take no joy in the obvious distress of the Anglican Communion today. Had the Anglican Church held fast to preserving the deposit of faith insofar as it had been preserved among Anglicans, there is every reason to believe that the conversations between Rome and Canterbury would have continued, and been fruitful. Having, in

our own various journeys, come to regard the Anglican tradition with respect, we are grieved at the turmoil and crisis which currently besets our Anglican brethren.

As it happened, innovation after innovation has been embraced by parts of the Anglican Communion. The effective destruction of the marriage discipline of the Church was followed by the ordination of women as Deacons, Priests, and Bishops; traditional sexual morality eroded, to the point where even seminarians and priests cohabit outside of marriage without fear; currently, the cause of the acceptance of homosexuality as an alternative way of being sexual is the issue of the hour. Perhaps most disturbing of all is the fact that it is not difficult to find clergy and even diocesan conventions in the Episcopal Church who refuse to affirm the clear teaching of Scripture that the holy Name of Jesus is the one name in heaven or on earth by which we are saved. The distress this causes faithful, traditional believers in the Anglican Communion is a grievous burden.

As the months go by, it becomes clearer that the authorities of some of the member churches of the Anglican Communion, most notably in the Episcopal Church of the United States and the Anglican Church of Canada, are determined that traditional believers shall have no place to live their faith in peace. As traditional Episcopal priests retire, traditional parishes experience an almost inevitable transformation; faithful people seeking to raise their families in the Church which has been part of their lives find themselves in an impossible situation.

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In the midst of this situation, surely a heart-rending and confusing one for traditional Anglican believers and those in other traditions, there is the Catholic Church. Some faithful Anglicans are drawn to her, while understandably reluctant to leave the communion in which they first learned of Jesus and heard His Gospel, found their love of Him nourished, and prayed and worshipped. Some are drawn to Eastern Orthodoxy for various doctrinal reasons; others to one of the Protestant traditions.

For those concerned about doctrinal issues, there is probably nothing we could recommend more highly than *The Catechism of the Catholic Church*, promulgated in the 1990's by Pope John Paul II. This is easily obtainable from any good bookstore, or you can order it from *The Daughters of St Paul* (1-212/754-1110). It is a big volume (\$19.95 in paperback), but it is enriched with wonderful indexes – Scriptural, Patristic and topical, so you can look up whatever topic troubles you and get a clear presentation including Scriptural references and notes from the

Fathers of the Church and the saints. Prayerfully consider what you find there, for we firmly believe that our Catholic Faith *is* the Gospel, grounded firmly on the witness of Scripture and the witness of the saints.

Some Anglicans have particular, strongly held doctrinal reservations about particular issues, which one often hears expressed.

If the doctrines regarding the Blessed Virgin Mary pose a particular problem for you, we hope the *Catechism* will help; but if you'd like a particularly comprehensive treatment of the subject in light of the Christian Tradition, look at *Mary and the Fathers of the Church: The Blessed Virgin Mary in Patristic Thought*, by Luigi Gambero. It is published by Ignatius Press, and you can get it from the Daughters of St Paul (212/754-1110) or [www.ignatius.com](http://www.ignatius.com)

If the teaching of the Church regarding the Papacy is your stumbling block, again, the *Catechism* treats of this, but you might find useful Stephen Ray's book, *Upon This Rock: St Peter and the Primacy of Rome in Scripture and the Early Church*. This book will surprise you; there is a great deal to consider in the Scriptural witness and the Fathers. Ignatius Press publishes this also; [www.ignatius.com](http://www.ignatius.com) or the Daughters of St Paul 212/754-1110 will get it to you.

Some people have reservations about the Church's moral teachings. These, we firmly believe, are completely grounded in Scripture. We also must say that the Christian moral tradition is something ALL Churches held in common until 1930; since then, many Christian traditions have departed from traditional morality (and society has as well, with results which should be evident to everyone). The *Catechism* sets these matters forth clearly, with citations from Scripture, the Fathers and the saints. For a more comprehensive treatment of one controverted subject, the Catholic teaching on contraception, you might look at Dr Janet Smith's *Why Humanae Vitae was Right: A Reader*. Dr Smith is quite frank in saying that she dissented from this teaching at one time: her study, prayer and reflection brought her to embrace it. Ignatius Press publishes this also ( [www.ignatius.com](http://www.ignatius.com) ), and the Daughters of Saint Paul can obtain it for you (212/754-1110).

The *Magisterium* of the Catholic Church, her teaching office, is an instinctive stumbling block for many. Here, we can only point out the following:

The disciples were promised by our blessed Lord the Gift of the Paraclete, the Holy Spirit, *Who will teach you all things* (Jn 14:26). This was at the very end of

our Lord's ministry, on the night He was betrayed. Clearly, He had not even then taught them everything.

In the unfolding life of the Catholic Church, guided by the Spirit over these two thousand years since, we see the fulfillment of this promise. We believe that the Church has enjoyed the fulfillment of the Lord's promise over those centuries: He has kept the Church from error while she has taught boldly, confident in the Spirit, just as we see the Church teaching in the Acts of the Apostles.

With respect, we must point out to our Episcopalian friends who have trouble accepting the Magisterium, the teaching office of the Catholic Church, that they find themselves in a Church which has a *teaching office* as well, one which their own Tradition does not allow. Today, the *General Convention* of ECUSA exercises a teaching office which would astound the founding fathers of the Protestant Episcopal Church in the United States of America in 1789. *GC* was never meant to be a doctrinal body. Anglicanism, as Archbishop Geoffrey Fisher of Canterbury said in the 1940s, neither had nor wished to have distinctive doctrines of its own; rather, it sought to be the Church of the early fathers and councils of the Church, and offering itself to the service of the future, undivided Church as a bridge between traditions.

The legislatures of different Anglican provinces today claim authority the Pope has declared he doesn't have – over Matrimony, Holy Orders, morality. It would seem that those troubled by the claims of the Catholic Magisterium need to consider where it is more likely that the Spirit is working.

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*What would I lose by coming into the full Communion of the Catholic Church?*

You would come into the full, mainstream of the Christian Tradition.

There is no point in pretending that everything is roses in the Catholic Church! Everything is roses *nowhere* in this troubled time. There are Catholic parishes and institutions which are as affected by the *zeitgeist* of this troubled age as are many Episcopal parishes.

But in the Catholic Church, the teaching standard is clear, and accessible. The devotional life is rich. The intellectual life of our Church is vibrant, as evidenced by the multitude of orthodox Catholic journals, publishing houses and

organizations. The life of the Catholic Church is available to all her members, never more so than in our day, and every indication is that for the future orthodox Catholicism is deepening and spreading.

For those wondering about the liturgical provision of the *Anglican Use*, and whether they might find it available if they came into the full Communion of the Church, we must honestly say that a large part of the answer to that question has to do with the number of those interested in a given locality. Anglican Use congregations have been established where there were congregations seeking this provision. Certainly, many other former Episcopalians have found tremendous spiritual fulfillment in their affiliation with local Roman Rite Catholic congregations. The Anglican Use Society would love to see more situations where faithful people interested in living the richness of Anglican spirituality in the Catholic Church would come together and petition for the erection of an Anglican Use congregation.

For your devotional life, however, the *Book of Divine Worship* is readily available (check out [www.atonementonline.com](http://www.atonementonline.com)). It contains not just the Mass texts, but everything you'd expect to see in *The Book of Common Prayer*, including Morning and Evening Prayer (Rites One and Two) with the Daily Office lectionary, and the traditional English and contemporary English psalters. We have found this a wonderful devotional help in our own lives of prayer.

Years back, an Episcopal priest, a married man and chaplain in the armed forces, met with a Catholic bishop to discuss being received into the full communion of the Catholic Church. He never forgot what the bishop told him.

*If you decide to come to us, don't think you need to leave anything good behind. Everything that is good and true finds its home in the Catholic Church. What made you a good Episcopalian, you bring with you to enrich the life of our Church.*

That is the teaching of the Second Vatican Council; it was the belief of Pope John Paul II. It is the belief of his deputy, Joseph Cardinal Ratzinger, who has done much to open the doors of dialogue between traditional Anglicans and the Catholic Church, and who is today Pope Benedict XVI.

The invitation is here, tendered with great respect. *May we be one.* And whether this happens soon, or in the future, may we always find ourselves sitting together, in mutual regard and charity, with the Lord Christ in our midst.

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*Finding out more –*

Check out the websites of our Anglican Use Congregations:

-that of Our Lady of the Atonement, San Antonio, TX [www.atonement.com](http://www.atonement.com)  
and contact the Rev'd Christopher Phillips, the Pastor,  
[FrPhillips@atonementonline.com](mailto:FrPhillips@atonementonline.com)

-that of Our Lady of Walsingham, Houston, Tx, <http://www.walsingham-church.org/> , and contact the Rev'd James Moore, [office@walsingham-church.org](mailto:office@walsingham-church.org) ,

-that of Saint Mary the Virgin, Arlington, Tx <http://www.stmarythevirgin.org> and  
contact the Pastor, the Rev'd Allan Hawkins [frargh@aol.com](mailto:frargh@aol.com)

-that of the Congregation of Saint Athanasius, Boston, MA.,  
<http://www.locutor.net> and contact the Chaplain, the Rev'd Richard S. Bradford,  
SSC.

The congregational websites contain a wealth of information, including history of  
the Pastoral Provision and texts of the Anglican Use liturgy.

You may also access the website of the Anglican Use Society at  
<http://www.anglicanuse.org> for information and support. The Anglican Use  
Society exists to serve you.