

# Affirming Catholicism

Inspiration and hope  in the Anglican Communion

## ALL SAINTS 2009

Dear Affirming Catholicism Supporter,

### WELCOME

Welcome to Affirming Catholicism's latest email newsletter!

It's been a busy few months since I last wrote to you, and I hope that all of you who are registered supporters have received our Annual Review. Just flicking through the pages gives a sense of how much has been done in the first full year of the life of our new Board, and of the challenges and opportunities facing us too. If you have lost your hard copy, you can of course read the Annual Report by going to our newly streamlined website [www.affirmingcatholicism.org.uk](http://www.affirmingcatholicism.org.uk).

This email newsletter takes up the story from the Annual Review. I hope that you have time to read all nine articles that follow, especially the final contribution – an address given by Dr. Joe Cassidy at our ACiS meeting during General Synod that gives us a kind of overview of why we exist as Affirming Catholics, or indeed as Anglicans at all.

As ever it would be very good to hear back from you, and to receive your contributions for future newsletters, so that we can continue to encourage one another. Please send comments, questions, articles etc. to [perran@perrangay.com](mailto:perran@perrangay.com).

*Perran Gay  
Canon Precentor and Head of Worship at Truro Cathedral,  
Affirming Catholicism Supporter Liaison Trustee*

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## BREAKING NEWS – THE VATICAN AND FORMER ANGLICANS

*Many of you may have read about the latest Apostolic Constitution issued by the Vatican. In it Pope Benedict introduces a canonical structure that provides for 'corporate reunion by establishing Personal Ordinariates, which will allow former Anglicans to enter full communion with the Catholic Church while preserving elements of the distinctive Anglican spiritual and liturgical*

*patrimony'. For more information see the Joint Statement by the Archbishop of Canterbury and the Cardinal Archbishop of Westminster at <http://www.anglicancommunion.org/acns/news.cfm/2009/10/20/ACNS4662>*

*Affirming Catholicism and our colleagues in the Society of Catholic Priests have issued the following statement in response:*

### **NOT ALL CATHOLICS ARE TRADITIONALISTS**

The current debate about the implications of the offer made by his Holiness Pope Benedict XVI to make provision for Anglicans who wish to join the Roman Catholic Church ignores one important fact. The majority of Catholics within the church are in favour of women's ministry and wish to remain loyal to the Anglican tradition within the Anglican Communion.

The Society of Catholic Priests, which has over 500 members in England and is about to establish chapters in the American Episcopal Church and in Australia, and Affirming Catholicism which draws together clergy and laity in this country and throughout the Anglican Communion, are committed to the Catholic nature and teaching of the Church of England. We are actively working to see women ordained to the episcopate and hold that this is entirely consistent with the teaching of the church and the historic nature of our orders. We are also convinced that the issues of human sexuality should not be ones that divide the church.

To suggest that the departure from the Church of England of those who hold more conservative views will remove the Catholic wing and tradition from the church is entirely wrong. Churches and parishes which have a Catholic tradition and are served by priests, both male and female, are growing and flourishing and look forward to the future with enthusiasm.

We welcome the offer made by the Pope to those of our brothers and sisters who no longer feel that the Anglican Communion is their spiritual home. We hope that this will not impede swift progress in the Church of England towards the ordination of the first women bishops in this land.

*Canon Andrew Nunn  
(The Society of Catholic Priests)*

*Fr. Jonathan Clark  
(Affirming Catholicism)*

*See below for ongoing discussions about women bishops.*

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#### **IN THIS NEWSLETTER:**

Meet the Team: our new Administrator –Mark Perrett  
Vocations – an Update  
A Labour of Love - Conference Report  
News from Gospel Imprint  
Women Bishops - the latest news  
Convenors Report  
News from across the Pond  
Radical Anglicanism



## MEET THE TEAM

*Here's our latest profile from the team working for Affirming Catholicism. Our new Administrator is Mark Perrett, who writes this about himself.*

I've been the new administrator for Affirming Catholicism since June 2009. I work currently four days a week as Parish Administrator for St. Mary's Church in Stoke Newington in North London, where I have been a regular practising member of the congregation since 1992, the year I was confirmed by the present Bishop of London. I work now only on Mondays for Affirming Catholicism, which is very much allied in theological spirit to St. Mary's! I see my role very much as trying to improve the communication between all Affirming Catholicism supporters and the team here.

I was educated at King Edwards School in Bath and then went to university at Exeter in the late 1970s to read French and Art, (where our Chair, Jonathan Clark was at the same time!). I was in the antiques business for a while before working in the jewellery business in the West End for many years. After 13 years, I decided that the world of "mammon" and the ultimate in luxuries jarred more and more with the important things in life! I enjoy travelling and keeping active in my spare time, love walking holidays, reading and the great outdoors, a drink with friends and being social."

*Mark Perrett  
Administrator  
Affirming Catholicism*

*To find out more about all the Affirming Catholicism Team go to [www.affirmingcatholicism.org.uk](http://www.affirmingcatholicism.org.uk) and download our Annual Review!*

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## VOCATIONS

*Last time Sally Wright introduced her Vocations work for Affirming Catholicism. Here's an exciting update on this year's Vocations Conference*

At the beginning of September a group of us gathered in the shadow of the magnificent Durham Cathedral for the annual vocations conference, 'Taking the Next Step', sponsored by Affirming Catholicism, Society of Catholic Priests and St Chad's College, Durham. Seventeen delegates and four leaders attended the weekend conference aimed at women and men exploring a vocation to ordained ministry in the Church of England, all of us enjoying the wonderful hospitality of St Chad's College. The weekend included input from The Rt Rev'd Mark Bryant, Bishop of Jarrow, and The Very Rev'd Michael Sadgrove, Dean of Durham, who both led stimulating and thought-provoking sessions. We also spent time in small and full group sessions, inevitably congregating at the college bar in the evenings! Our worship certainly enriched our work, with daily Mass, Evensong at the cathedral and a service of meditation and anointing. The conference was hugely enjoyable with great camaraderie, prayerfulness and mutual encouragement; we look forward to welcoming 2010's delegates this time next year. For information about the 2010 vocations conference, please contact The Rev'd Sally Wright at [sallywright29@yahoo.co.uk](mailto:sallywright29@yahoo.co.uk)

*Sally Wright  
Vocation and Lay Formation Trustee  
Affirming Catholicism*

*To find out more go to [www.affirmingcatholicism.org.uk](http://www.affirmingcatholicism.org.uk), and select 'Vocations' to take you straight to the Vocations web page.*

## KEEPING IN TOUCH

We hope that you find these regular email newsletters useful, and do please forward them on to others who might be interested to find out more about us. Keeping in touch in this way is obviously much cheaper than producing printed newsletters, and enables us to use our limited financial resources in other ways that we hope can really make a difference to our Church, as we provide educational and catechetical sources and seek to inform debates.

If you have received this because someone has forwarded it to you, please consider becoming a supporter yourself. It's easy to do this on our website [www.affirmingcatholicism.org.uk](http://www.affirmingcatholicism.org.uk). In doing this, you will receive regular news and updates including the Annual Review; your financial contribution will help us to do more and to do it even better; and you will be one more voice calling for a generous and open Catholic future for the Church of England and the Anglican Communion.

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# Affirming Catholicism

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WORKING TOGETHER WITH

## the Society of Catholic Priests

supporting men and women in their priestly service of God within the Anglican Communion



### LOVE'S LABOUR

*We are delighted to continue our close partnership with SCP in cosponsoring projects and events, as well as speaking out together on appropriate issues. Early October saw an exciting day conference on Catholic Evangelism led by Bishop Stephen Cottrell. Talisker Macleod, on ordinand from Ripon College, Cuddesdon, was there, and sends this report.*

### A LABOUR OF LOVE: DOES ANCIENT FAITH HAVE A FUTURE MISSION?

'Love's Labour', the Catholic Evangelism day at Southwark Cathedral on Tuesday 6<sup>th</sup> October run by Affirming Catholicism & SCP, and led by Bishop Stephen Cottrell, was a very interesting day; unfortunately, rather like Greenbelt, one simply could not go to all the workshops one wanted to! My choices were the spirituality and fresh expressions workshops, and I found these fascinating. That fine line between self and community in spirituality was very cleverly trodden and those concepts were then woven together towards the idea of the personal prayer life feeding the community; how evangelism will come through our spirituality as it is lived, and through being who we really are with integrity. Indeed if I had to put a soundbite on the day, it would be that if we have truly grounded and incarnational integrity, all else will follow. That statement needs a lot of unpacking, but it is good a starting point for discussion! Our deepest call is to be distinctively and unashamedly ourselves and to be radically open; the Christian insight into what it is to be utterly free is something that cannot be taught, but can only be lived. This is of course not really new, but sometimes the obvious needs to be restated, as was done most effectively.

The sacramental Fresh Expressions workshop in the afternoon made me aware of several things; and you may say that I'm stating the obvious, but I had forgotten how long new ideas take to percolate through. The first surprise was that seemingly quite a lot of people simply don't get what the missional side of Fresh Expressions is really about and think it is just putting on the occasional exciting and radically different service; the fact that this worship

only comes at the end of years of missional work in building community and fellowship hadn't registered for quite a few people. As Bishop Stephen said, the 'come to us' policy in mission and evangelism isn't enough; however the point was made (with reference to the Moot community) that this doesn't mean that the need to be geographically rooted is no longer there. Place matters if one is to build community, and provide a space for nurture and exploration.

The other thing was that most of the new and exciting things in the church are directed at families and children, with (taken across the board) not a lot being done in the areas of the elderly and those in the 20-35 age bracket who don't have kids. Of course the exception proves the rule, and Moot (and other communities like it) are a blindingly obvious exception. However the questions asked after the session did reveal exactly this blind spot, and it is something that probably needs to be considered. One gentleman asked about a Noddy Guide to Fresh Expressions; whilst this may sound like fodder merely for Church Times cartoons, there is a serious point to be made here. We still have the Dummies' Guide to Windows after all, and, in 2009, honestly how many people can't use a computer!

In our modern culture which is dominated by the image and the soundbite, when presentation seems to be everything but where people are sick of spin and lies, inner integrity and cultural relevance is so essential if something is going to work. This is surely the way forward for the church; and it is here that the catholic tradition with its huge resource of the dramatic, visual and tactile, could come into its own. Bishop Stephen put this point across very well, speaking of the difference between mission and evangelism, and the need to be passionate about what we do. We need to build places of nurture where questions can be asked, and we need to figure out how our lives and the lives of our churches are a blessing to our communities. For me as an ordinand, some questions resonated very strongly, and (if I may mix my metaphors) I very much hope that the catholic end of the church has the guts to take this bull by the horns and run with it

The title 'Ancient Faith Future Mission' seems to encapsulate exactly what the day put across to me, and personally I'm really excited at the prospect of seeing how this is going to work out; I only hope we have the patience and faith to see it through and not give up when it all seems just plain impossible.

*Talisker Macleod  
Ripon College, Cuddesdon*

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## LATEST NEWS

Have you visited the Gospel Imprint website recently at [www.gospelimprint.com](http://www.gospelimprint.com)? If not, it's high time to do so. You will find three new leaflets available for downloading and printing for your Church literature stall or to distribute to those asking questions about the faith. There's one on the sacrament of **Confirmation** and its many dimensions that could well be given to someone making enquires about being confirmed. There's a leaflet on **Catholic Evangelism** that summarises some of the key themes of the day conference reported above. And there's a very helpful pastoral leaflet '**Beyond Death and Dying**' which may bring some comfort and insight to those going through the experience of bereavement. Why not take a look at them for yourselves? And while you're there, spend a few moments looking at our brand new **liturgical materials**, the first examples of a series that will soon be covering the whole Christian year and all its seasons and festivals with Eucharistic orders of service that fall within the provisions of *Common Worship* while seeking to express the riches of the Catholic tradition. We'd be grateful for your feedback on any aspect of this important project.

Perran Gay  
*Liturgy Project Leader*

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## Affirming Catholicism

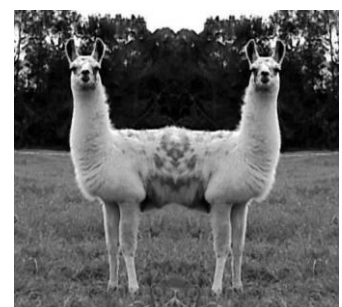
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### WOMEN BISHOPS- THE NEXT STEP

*After the real progress made at General Synod in July 2008, the latest proposals from the Revision Committee come as a real disappointment. Our Chair explains why:*

Those who were young at the right time may recall Dr. Doolittle, and in particular his wonderful discovery, the pushmepullyou: a sort of llama, but unusual in having a head at each end, and no hind quarters.

I think this might help those wondering what is going on in the present debate over the correct form for legislation to make women bishops in the Church of England. Both sides



agree that women should become bishops. Both sides agree that provision should be made for those who oppose the change, and most agree that male bishops should be appointed (using a deliberately vague term) to look after those clergy and parishes.

One might think that it's all over bar the shouting: that the positions of each side on this were sufficiently close that a little arm-twisting should see it through in an acceptable compromise form. Would that it were that simple! The big problem is that the Church of England has never yet really made up its mind as to whether women's ordination (as priests, never mind bishops) is a done deal or not. On the one hand, the number of those being selected for ordination is pretty equal now between men and women. On the other hand, those who are opposed feel that the provision made at the time leaves them the option of doubting whether women are in fact ordained at all.

When women become bishops, that grey area can't continue to exist. Hidden in all the wrangling is one fundamental choice. Either the church accepts that those people who don't believe women are bishops may be right – in which case it has to set up a system for those people which bypasses women in ordained ministry altogether. Alternatively, the church decides that women are truly ordained, and makes arrangements within the existing structures of the church for those who find that difficult to accept.

General Synod in July 2008 went for the second of those options; the Revision Committee has revised to the extent of opting instead for the first. The debate currently revolves around 'delegation' and 'transfer' of episcopal responsibility for those who are opposed. If a woman bishop delegates responsibility, then she possesses it first in order to delegate it. Therefore she is a genuine bishop with genuine episcopal authority. If responsibility is transferred, a mechanism is set up which bypasses the woman bishop entirely. The only reason to do this is that she might not be a bishop at all: there is no other justification.

The danger we currently face is that legislation will be put forward which alienates the people in whose favour it is supposedly being put forward, while continuing to leave an unpleasant taste in the mouth of those opposed to the whole thing. Women will be offered mitres, on condition of legislation which entrenches the view that they may not be ordained at all. Those opposed will be offered an awkward set of provisions which scarcely meets anything they originally demanded. The church as a whole will, along the way, have undermined its traditional understanding of what a bishop is and does. The only winners will be those who just want the whole thing to go away. A pushmepullyou may have a certain apparent balance, but it certainly isn't going anywhere.

Jonathan Clark  
*Chair, Affirming Catholicism*

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## FROM THE GRASS ROOTS

*Affirming Catholicism is an organisation that engages with the Church and the world at a national and international level. But another of its tasks is to engender a sense of Catholic presence among local churches and congregations. One of the ways in which it seeks to do this is through diocesan groups, led by local convenors who are key figures in supporting our work. Our Company Secretary is also a diocesan convenor in his other life, and shares these concerns and hopes:*

## THE FRUSTRATION OF THE LONG DISTANCE CONVENOR

Ask any Diocesan Convenor their biggest frustration (and I know because I am one) and they will quickly tell you that it's the inability to get their hands on a complete and up to date listing of their Diocese's supporters. Most of us as a result have our own local lists. And when it comes to emailing supporters it has been a matter of relying on our own computer's address book, in so far as we have managed to keep that up to date as well. Over time that means gaps have opened up between the lists we keep, the lists that are registered centrally, and that third list somewhere in the sky (heaven forbid) of those names that fall between the first two.

There is a reason (explicable, if not very good) for this. When Aff Cath was set up over 15 years ago database software was rudimentary: the organisation bought into some shrink-wrapped, proprietary software that was used to maintain the lists of central supporters. Apart from the fact the system could produce address labels (on a good day), it was not good at providing listings; and since 2006, when we leapt into the new century with the new web site, that proprietary software has been unable to talk to the database housed in the new web-based software that has increasingly been where our newer supporters have registered their details. The end result was three lists: yours and mine; the one offline in the old database; and the new list domiciled within the web site.

When the new Board took over a little over a year ago we knew this was one of the biggest legacy issues we faced. Thanks to the support and ingenuity of our web master, Wayne Prescott, Managing Director of *Netsima*, we have now made some real progress. Wayne has succeeded in breaking into the old software and migrating all those names and addresses into the new web database.

So, as you might expect (because you are already one jump ahead of me, I know), after this small step for technology and one vast leap for Aff Cath, we now face a different set of challenges. Those old addresses failed to record the Diocese of the supporter; in those early days, many did not record an email address (well, what was an email address to a lot of people in the early 1990's?); and of course many are now out of date.

The next step of our plan to conquer the world has been to work through this (now combined) database in One Big Clean Up. We estimated there were something like 2,000 remaining addresses that needed validating, completing

and assigning to a Diocese. And we now have undertaken a project to get this done – painstaking work, that is taking several months to complete, but which will be well worth it. Once it is complete, and some new programmes we have been trialling have been switched on, not only will Diocesan lists be possible, but Convenors will be able to generate bulk emails, by Diocese; and general mailings from the centre will also become possible, without having to go through Convenors first, relying on them to do the painstaking forwarding.

Of course, names on local lists that have not been added to the central database will continue to be left out, and that is a right some supporters will doubtless continue to want to exercise – to be just a local supporter, with dependence on the local Convenor for the things they feed you.

But there is something you can do to help this exercise right now. If you have not done so already, please go to the web site, and register under “my details”, where you will be asked for name, postal and email address (and, yes, you guessed, the name of your Diocese from the easy pull down list). Your latest details will immediately be added to the central list and, whether or not you are also known to your local Convenor and on their list, you will be added to the Diocesan lists that we shall be able to make available to Convenors, just as soon as the address-list-by-Diocese facility goes live.

If that is not incentive enough to get yourself registered, here is another reason: very shortly we shall be creating a “Supporters’ Area” within the web site, access to which will be limited to those supporters who have registered themselves on the web site. Within this area will be resources available to registered supporters only, and, even more valuably, access to the on line book shop with whom we have done an exclusive deal to provide, not just Aff Cath publications, but a range of books, at 10% discounts, post-free, to those registered supporters who have access to the promotional code that you will need to quote - and which will be kept up to date in the “Supporters’ Area”.

We are also able to offer on-line registration for national conferences and symposia complete with an ability to register in advance for any individual workshops within the conferences. We trialled this very successfully for Vice President Bishop Stephen Cottrell’s October conference in Southwark Cathedral.

Talking of Convenors (and we often do), please remember the important date of **Saturday 5<sup>th</sup> December, in Derby Cathedral**, when we shall be holding a Convenors’ Day to launch all these new resources and some more we are still working on. To help you attend, there will be travel bursaries available for all Convenors to help us all re-connect, not just electronically, but face to face with each other and with the exciting world of Affirming Catholicism. Details of this should have already reached convenors.

So, next time you hear someone say the web site is out of date, invite them to take a tour, to register their details and to see what they are missing ...

*David Thunder  
Company Secretary/Director of Business Planning  
(... and Convenor for the Chichester Diocese)*

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## CHURCH LIFE ACROSS THE POND

*In July, it was my great privilege on behalf of Affirming Catholicism to attend the General Convention of The Episcopal Church at Anaheim, California (and I promise that I didn't visit Disneyland!) Unlike the press coverage of that convention which focussed exclusively on gay bishops, same sex blessings and the breakup of the Anglican Communion, I found a diverse Church (liberal and conservative) engaged in financial cutbacks, ecumenical and interfaith dialogue, and exciting new mission projects, and one in which there was a careful and nuanced debate on the issues that threatened to overshadow its life. Here's a helpful report by Bishop Pierre W. Whalon, Bishop in Charge of the Convocation of American Churches in Europe.*

### WHAT DIDN'T HAPPEN AT GENERAL CONVENTION 2009

#### - AND WHAT DID?

Every three years, The Episcopal Church's 110 dioceses (eleven from outside the USA) and one Convocation in Europe send their bishops, four clergy deputies and four lay deputies (and a few alternates, in some cases) to meet for nine gruelling days of legislation. As resolutions are submitted and batted between the House of Deputies and the House of Bishops, eventually some are agreed upon and they become official decisions of the Church.

Every three years, for at least thirty years, the media have descended upon the General Convention, fishing for titbits that make for great headlines: "Episcopal Church Votes to [fill in the blank]!" They often get it completely wrong, either because of ignorance (qualified religion journalists being even scarcer than qualified curling reporters) or malice (Episcopalians are fun to ridicule because we are so open, and we present a much safer target than say, radical Muslims). Other commentators, usually more thoughtful, joined the chorus of inaccurate reporting this time. Philip Jenkins asserted in the *Wall Street Journal* that this Convention "ended the ban on gay clergy." Bishop Tom Wright of Durham, England, a noted New Testament scholar, went further. Writing in the *Church Times*, he opined that "The House of Bishops of the Episcopal Church (TEC) in the United States has voted decisively to allow in principle the appointment, to all orders of ministry, of persons in active same-sex relationships. This marks a clear break with the rest of the Anglican Communion."

Both are wrong. We did not pass any such resolutions. What did happen was that, after a protracted struggle in the House of Deputies over the moratorium on ordination of partnered gay bishops, a compromise resolution, numbered D025 and entitled "Commitment and Witness to the Anglican Communion," passed both Houses. It described the situation in The Episcopal Church, namely, that the prevailing sentiment these days is that gay people can be ordained to all three orders, though disagreement certainly continues within

the church as well as within the rest of the Communion. There was also a lot of language about listening to the rest of the Anglican Communion, about our constituent membership and desire to remain a part of it, in this resolution and others.

Following up on this was another resolution that passed, C056, which was a substitute for an earlier version entitled "Liturgies for Blessings." The earlier text called for the creation of liturgies of same-sex blessings, the substitute does not (because of technical rules, substitute texts may not change the title of the original resolution). It calls for collecting theological studies and texts of experimental liturgies, which is a reiteration of C051 from the 2003 Convention. Both D025 and C056 reiterate language from previous conventions. Nothing new, in other words.

C056 did contain something new in its first paragraph: "*Resolved*, the House of Deputies concurring, That the 76<sup>th</sup> General Convention acknowledge the changing circumstances in the United States and in other nations, as legislation authorizing or forbidding marriage, civil unions or domestic partnerships for gay and lesbian persons is passed in various civil jurisdictions that call forth a renewed pastoral response from this Church..." This is an acknowledgment that all the churches of the Anglican Communion, a global communion, each face new circumstances in their local situation, some nations permitting, and others forbidding, gay unions. In the United States this varies by state - some allowing, others outlawing them. In each case, the church must make a pastoral response. And in every case, this response will perform seem different viewed from elsewhere.

But the basic stance for all is the decision to which all member churches of the Communion have subscribed: "We commit ourselves to listen to the experience of homosexual persons and we wish to assure them that they are loved by God and that all baptised, believing and faithful persons, regardless of sexual orientation, are full members of the Body of Christ." (Lambeth 1998, resolution I.10.c, reiterating earlier Lambeth Conference resolutions). The question, of course, remains: what is the appropriate pastoral response? Certainly, at the very least, churches in the Anglican Communion must oppose local legislation that criminalizes being gay. But a positive affirmation is also necessary: since gay and lesbian people are beloved of God and fully members of Christ's Body, the Church, they must be treated as such.

Another aspect of this Convention's decision-making, this time through inaction, was *not* to allow the use of the Prayer Book marriage rites in same-sex blessings, particularly in those states which now allow civil marriage for gay partners. The language of the texts have the full force of the canon law, which itself still defines marriage as between a man and a woman only. Only votes to change these at two consecutive General Conventions can authorize a revision of the text. If a bishop were to authorize such a use, it would be actionable.

A number of bishops, including this writer, signed "The Anaheim Statement," presented by Bishop Gary Lillibrige of West Texas. This statement merely

reiterates commitment to the wider Anglican Communion and to our ordination vows. For me, signing it was a way of re-stating that my positive votes on D025 and C056 were not to be interpreted in any way - personally or corporately - as signifying a desire "to walk apart" from the Communion or indeed, the Church catholic.

What happened at this General Convention, in terms of movement to the Right or the Left on the issue *du jour*, was neither. The three moratoria, as the Presiding Bishop and President of the House of Deputies made clear in a letter to the Archbishop of Canterbury, remain in force. The first two concern creation of rites of same-sex blessing and ordinations to the episcopate. The third moratorium, that bishops from other churches cease intervening in congregations of The Episcopal Church, is the only one that applies to other churches of the Communion. If only they followed it as The Episcopal Church has observed the first two that concern us (and a few other provinces)... If only they observed it at all.

And we get accused of being schismatic?

More important decisions, signifying real changes, have scarcely received any attention. We voted to share the historic succession of bishops with the Unitas Fratrum, also known as the Moravian Church, as part of an agreement to enter into full communion, including interchangeability of clergy. We affirmed a much more basic agreement with the United Presbyterian Church, and gave thanks for progress toward full communion with the United Methodist Church.

Another very important set of decisions has to do with requiring, by canon law, the provision of pensions to lay employees and the registration of all institutions of The Episcopal Church in a single health care plan. While these will marginally increase costs (health care savings offsetting increase of pension premiums), the Convention also passed a sweeping series of budget cuts, which necessitated laying off some forty employees at the church headquarters. Programs like missionaries received *increased* funding.

Finally, a very significant theological statement on interreligious dialogue passed the bishops unanimously, and by a large majority in the House of Deputies (with 888 voting deputies, unanimity is extremely rare). For those who wonder about the orthodoxy of our church, here are some excerpts:

"We affirm the foundational Gospel proclamation that "Jesus is Lord" (I Corinthians 12:3 NRSV here and hereafter), and therefore Jesus' Summary of God's Law: "love the Lord your God with all your hearts, with all your souls, and with all your minds, and to love your neighbour as yourself" (Mark 12:29-31; BCP, Catechism, page 851). For this reason we reach out in love and genuine openness to know and to understand those of other religion traditions." (Introduction)

And these paragraphs from Section V are worth quoting in full:

“24. The Christian scriptures proclaim that Jesus is “the Word made flesh” (John 1:14) and as such he is “the Way and the Truth and the Life” (John 14:6). As stated in our creeds (Apostles’, and Nicene) and liturgy, Jesus Christ is the full revelation of God. Since God has chosen to share our life, we affirm that God is intensely concerned about every human life. Among Christians, Episcopalians have a particular appreciation of this teaching, in that we believe that the coming of God in Christ has already begun to transform all of creation.

“25. The human response to God’s incarnate love was “to crucify the Lord of Glory” (1 Corinthians 2:8). The cross is the Christian symbol and act of self-emptying, humility, redemptive suffering, sacrificial self-giving, and unvanquished love. We believe that we have been reconciled to God through the cross.

“26. In the resurrection we believe “Christ is risen from the dead, trampling down death by death, and giving life to those in the tomb” (BCP, p. 483). By our baptism into Christ’s death and resurrection we enjoy new life as members of the Body of Christ, called therefore to become ourselves ambassadors of reconciliation (Romans 6:4; 2 Corinthians 5:14-20).

“27. Professing salvation in Christ is not a matter of competing with other religious traditions with the imperative of converting one another. Each tradition brings its own understanding of the goal of human life to the interreligious conversation. Christians bring their particular profession of confidence in God’s intentions as they are seen in and through the incarnation, death and resurrection of Jesus Christ.”

Please note, Gentle Reader, that this is now the official teaching of The Episcopal Church, since it has the approval of the General Convention. The purpose of these passages is to reiterate in basic language who we are as Christians, since clarity of identity is as important in interreligious dialogue as clarity of intent. Precisely because we are followers of Jesus, we must engage people of other religious traditions in conversation, not to proselytize but rather to build common ground in the world in which we live.

So why didn’t we see headlines like “Episcopalians Give Employees Pensions, Better Health Care”; “Church Dramatically Cuts Budget, Except Missionaries”: “Episcopal Church Breaks New Ground In Reconciling Christians”, “Episcopalians Reaffirm Jesus As Lord”?

Doesn’t sell, that’s why. People want bad news. Disasters and scandals sell. “Those crazy Episcopalians” sells. Good news does not, especially when it contradicts conventional media images.

One headline that would have sold newspapers and Google ads on blogs (yes, [my blog](#) has them too, giving all proceeds to Episcopal Relief and Development) did not appear, however: “General Convention Ignores Report on Declining Numbers.” This is found in the [House of Deputies Committee Report on the State of the Church](#), part of the [2009 Blue Book](#).

For all the good hard work of this Convention, the few mentions of this report in either House showed that Episcopalians, like other human beings, tend to avoid bad news. Except when it is about other people. Of course, the other Christian churches in the United States and Europe continue to experience declining numbers. Nevertheless, the next General Convention, in Indianapolis in 2012, will be even less able to avoid this issue. But we will probably try.

And, I suppose, the media and others will continue to proclaim what they want us to say, but didn't.

*Bishop Pierre W. Whalon  
Bishop in Charge  
Convocation of American Churches in Europe*

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# Affirming Catholicism

Inspiration and hope  in the Anglican Communion

## **THE BIGGER PICTURE**

*Finally, here's a thought-provoking article – based on an address given at the York Synod to the meeting of ACiS (Affirming Catholics in Synod) by Dr. Joe Cassidy, Principal of St. Chad's College, Durham. He and his college have been tremendously supportive of our movement for many years, and here he sketches out the kind of qualities we ought to be looking for in Anglicanism today.*

## **RADICAL ANGLICANISM**

It is not an easy time to be an Anglican. For not a few times in the past few years, it has been more tempting to scream than to try, yet again, to figure out why it is still worth being an Anglican.

I should begin by saying that, by 'radical' Anglicanism, I mean something at the root of Anglicanism that is worth a huge commitment. So I use the term 'radical' in two ways: in terms of getting at the root or heart of it all and also in terms of a radical commitment to what *is* at the heart of it all.

So my question is: Is Anglicanism really an excellent way of being a Christian? Is it conducive to living the Gospel or is it an obstacle? Or is it both? Does it lead to a real kind of holiness that the Church needs? Would any of us these days encourage someone to become or to remain an Anglican as a particularly excellent way of following Christ?

One of the things that is sometimes said to hold us back from promoting ourselves, which is to say from promoting our particular gifts, is our belief in

provisionality: Anglicans have made much of the fact that they do not see Anglicanism as the paradigm for the whole church, that they could imagine a re-united church evolving that would require some quite significant changes in how we do church. That said, I do not entirely buy Stephen Sykes's idea that Anglican self-deprecation is the cause of much of this, and that this self-deprecation stems from the deeply-ingrained cultural habit of self-denigration on the part of the English educated elite (*note 1*). As a Canadian who has lived in the UK for close to 20 years, it has taken me a long time to realise that the English have an exquisite ability to *seem* self-deprecating *and* to put you in your place at the same time. Just watch a so-called cultivated English man or woman make a complaint: after a litany of self-deprecating apologies for even bothering to bother you, which softens you up and gets you smiling and feeling good about yourself, he or she slips in the matter of his or her complaint, and you find yourself wanting to agree, wanting to please. That's not self-deprecation; that's a finely honed killer instinct, where the prey dies smiling, but dies nonetheless. And I still get caught every time. It means complaints take longer than they need to, but the strategy works.

So provisionality may not be fully explained by reference to self-deprecation or self-denigration - at least not entirely. As many others have said, perhaps we simply need to agree on essentials: so long as we're united on essentials, united even on a small subset of the really-essential, then we can be fairly relaxed about the non-essentials and so allow everything else to be provisional. But even that feels like a bit of a stretch these days, when we patently cannot agree on *what* the essentials are. And, as Stephen Sykes again has said, it is difficult to pin-down any such fundamentals. (*Note 2*)

So should we even talk of Radical Anglicanism when we are faced with such differences within Anglicanism? Can we talk of Radical Anglicanism without privileging some particular and exclusive subset of Anglicanism?

I want to offer two approaches that may help us to imagine how we can identify something at the core, something that encourages Anglicans to remain Anglican these days, something that may even give Anglicans permission to feel some measure of confidence. One approach is to think of Anglican disagreements in terms of the way that ecumenism has developed. Another is to compare Anglicanism's position within the church in terms of differences among religious orders within the Roman Catholic Church.

### **Ecumenical Insights**

One of the more important things to realise about Anglicanism is that it is not a denomination. Rather it is a church of denominations, in the plural. A famous irony of Anglicanism is that Anglicans are often more open to other denominations, to other churches, than they are to other flavours of Anglicans.

The key shift in ecumenism in the last few decades, or so I have gleaned in part from Paul Avis (*Note 3*) is that expectations have shifted away from seeing reunification as a 'return to a united past' to seeing the goal as 'a form

of unity that respects, indeed that expects, diversity.’ The shift has been in appreciating the Gospel’s universality not in terms of a single way of being church for all time in all places, but in terms of the Gospel’s way of coming alive at all times and in all places. The universality of the Gospel is precisely its universal applicability, its universal relevance, its universal challenge, its promise of grace in all times and in all places. And this is more than inculturation, at least as the term is often used or misused to describe how things are culturally-adapted or translated. Rather, it is a type of universality that can coexist with some radical, even incommensurable, local differences, differences perhaps as radical, as Avis says, as those found in the four gospels, or as radical as the differences between Peter and Paul, or as radical as the various apostolic churches as they first emerged.

For a long time, many of us thought that church history evinced a trajectory towards catholic order (after all, we saw clear traces of it already in the New Testament itself); we thought that the true church was unfolding providentially, under the sure influence of grace, as it coped with becoming larger, as it coped with the challenges of staying together as key theological arguments emerged. It was becoming clearer; a structure was coalescing. But the church obviously did not remain united. And the result, the ecclesial reality, is a *series* of churches, of denominations, each emphasising different facets of the Gospel. Ecumenism today, arguably when it is at its best, does not want even to imagine a united church without these different facets, without these different emphases – even if they are in tension with each other. Rather, the ecumenical movement is espousing recognition of each other as legitimate and as legitimately different – at least as a first step.

Ecumenism is not espousing relativism here: ecumenists anticipate that some of the distinctiveness will involve rival, conflicting truth claims, but without mutual excommunications.

So that’s my first point, or rather that’s Paul Avis’s first point. If ecumenism is onto something by inviting and celebrating diversity and distinctiveness, then perhaps Anglicanism, with its own internal denominations, ought to be doing so as well. More than that, perhaps Anglicanism has *always* been doing this, though not always with a happy heart.

Of course, there’s something about ‘distinctiveness in unity’ that is at the heart of it all. Our central insight into the Trinitarian nature of God suggests as much – or frankly demands as much. At the same time, arguments within a family are bound to be more painful than arguments outside. So adopting an ecumenical model for Anglicanism is not easy.

Now, this is neither earth-shattering nor very original, but that does not take anything away from the importance for Anglicanism of ‘distinctiveness in unity’ nor from the claim that this makes being an Anglican an excellent way of being a Christian. It is an openness not just to the anonymous other out-there-somewhere, but to the familiar, irksome other who is right next-door, or even in the same family. It is a commitment to being the sort of church that invites diversity, that does not insist on uniformity, that enables and permits

strong disagreement, dare one say even on fundamentals, without anathematising one another. It is a church that welcomes profound and costly conversation, not just a parroting of the same old stuff amongst familiar friends who all think the same way. This may sound like a liberal, pluralist model, but it need not be: rather it is the model of a church that expects the conversation to be getting somewhere over the longer term, that believes truth can and will emerge without using sticks, that stays together despite important differences because the truth will not emerge without the conversation. Indeed, a large part of the truth *is* engaging in the conversation, because that is where we actually experience the Holy Spirit working in those with whom we disagree. So we have common ground not so much at the level of our agreements, but at the level of attending to what God is enabling in us all.

## Religious Orders

I'd like to expand this first model further by considering a different model -- religious orders. I could make the points I want to make by referring to Anglican religious communities, but I can speak a bit more knowingly about RC religious orders, having been in one for half of my adult life.

Each religious order in the Roman Catholic Church has its own charism; and the charism stems from the founder or foundress of the order. It is quite personal in that sense: and so each order has a different personality. Each charism is a particular, perhaps even an exaggerated, take on one aspect of the Gospel for the sake of the whole Gospel. Thus the Capuchins, or Friars Minor, stress being lesser or minor, a Christ-like kenotic humility that opens them up to experiencing the privilege of serving the other. The Dominican charism emphasises contemplation of the scriptures in order to proclaim the gospel with appropriate care and integrity. The Jesuit charism is radical availability, the freedom to be willingly sent on a mission anywhere in the world to serve the Gospel – as seen in the Jesuit fourth vow, which is based on the mission of the second person of the Trinity's being sent by the Father. I could go on, order by order, but the key insight is that each of the historic Roman Catholic orders has a charism, the charism of its founder, which is a kind of practical wisdom, a path of holiness, which focuses on one or other aspects of living the Gospel radically – it is not just a division of labour in the Church; it is rather an eschatological witness. You focus and exaggerate to draw attention, without thereby suggesting that the exaggerated model is a model for everyone, much as the vow of celibacy focuses attention on everyone's need to be single-hearted, without thereby being a model for everyone; or as the vow of poverty challenges our values and priorities without thereby ruling out private property.

So the religious orders 'contain' diversity: they provide a means of remaining in union with one another precisely by 'containing' or 'focussing' or 'legitimising' this diversity. They provide a way for those who might otherwise leave the church to live, what to their mind is, a less compromised life within an order *within* the church (at least they may start out that way, until they discover their own weaknesses). But the thing is: the diversity is good. Jesuits do not dream of a day when all Dominicans will see the light and

become Jesuits; in fact there are fairly strict rules against order-hopping. (*But see Note 4!*)

It is probably fair to say that most of the great theological differences that once characterised the Franciscans, Dominicans and Jesuits are behind us (differences on such diverse things as grace, tyrannicide or probabilism/probabilism), but such differences did exist, and there are still some dramatic differences in how the orders live their communal lives, how they understand their missions, how they follow Christ practically, which aspect of discipleship they emphasise. They do not argue about which is the best. Rather they have a sense that each is the best for some people, and that each could be the worst for other people.

Could it be that the most radical thing about Anglicanism is not the radical fervour of any one of its 'more correct' internal denominations, but the very fact of its having space for each of these denominations? Could it be that each internal Anglican denomination focuses on, and perhaps often exaggerates, some aspect of the Gospel, and that this could be a good thing – a way of reminding the whole church of something truly vital? And could it be that such a limited focussing will always imply a distortion of some sort – a distortion that will become most obvious if one mistakenly claims that one particular way will and must fit all? But more on that later.

### **Holiness and Graciousness**

There is a grace, a type of holiness, that can underpin this openness to diversity. All grace is concrete, and that's perhaps why it is often best communicated by narrative. Hence I want to change pace and recount two very simple, and admittedly personal, encounters with two brothers. These simple examples were chosen because the grace is very simple too, even if living according to such grace requires incredible heroism.

The first encounter was when I was a college student back in the early 70s. A number of us used to visit Benedict Vanier, a Trappist monk at Oka, just north of Montreal. Benedict happens to be Jean Vanier's brother. We used to bring a picnic lunch, and Chris Elliot, our theology lecturer, used also to insist that we bring the ham sandwiches we'd normally bring to a picnic. Now Trappists do not eat much at the best of times, but when they do eat, they are vegetarians. So we'd bring our ham sandwiches, offer one to Benedict, and he would eat it, smiling and complimenting whoever had made the sandwich. I am not sure whether Chris was doing this as a playful joke on Benedict; whether it was to enable Benedict to choose hospitality over regulations (which Benedict invariably did); or whether he did it to show *us* how hospitality trumped such rules. Whatever the motive, I have remembered the encounter for almost 40 years. I presume that Benedict was committed to his vegetarianism, but what an unusual commitment. How many vegetarians eat whatever is served them, without so much as a comment?

The simple point I want to make is that there was a graciousness about Benedict: he was able to accommodate our meat-eating without making a

point of it. He did not abandon being a vegetarian even when he ate our sandwiches; not at all; he simply made us feel comfortable being meat-eaters. I have to say that, as older teenagers, our being meat-eaters was the least of our sins, but he did not require us to change to share a meal with him. His freedom around food-rules made us, however, ask important questions about our own freedom.

Moving the clock forward quite a few years, a few months ago I welcomed Jean Vanier to St Chad's College, in Durham. Jean happens to be Benedict's brother. This was the second time I'd met Jean Vanier in 35 years, but each time I have encountered Jean, I have noticed two things (similar to what I noticed in Benedict): one is a sense of his acceptance of me, even though I hardly live up to his example; and another is a sense of being called to integrity, without being made to feel guilty -- a wonderful, if too-rare, experience.

In Jean Vanier's case, I am tremendously inspired by his simplicity, by his joy, which enables him to be present to people of all sorts. I'm challenged by such simplicity of heart; I frankly want some of it myself. There is a sense that the authenticity of his life *is* a sort of judgment on mine; but rather than feeling accused I feel energised by recognising something stirring in me that seems in sympathy with the good I see in Jean Vanier. He doesn't try to convert me. He is content to live with his lights, confident that the grace that causes and enables the good in his life is the same grace enabling me to do something equally good (but different) in mine – and to do so in God's own time. One could imagine that Jesus might have had a similar, though perhaps even more intense, effect on the people he met.

The point of recounting these two reminiscences is to suggest that this type of simple-but-real holiness you see in the Vanier brothers is exactly the sort of holiness that ought to characterise a radically gracious Anglicanism. It urges the question of whether there is a way of living with differences, of remaining in conversation, such that 'the other' feels at home? Is there a way of recognising that 'something' stirring in me when I encounter the other on the other side of a vexing issue? Can we trust such 'stirring' and let it lead wherever it does lead, instead of demanding instant capitulation to my view? Can we engage with each other so that we do not allow our differences to prevent our sharing ham sandwiches? Or the Eucharist? Can we find some way of disagreeing with one another without trying to make each other feel guilty? Is there any way of appreciating that some of our differences emerge because we actually do emphasise and even exaggerate different but nonetheless real aspects of the Gospel? Can we allow each other to do so without recrimination?

### **Radical Anglicanism**

'Radical Anglicanism' can truly evince an authentic type of graciousness, but it can also, and all too easily, get confused with good manners. That was one of the gentle criticisms made of one of Paul Avis's most recent books, but I think Avis got it exactly right: there is an Anglican knack, an Anglican genius,

for holding things together in diversity – and not just for the sake of expedience. It is more than a knack, of course; for this sort of graciousness is real holiness. And this sort of graciousness ought to be appreciated as cutting to the very heart of the Gospel, because it turns on a profound belief in the priority of grace. We did not cause our faith; we were called; and what's more, we were called while we were still sinners. That same priority informs a Catholic understanding of the sacraments, and it ought also to inform the way Anglican Christians relate to one another. We do not use sticks (or bibles or mitres) to beat each other up because God works by gracious invitation. God knows what God is doing; and we should take the cue. The Anglican Communion needs jaw-dropping generosity -- the kind seen in those who are profoundly committed to what they believe and yet do not make those who espouse something different feel any the less. How? By disagreeing, yes, but not by excluding or demonising. We do not exclude, we cannot demonise, because we know in our bones that we are not more worthy.

Just as each religious order has a charism that focuses on one or a few aspects of the Gospel and so distorts it by stretching the Gospel a bit in one direction rather than in another, so too, if graciousness is *the* Anglican charism, then focussing on graciousness will distort things too. Graciousness and breadth will seem like a lazy accommodation of contradictory views, a sloppy acceptance of incoherence, an indecisiveness or fudge that causes others to judge Anglicanism as something impossible to pin-down. But this ought to be an expected and acceptable cost of having an intense focus on *one* aspect of the Gospel rather than an equal focus on all the other aspects at the same. Thus our 'gracious' accommodation with those who do not recognise the orders of women means that we do truly lack something key in terms of coherent unity; but we tolerate this very real and incredibly frustrating lack as a way of witnessing to a more radical prior commitment to graciousness – a more fundamental touchstone, again reflecting the fundamental belief in the priority of grace. And this witness is made, with all its attendant difficulties, for the sake of the whole church. Other churches will focus on other things – on permanence, on truth, on our redeemed fallenness – but Anglicans can focus particularly on the fact that we were *called* together, whether we always like it or not, because fundamentally there is only one Spirit, one Body of Christ. Graciousness in the face of diversity is our humble way of letting God work on keeping Anglicans together.

In the end, graciousness ought to be synonymous with Anglicanism. It *is* an evangelical stance, inasmuch as it captures what is at the heart of the sinner's experience of undeservable forgiveness; and yet it is also quintessentially Catholic because divine antecedent grace or graciousness is the essence of the sacramental life, of the sacramental church. We are gracious because we have been graced. And the more conscious we are of being graced, the more conscious we are of our own sin, and so the less likely we should be to exclude others. And even if we, as a church, do not agree on what gratuity looks like when it ramifies through our theology, even if we do not agree on how gratuity and inclusiveness interlink and get expressed in our doctrines or morals, still we can insist that our polity, our practical communion, be defined by graciousness-in-action. If we do so, then we've struck the kind of

radicalness that is worth looking for, the kind of radical graciousness that is well-worth committing to, the kind that gives God some proper credit for keeping Anglicans around a shared table.

But this sort of Radical Anglicanism is costly. How do we live a more gracious, welcoming type of Christian life in a Church that may itself be less and less welcoming of diversity? This is the old challenge of how to be tolerant of the intolerant, of how to be critical of intolerance without being seen as superior or as intolerant ourselves.

Perhaps the only sufficient answer is to trust what we experience when we encounter the Vaniers of this world. Perhaps we need to rediscover the holiness of hospitality, of profound graciousness, and the humility that makes these possible in the first place. The scriptural bases are already there: preserve unity in humility by 'putting on the mind of Christ Jesus' (*Phil 2.5*) or 'bear with one another charitably, in complete selflessness, gentleness and patience' (*Eph 4.2*): but we need to see and be pulled by the compelling beauty behind these tags. After all, God bears with us. We need to keep on being graciously inclusive, by including those who are currently outside or feel on the fringe, as well as by including those who want to define the boundaries more exclusively. Being gracious does not mean backing down when there are threats to inclusiveness. No, the challenge is to stand up with honest, disarmingly gentle, non-violent graciousness, even at the cost of some coherence.

All of this means being very strategic at times; it may mean accepting further division while insisting on continued mutual recognition by newer, more tightly-defined 'denominations' within Anglicanism: achieving such mutual recognition will require not just graciousness but also some deft political insight. Should the Communion, for instance, absolutely rule out the possibility of recognising ACNA or other emerging groups (as painful as that might be)? But graciousness would require that any recognition of these new groups be conditional on their agreeing to re-enter into some admittedly-imperfect communion with ECUSA (again the differentiation of newly-emerging religious orders can be a clue to how this could occur). The key thing is that this sort of insistence on a gracious arrangement should be required as the Anglican way, though it should also be regarded as provisional, as a less-than-satisfactory way-station on the way to reconciliation. This is perhaps the proper context for discussing Anglicanism's provisionality: the concessions made in the name of graciousness are assented to as ways of keeping the larger, longer unitive conversation going until the differences are either overcome or recognised as legitimate.

To conclude, our communion needs the new, more generous insights into diversity that mark modern ecumenism – we ought especially to learn from that movement because it has been so much a part of recent Anglican history. We also need the permission felt by the traditional religious orders to distinguish themselves from others: while remaining in the church, they tried to live the Gospel radically, but they did so in different ways, in ways that stretched the Gospel in certain (non-universalisable) directions rather than

others. There could be some wisdom there. But if we want to recognise and enable any such diversity, then we'll need to embrace the gracious holiness that we find when we encounter truly holy women and men. We need not apologise for accepting this divine grace: there is a beauty to breath-taking magnanimity, to huge-heartedness, to a humble commitment to costly catholic universality. For, without patient, forbearing, humble, expectant holiness, Anglicans will be reduced to fighting; and if there are winners and losers, then we are all losers.

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#### Notes

- 1) Stephen W. Sykes, 'Odi et Amo: Loving and Hating Anglicanism', in *One Lord, One Faith, One Baptism: Studies in Christian Ecclesiality and Ecumenism in Honor of J. Robert, M. L. Dutton and P. T. Grey* (eds), (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2006), p. 195. As quoted in Paul Avis, *The Identity of Anglicanism: Essentials of Anglican Ecclesiology* (London: T&T Clark, 2007), p. 5.
- 2) See, for instance, Sykes, 'The Fundamentals of Christianity', in *The Study of Anglicanism*, Stephen Sykes and John Booty (eds) (London: SPCK, 1988).
- 3) Avis, *The Identity of Anglicanism*.
- 4) Of course there are rivalries, as shown in that famous joke, where a Franciscan, a Dominican and a Jesuit were arguing about which order is the greatest. There's a huge thunderbolt, and a little piece of paper floats down. The three of them pick up the paper and read: 'All orders are equal.' It was signed, 'God, SJ'. (There may be *three* versions of the same joke, but one hopes not, as it would undermine the play on the Jesuits' well-known virtue of humility.)

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*That's all for now – watch out for the Advent edition coming to a computer screen near you!*

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