

Text of Cardinal Wuerl's Report [On the US Ordinariate] 6/15/11
Consultation on Implementation of Anglicanorum coetibus United States Conference of Catholic Bishops

Anglicanorum coetibus, an Apostolic Constitution which provides for groups of Anglicans to enter into corporate union with the Catholic Church, was issued by our Holy Father in November 2009. Specifically, Anglicanorum coetibus allows for the erection of Personal Ordinariates, juridically similar to dioceses, in which elements of the Anglican heritage may be maintained.

In early 2010, Cardinal Francis George, then President of our Conference, established the USCCB's Ad Hoc Committee for the Implementation of Anglicanorum coetibus in the United States. Bishop Robert McManus of Worcester, Bishop Kevin Vann of Fort Worth and myself are members of this Committee which I Chair.

On March 23, 2010, I gave a report to the USCCB Administrative Committee. In the context of that report, I attempted to answer questions and also solicited the observations of the bishops on establishing an Ordinariate in the United States. Subsequent to the meeting, the bishops' responses were compiled in a report, which also included observations by USCCB Senior Staff. This report was most helpful in conveying the mind of the USCCB at meetings in Rome on Anglicanorum coetibus, directed by the Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith from April 26 through April 28, 2010.

The Ad Hoc Committee met in Florida during the USCCB's June meeting. We were joined by Father Scott Hurd, a priest of the Archdiocese of Washington who was ordained through the Pastoral Provision. At this meeting, it was decided that the responsibilities of the Committee are two-fold: 1) assess the level of interest in such an Ordinariate in the United States and thus provide appropriate information for both our Conference and the Holy See; and 2) facilitate the implementation of Anglicanorum coetibus in the United States.

On August 22, 2010, Father Hurd was appointed as liaison with the USCCB for the implementation of Anglicanorum coetibus. In this capacity, he serves as staff to the Ad Hoc Committee.

The USCCB made a public announcement in September 2010 of my appointment as the Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith's Delegate for the implementation of Anglicanorum coetibus in the United States. In the official press release, Anglicans wishing to be received into the Catholic Church were invited to express their intentions to me in writing by December 31, 2010.

Since that time, every Anglican group and individual who has written has received an acknowledgement of their statement of intention. Anglican groups were sent a "Community Profile" questionnaire, based upon established criteria for assessing Anglican communities. Anglican clergy not associated with a larger group were sent a "Clergy Profile" questionnaire. Finally, Anglican laity not associated with a larger group were sent an acknowledgement to their letter, instructing them to await further instructions, should an Ordinariate be established.

Personal contacts were also made with interested Anglicans during this time, both by members of the Ad Hoc Committee and by Father Hurd, who is in frequent contact with interested Anglicans by telephone, e-mail, and Facebook.

In January 2011, an overview and summary of the responses received from interested Anglicans was sent to the Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith. A modified version of this report was submitted to the USCCB President, Archbishop Timothy Dolan, who in turn shared it with all members of the Conference. Both reports concluded with the assessment that it appears feasible to establish an Ordinariate in the United States at this time.

Shortly thereafter, an extensive assessment of those Anglican communities intending to enter an Ordinariate was compiled and sent to the CDF. This assessment was referenced in my report on Anglicanorum coetibus to the USCCB Administrative Committee on March 22, 2011. In this report, I explained that all bishops with an Anglican group in their jurisdiction requesting to be received into an Ordinariate would be invited to submit by May 1 any information they wished to share with the Ad Hoc Committee. Many bishops accepted this invitation and provided helpful information.

An analysis of the academic and ministerial formation history of all petitioning Anglican clergy was submitted to the CDF at the beginning of April. This was done to evaluate their formation needs for Catholic ordination. This analysis proposed that petitioning Anglican clergy be placed into one of three categories: those eligible for an intense period of formation; those eligible for the intense period plus an additional period of mandated continuing formation after ordination; and those whose formation histories would not recommend them for either of these options.

In planning for the implementation of Anglicanorum coetibus, a program of priestly formation was developed that would allow for a concentration of study in the areas of historic theological divergence in anticipation of ordination to the priesthood. The CDF approved the modified program of priestly formation and authorized its use.

With the encouragement of Cardinal Daniel DiNardo, the leadership of the Archdiocese of Galveston-Houston's Major Seminary, Saint Mary's, agreed to implement the priestly formation program. A Saint Mary's faculty member, Father Jeffrey Steenson, has been instrumental in designing the specific elements of this program, in collaboration with Cardinal DiNardo and myself. Father Steenson is the former Episcopal Bishop of the Rio Grande, who was received into the Church in 2007. The formation program will be available on site at the seminary and also through distance learning facilities.

In mid-April, Anglican clergy seeking ordination in an Ordinariate were directed as part of the process to submit dossiers to me by May 16 for eventual review by the CDF. Since that time, completed dossiers have been sent to Rome for evaluation.

Those Anglican clergy whose dossiers are granted a Nulla Osta by the CDF, indicating that they are eligible to proceed with the approved priestly formation process, will be directed to provide additional information to the CDF. This information will include the results of criminal background checks, a psychological evaluation, a letter of resignation from their Anglican entity, a Votum from the Delegate or Ordinary, and a Votum from the Catholic bishop where the candidate resides, who will have been invited to interview him, either personally or through a delegate. If possible, a Votum from the candidate's former Anglican authority will also be included.

During this time, those candidates responsible for a congregation will be guiding the catechetical formation of their people, utilizing the United States Catholic Catechism for Adults, as has been approved by the CDF. Candidates will be encouraged to invite speakers from the local Catholic community.

Once the second set of documentation has been sent to the CDF, a candidate will cease celebrating the Anglican Eucharist. When a rescript has been issued and received, he may be ordained to the diaconate immediately, with the intention that his subsequent priestly ordination would coincide with the reception of his parish group into full communion.

Since the Holy See has indicated its wish to establish an Ordinariate in the United States this Fall, I am grateful for this opportunity to conduct this consultation with the members of our Conference, to receive any additional observations you might have and to indicate a few areas where we as bishops can be of assistance to a newly-appointed ordinary as he attempts to implement an Ordinariate in the United States.

Before inviting your observations and, I hope, support for this effort, I would like to touch on a number of areas where individually we as bishops can be of assistance to a newly formed Ordinariate and its efforts to review possible candidates for priestly ordination. Since each candidate will be required to have a criminal background check and a psychological evaluation, I would hope that each of us would be able to provide these services for a candidate for the Ordinariate just as we do for those who are seeking admission in our priestly formation programs or to minister in a diocesan program.

A second area where we can perhaps be of some assistance is to offer worship space to a small community that would be a part of the new Ordinariate. Most of them will not have property such as a church and meeting facilities. Our hospitality in providing them worship space would be a sign of generosity on our part and, I am sure, greatly welcomed by them.

An additional way we can facilitate the work of the Ordinariate would be to assign priests who would function as a bishop's delegate. These delegates would meet and interview candidates for priesthood ordination and, perhaps, serve as a mentor to assist with any issues that arise in the formation process.

Fourth, I suggest that we make available the resources of our Tribunals to those Anglicans, both clergy and lay, who will need to secure an annulment before being received into an Ordinariate.

Another area where collaboration at the local level could be helpful is in the catechetical preparation of the lay faithful of the former Anglican congregation. While this is the responsibility of the Ordinariate, and specifically the head of the congregation seeking membership in the Ordinariate, perhaps someone involved in catechesis in the neighboring Catholic parish (Director of Religious Education, Coordinator of Religious Education or a senior catechist) might be willing to assist in the catechetical process for those lay faithful coming into the Ordinariate and making their profession of faith as a Catholic.

It might also be helpful to note that the establishment of an Ordinariate and the process for the Pastoral Provision are two distinct responses. The Ordinariate deals with those seeking to come into the Catholic Church as a group. The Pastoral Provision is intended for an individual seeking ordination as a Catholic priest.

Finally, as this consultation unfolds, I welcome your input, observations and comments.

Thank you.