



NEWS

FILE
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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

'COMMON IDENTITY' IS POSSIBLE FOR ANGLICANS
SEEKING MEMBERSHIP IN ROMAN CATHOLIC CHURCH

WASHINGTON--Certain Anglicans in the United States seeking entrance into the Roman Catholic Church may be admitted with a "common identity" under terms to be established by the National Conference of Catholic Bishops (NCCB) and approved by the Holy See.

Archbishop John R. Quinn of San Francisco, President of NCCB, said Pope John Paul II has approved this decision, which was made by the Vatican's Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith in reply to inquiries from NCCB.

The bishops' conference raised the question with the Vatican congregation in response to requests from both individuals and groups of Anglican background who have been members of the Episcopal Church. They had expressed a desire to become members of the Roman Catholic Church while retaining some form of "common identity."

Archbishop Quinn said the decision applies only to persons who, while wishing to retain some elements of the Anglican tradition, fully accept Roman Catholic doctrine and the authority of the pope and bishops.

Emphasizing that many details remain to be worked out, he

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said terms of the arrangement include provision for married clergymen to continue in the ministry. Their ordination as Roman Catholic priests can be allowed in keeping with the customary norms and practices of the Roman Catholic Church.

Also, he said, elements of the Anglican liturgical tradition could be retained by such person in liturgical celebrations among themselves.

Noting that Bishop John M. Allin, Presiding Bishop of the Episcopal Church in the United States, has been informed, Archbishop Quinn said: "This new development is not meant to impede Anglican-Roman Catholic ecumenical dialogue, which seeks the unity of the Anglican and Roman Catholic Churches as sister churches.

"It is important to bear in mind that the decision applies only to those of Anglican heritage seeking membership in the Roman Catholic Church with some form of common identity.

"While the bishops and the Holy See wish to accommodate such requests, we wish also to continue and improve Anglican-Roman Catholic ecumenical relationships which have made great progress since the Second Vatican Council.

"These give us grounds for great hope, and we assure all of our continued deep regard for the traditions and usages proper to the Anglican Communion. We desire unity in the spirit expressed by these words of Pope Paul VI: 'There will be no seeking to lessen the legitimate prestige and worthy patrimony of piety and usage proper to the Anglican Church when the Roman Catholic Church--this

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humble 'Servant of the servants of God'--is able to embrace her ever beloved sister in the one authentic Communion of the family of Christ.'"

On two occasions--during executive sessions of their general meetings in May 1978 and May 1980--the U.S. Catholic bishops have discussed the question of receiving certain Anglicans, and specifically married clergy, into the Roman Catholic Church. The initiative for these discussions came from several groups of such persons as well as individuals. On both occasions the bishops indicated that they accepted the idea in principle, and the Holy See was so informed.

Archbishop Quinn said the following points were covered in a communication to him from Franjo Cardinal Seper, Prefect of the Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith:

--The admission to membership of the Anglicans in question is properly understood as the reconciliation of individual persons with the Roman Catholic Church.

--Although they can be received into the existing structures of Roman Catholic dioceses, some form of "common identity" is also possible.

--The use of elements of the Anglican liturgical tradition will be restricted to liturgical celebrations involving these persons.

--It is possible for married clergymen among this group to be ordained and to function as Roman Catholic priests after ordination. Cases will be considered on an individual basis by the Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith. Such priests may not become bishops and may not remarry in case of widowhood. Future candidates for the priesthood may not marry.

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--Individuals are to make personal professions of faith in the doctrine of the Roman Catholic Church.

--The statute or "pastoral provision" is to be developed by the NCCB, subject to the approval of the Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith. The Vatican's Congregation for the Sacraments and Divine Worship will also be asked to approve sections pertaining to liturgy.

--The Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith will keep the Vatican's Secretariat for Promoting Christian Unity and Congregation for the Oriental Churches informed of developments in their areas of concern.

The bishops' conference is currently developing a mechanism for implementing these structures, which may include the designation of a bishop or group of bishops to facilitate the new arrangement.

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