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UNITY OF FAITH IN DIVERSITY OF LITURGICAL EXPRESSION: AN ECUMENICAL APPROACH FROM A CATHOLIC PERSPECTIVE BY MEANS OF THE “ANGLICAN USE OF THE ROMAN RITE”

Hans-Jürgen Feulner

Prosper of Aquitaine’s well-known ancient Christian principle “lex orandi, lex credendi” (“the law of praying [is] the law of believing”—and vice versa) refers to the indispensable relationship between worship and belief. It has long governed the liturgical celebrations of the Church. Nevertheless, it does not require a rigid uniformity of liturgical expression for keeping the unity of faith. This essay will explore the recent incorporation of groups of former Anglicans into the Roman Catholic Church together with the preservation of their Anglican liturgical patrimony to demonstrate the legitimate diversity of liturgical expression in the Church, also in the West, as background for the movement toward unity in a diverse community of believers.

Diversity of Liturgical Expression—Western Non-Roman Rites and Liturgical Usages

In the preface to his first Book of Common Prayer (1549), Edward VI wrote: “And where heretofore, there hath been great diversitie in saying and synging in churches within this realme: some folowyng Salsbury use, some Hereford use, some the use of Banger, some of York, and some of Lincolne: Now from henceforth, all the whole realme shall have but one use.”

Until the time of the English Reformation, at least five liturgical uses or diocesan usages in the English church mirrored a widespread diversity of liturgical expression in Europe that still exists today. Diversity continued in the Catholic Church even after the Council of Trent (1545–1563) with its move toward a standardization of the liturgy of the Latin Church, the largest and most significant ritual church within the Catholic Church. It is perhaps
surprising that a variety of liturgical rites exist in the Roman Catholic Church—and not only the Roman Catholic Rite that we may expect to find everywhere in the West. The Church has always had a great variety of rites and liturgical usages—in both the Christian East and the Catholic Church. Special local liturgical forms remained permissible if they had existed for at least 200 years before the Council of Trent. Thus, in the West there were and are plenty of non-Roman rites and diocesan or monastic liturgical forms and usages: the lost Old Gallican and Celtic Rites; the current Milanese or Ambrosian Rite; the Old Spanish (or Hispano-Mozarabic) Rite; the so-called Glagolitic Use (still partially used in Croatia); the former liturgical uses of religious orders like the Premonstratensians, Cistercians, Carmelites, Dominicans, and Carthusians (the last maintained to this day); the former diocesan uses in many dioceses of Italy, Germany, and Spain (and in England until the Reformation), of which only one remains in use today—that of the archdiocese of Braga in northern Portugal.

The Apostolic Constitution “Anglicanorum Coetibus” (2009) and the Personal Ordinariates for Former Anglicans/Episcopalians

The internationally renowned German liturgist Balthasar Fischer was rather farsighted and somewhat euphoric, when, already in 1981, in connection with Article 4 of the Second Vatican Council’s Constitution on Sacred Liturgy, Sacrosanctum Concilium (SC), he mentioned the ecumenical dimension of the liturgy:

Nowhere does re-unification any longer mean—and also not in the West—the adoption of the Roman liturgy and of specifically Catholic piety. Today one can very well imagine how the magnificent liturgy celebrated by our Anglican brothers, with some minute changes, could become a “ritus legitime agnitus” (“lawfully acknowledged rite”); an English liturgical family among the liturgical families of the Catholic Church. With all the spiritual riches that have been amassed here in 400 years, she would join her wagon to the train of Catholic liturgies.

On January 15, 2011, a decree of the Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith (CDF) created the Personal Ordinariate of “Our Lady of Walsingham” for England and Wales—the first of three Personal Ordinariates. Personal Ordinariates are ecclesiastical administration units for former Anglican communities seeking to become Catholic while retaining many aspects of their Anglican liturgy and traditions. This diocese-like institution of the Roman Catholic Church, being a canonically independent local and particular church similar to an exempt Military Ordinariate, was accomplished with the agreement of the Bishops’ Conference of England and Wales in accordance with the guidelines of the Apostolic Constitution Anglicanorum Coetibus (AC)—together with its “Complementary Norms” and their “Amendment”—promulgated by Pope Benedict XVI in 2009. The same is also relevant to
the later established Personal Ordinariates of “The Chair of Saint Peter,” created in 2012 for the United States and Canada, and of “Our Lady of the Southern Cross” for Australia—the last of them to date. All three Personal Ordinariates serve former Anglicans from the Church of England, the Church in Wales, the Episcopal Church in the United States of America (ECUSA), the Anglican Church in America (ACA), the Anglican Church of Canada (ACC), the Anglican Catholic Church of Canada (ACCC), the Anglican Church of Australia, and the Anglican Catholic Church of Australia, all of which desire to return to full communion with the Catholic Church without having to give up most of their own Anglican patrimony, including their liturgical tradition.

The Apostolic Constitution Anglicanorum Coetibus, providing a special structure for groups of Anglicans entering full communion with the Catholic Church, states in its article III:

Without excluding liturgical celebrations according to the Roman Rite, the Ordinariate has the faculty to celebrate the Holy Eucharist and the other Sacraments, the Liturgy of the Hours and other liturgical celebrations according to [the] liturgical books proper to the Anglican tradition, which have been approved by the Holy See, so as to maintain the liturgical, spiritual and pastoral traditions of the Anglican Communion within the Catholic Church, as a precious gift nourishing the faith of the members of the Ordinariate and as a treasure to be shared. (emphases added)

This liturgically outstanding article—for the first time rather open-minded toward a Protestant liturgical expression—describes patrimony (“liturgical, spiritual and pastoral traditions”) as “a precious gift nourishing the faith of the members of the Ordinariate and as a treasure to be shared.” According to Steven Lopes, this “description bespeaks both an internal aspect within the Anglican communities seeking full communion with the Catholic Church (nourishing the faith) as well as an external aspect contributing to Catholic liturgical celebration (a treasure to be shared),” although the Apostolic Constitution is still rather less specific concerning what actually constitutes this patrimony.

Unity of Faith—The Personal Ordinariates and Their Anglican Use Liturgy (“divine Worship”)

Rome stipulated not to compose a new liturgical text or to devise new liturgical forms, but rather to identify the patrimony from “liturgical books proper to the Anglican tradition” (AC III) and to bring it—only as absolutely necessary—very carefully, with as little encroachment as possible and with pastoral sensitivity, into conformity with the indispensable Catholic faith—the “unity of faith.” October 2011 saw the convocation of the international commission Anglicanae Traditiones: Interdicasterial Working Group, at first organized only by the CDF, which has been responsible for preparing a liturgical order for all the Personal Ordinariates according to the requirements of AC III and in due consideration of the Book of Divine Worship, of Sacrosanctum Concilium, and of what is meant by “Anglican Patrimony.” This
liturgical form is to be finally approved and confirmed by the Congregation for Divine Worship and the Discipline of the Sacraments (CDWDS), in agreement with the CDF.

To date, the Holy See has successively approved the Liturgical Calendars, Eucharistic Lectionary, Order for Funerals, Order for the Celebration of Holy Matrimony, Order for the Celebration of Holy Baptism [for infants], Order of Holy Baptism and Confirmation for Adults and Older Children / Order of Holy Baptism for Infants [= slightly corrected version] / Order of Reception into Full Communion with the Celebration of Confirmation / Conditional Baptism / Emergency Baptism / Baptism of One in Imminent Danger of Death / Public Receiving of One who has been Privately Baptized, and Order of Holy Mass.13 Recently the Celebration of Holy Mass (Missal) was approved and will be published in fall 2015.14 Hopefully, the Daily Office (Liturgy of the Hours), the Anointing of the Sick, the Blessings, and others will follow. Adaptations to regional peculiarities, especially regarding the liturgical calendar and music, are possible.

In April 2014, the liturgical vision of Anglicanorum Coetibus was finally realized in the publication of the official liturgical book Divine Worship: Occasional Services, which contains the approved rites for baptism, marriage, and funeral for the three Personal Ordinariates.15 The richness of these liturgical texts and their conformity with Catholic faith and practice has been made available for the spiritual nourishment not only of Anglican Christians coming into full communion with the Catholic Church, but all members of the Catholic Church as everybody is allowed to join the “Anglican Use” liturgy.

These rather recent developments, however, raise a number of liturgical and also ecumenical questions: Do these Personal Ordinariates create new instances of uniate churches? Are we thus dealing with a form of proselytism, which could severely derogate ecumenical dialogue not only with Anglicans? Furthermore, does the liturgy of the Ordinariates signal the recognition or perhaps even the creation of a new rite within the Roman Catholic Church and thus a dissolution of the unity of the liturgy? Or is liturgical provision for the Ordinariates merely a case of variations and adaptations of the Roman Rite with regard to the special spiritual-liturgical and cultural patrimony of a relatively large and formerly Protestant community in various countries, while maintaining the unity of the liturgy and the Roman Rite?

Ecumenical Considerations

In response to many changes in the Anglican Communion in the late twentieth century (in part over the ordination of women, liturgical revisions, etc.), the Roman Catholic Church in 2009 finally offered groups of Anglicans the option to enter into full communion with the Catholic Church—a movement and complex process that had already started in the 1980s. The Anglican Communion’s displeasure with the supposed “hostile acquisition” of its faithful by the Catholic Church was apparent to observers. A BBC News headline on October 21, 2009, read, “Rome Goes Fishing in Anglican Pond.”16 Many Anglicans have accused Rome of engaging in an ecumenism of return.
Of course, it has to be said that Anglicanorum Coetibus must not be the expression of such an ecumenism of return, but rather a canonical possibility of non-Catholic groups joining the Catholic Church of their own free desire while retaining some of their own legitimate traditions formed over the centuries. Any kind of proselytism or active enticement of members of other Christian denominations is clearly to be rejected. Primarily there should be ethical, doctrinal, and liturgical attraction or affection toward the Catholic Church, and not only negative differentiations and disagreements with one’s own church or ecclesial community. The Catholic Church must not go fishing for members of other communities, but should be allowed to answer a knock at her door with pastoral sensitivity—which may unfortunately cause ecumenical discords. Kurt Cardinal Koch, president of the Pontifical Council for Promoting Christian Unity, said in an interview on October 24, 2012:

Anglicanorum Coetibus was actually not an initiative of Rome but came from the Anglican church. The Holy Father then looked for a solution and in my opinion he found a very wide solution, in which the ecclesiastical and liturgical traditions of the Anglicans have largely been taken into account.17

One has to emphatically challenge the opinion that the Personal Ordinariates revive methods of uniatism in the spirit of Pius’ XI 1928 encyclical, “On Religious Unity,” that said unity would be achieved only with Christians becoming Roman Catholic, rather than the differentiated understanding of the Second Vatican Council in 1964 with the distinction between full and incomplete communion with the Catholic Church.18 It is, rather, for the first time the expression of the Vatican II perspective of recognizing the “liturgical, spiritual and pastoral traditions” of churches of Protestant heritage “within the Catholic Church, as a precious gift nourishing the faith … and as a treasure to be shared” (see AC III).19

Theological consensus must be sought to consider what is really meant by oikumene with regard to its content, because a great diversity of interpretation exists about the “Common understanding and vision of the W[orld] C[ouncil of] C[hurches].”20 Divergent perceptions of oikumene exist within Christianity. The Catholic Church has given eloquent expression to a fundamental principle for the ecumenical movement: the unity of faith that is at the heart of the communion of the church does not require a rigid uniformity of expression.

Summarizing Remarks and Future Prospects

The Second Vatican Council, in its Constitution on Sacred Liturgy, Sacrosanctum Concilium, affirms, in faithful obedience to tradition, that the Church holds all lawfully acknowledged rites to be of equal right and dignity and wishes to preserve them in the future and foster them in every way (SC 4).21 Article 39 of Sacrosanctum Concilium describes the usual process for the preparation of liturgical books. However, in SC 37 the council declared that the Church does not wish to make rigid uniformity obligatory, even in worship, as long as issues of faith and of the general good are not affected. It is inappropriate to identify Catholic liturgy nowadays only and exclusively
with the liturgy of the Roman Rite. The reasonable efforts of the Council of Trent to halt liturgical abuses led to a standardization of Catholic liturgy, while still allowing for several exceptions that have unfortunately all but disappeared. Article 4 of the Constitution on the Sacred Liturgy basically recognizes the lawfulness of legitimate variety in the different liturgical families and liturgical rites—especially in the East, but also in the West.

Unity does not require rigid uniformity, and the catholicity of the church admits diverse forms of expression, drawing from different cultures and traditions (see Decree on Ecumenism of Vatican Council II, no. 4 and no. 13). Thus, a broader understanding of inculturation in the sense of *aptatio ad diversos coetus* (adaptation to different groups) according to *Sacrosanctum Concilium* justifies an Anglican Use that is informed by specific cultural traditions, yet remains an integral part of the Roman Rite.

It remains to be seen within the next years, as the various Personal Ordinariates develop in England and Wales, the United States, and Australia, with Canada to follow, how an Anglican Use of the Roman Rite can or should establish itself as an additional Anglican liturgical form or use within the framework of the Roman Rite. In this way, the adaptation of the liturgical books to the needs of the Anglican groups (see SC 37) may be achieved, retaining the Anglican Patrimony as intended by *Anglicanorum Coetibus* (article III), while the Roman Rite is essentially maintained (see SC 38). This certainly has been a particular challenge for the international commission, Anglicanae Traditiones, established by the CDF in collaboration with the CDWDS in 2011, for the purpose of preparing a liturgical ordo for the Personal Ordinariates of the former Anglicans. Careful attention, thus, had to be paid when developing an Anglican Use liturgy so that “any new [liturgical] forms adopted should in some way grow organically from forms already existing” (SC 23). In due course, this liturgical ordo has successively been approved and confirmed by the Holy See.

When asked in an interview in Austria in 2012 how the Catholic Church was being affected by the conversion of many Anglicans, Kurt Cardinal Koch answered:

> If during a dialog it is only one side that changes, then there has been no dialog. By getting to know others, we discover our own Church anew. In that sense the *oikumene* is enriching. And that is what is so special about Pope Benedict’s offer to the Anglicans that they maintain their own liturgical traditions. This is a positive sign for the future that the Pope values diversity, not standardization.²⁴

From these words of the cardinal responsible for ecumenical relations, one can surmise that ecumenical talks have a capacity for enrichment in two ways. Alongside shared understanding, there can also be the enriching exchange of liturgical traditions. Thus, unity of liturgy does not mean rigid uniformity, but allows also for a diversity of liturgical forms of expression within the Roman Rite. This includes Western non-Roman rites and liturgical usages, for example, Anglican Use and the Extraordinary Form of the Roman Rite, as well as all lawfully recognized rites, and diocesan and monastic usages, of which unfortunately only a few remain. This does not, however,
mean a division into new liturgical rites or families, but could certainly be seen as enrichment, even if now and then there arise significant problems that appear to be irresolvable. In the words of Pope Paul VI: “The Savior wanted one single Church, but she must at the same time be Catholic: this means requiring quality and legitimacy, and open to uncountable possible [liturgical] forms of expression.”

A rigid uniformity would be contrary to the Apostolic Constitution’s affirmation of the “precious gift” of the Anglican liturgical tradition reclaimed for Catholic worship in the context of unity in diversity. The Anglican tradition—with its roots in the distinctive sacral dialect of the Books of Common Prayer, with a wide diffusion throughout the English-speaking world, and with a rich heritage of music, art, and architecture, not to mention a particular ethos of parish life—surely constitutes an enriching cultural patrimony worthy of inculturation. It is uniquely susceptible to repatriation to the Catholic Church under the terms of Anglicanorum Coetibus. The incorporation of Anglican liturgical patrimony in the Catholic Church, an act historic in itself, invests our liturgical expression with the sure authority of that faith, and redounds to the glory of God, the source of communion and focus of our sacramental worship.

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Notes

2. The designation Latin refers here to the rite or group of rites and liturgical forms and ordinances of which the Roman Rite is the most dominant; and to the traditional liturgical language that has been used within this particular church, today mostly replaced by the vernacular.
3. See the papal bulls “Quod a nobis” (July 9, 1568) and “Quo primum” (July 14, 1570) of Pope Pius V included in the Breviarium Romanum 1568 and in the Missale Romanum 1570.
4. See Archdale A. King, Liturgies of the Religious Orders, 2nd ed. (London and New York: Longmans, Green, 1956); Liturgies of the Primatial Sees (London: Longmans, Green, 1957); Liturgies of the Past (London: Longmans, Green, 1959); Stephen Smržík, The Glagolitic or Roman-Slavonic Liturgy, Series Cyrillomethodiana, no. 2 (Cleveland, OH: Slovak Institute, 1959); Denys Buenner, L’ancienne liturgie romaine: Le rite Lyonnais (Lyon: Vitte, 1934; repr., Farnborough: Gregg, 1969). For the Braga Use, see Missale Bracarense (Rome: Typis Polyclottis Vaticanis, 1924); Missal Bracarense. Ordinario da Missa


5. Balthasar Fischer, “Liturgie oder Liturgien?” Trierer Theologische Zeitschrift 90 (1981): 273–274 [my translation from German; emphasis added and my explanation of the Latin expression]. Here the term “liturgical families” probably means “rites.” For SC 4, see The Basic Sixteen Documents Vatican Council II: Constitutions, Decrees, Declarations, ed. Austin Flannery (Northport, NY: Costello, 1996), 118: “Finally, in faithful obedience to tradition, the sacred council declares that the church holds all lawfully recognized rites to be of equal legal force and dignity; that it wishes to preserve them in the future and to foster them in every way.”


1. On “liturgical families” see Balthasar Fischer, “Liturgie oder Liturgien?” Trierer Theologische Zeitschrift 90 (1981): 273–274 [my translation from German; emphasis added and my explanation of the Latin expression]. Here the term “liturgical families” probably means “rites.” For SC 4, see The Basic Sixteen Documents Vatican Council II: Constitutions, Decrees, Declarations, ed. Austin Flannery (Northport, NY: Costello, 1996), 118: “Finally, in faithful obedience to tradition, the sacred council declares that the church holds all lawfully recognized rites to be of equal legal force and dignity; that it wishes to preserve them in the future and to foster them in every way.”


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1. The Apostolic Constitution refers indirectly to, for example, the Book of Divine Worship (1983/2003), the classic Prayer Book heritage (represented by England 1549, 1662, and 1927/1928; United States, 1928 and 1979; Scotland, 1929; South Africa, 1954; and Canada, 1962), the English Missal (1958, repr. 2001), the Anglican Missal (1921, 1961), and the American Missal (1951, repr. 2010), Common


13. The liturgical calendar for the Personal Ordinariate in England and Wales has already been approved and confirmed by the CDWDS (Feb 15, 2012; Prot.N. 76/12/L), for the United States (February 15, 2012; Prot.N. 75/12/L), and Australia (April 30, 2013; Prot.N. 280/13/L). Roman permission has also been granted for the Mass-Lectionary for the Personal Ordinariates. The Revised Standard Version Three-Year Lectionary, 2nd Catholic ed., 2 vols. (San Francisco: Ignatius Press, 2006), was originally approved for use by the Episcopal Conference of the Antilles, for the United States in 2012 by the CDWDS (Prot.N. 77/12/L), for England and Wales in 2012 (Prot.N. 78/12/L), and finally for Australia in 2013 (Prot.N. 280/13/L).


19. Time will tell how the Personal Ordinariates will address the Lutheran-Catholic issue of full communion.


21. For SC 4, see The Basic Sixteen Documents Vatican Council II, 118 (see n. 5).


25. Pope Paul VI, talk, August 18, 1963, to the Italo-Byzantine Abbey of Grottaferrata. Original Italian text in Insegnamenti di Paolo VI, vol. 1 (Rome, 1963), 554; quoted according to the German translation by Fischer, n. 46, 275 (see n. 5).

26. See also Pope Francis, October 31, 2014, in Rome: “Unity does not imply uniformity; it does not necessarily mean doing everything together or thinking in the same way. Nor does it signify a loss of
identity. Unity in diversity is actually the opposite: it involves the joyful recognition and acceptance of the various gifts which the Holy Spirit gives to each one and the placing of these gifts at the service of all members of the Church.” See http://www.news.va/en/news/pope-seek-the-unity-which-is-the-work-of-the-holy.

27. Lopes, “Liturgical Book.” I am very grateful for the corrections of my English text by Dr. Daniel Galadza (Vienna).