

# Primate clarifies aspects of several reports on TAC-Holy See initiative

SINCE the publication of a report on the Traditional Anglican Communion and unity in the semi-official Vatican publication "*Civiltà Cattolica*" (in Italian in October last year, in English in December) there has been speculation about precisely what structure might be considered appropriate for the Traditional Anglican Communion. This speculation reached new heights in early February with a major feature in the *Catholic Record* (the Catholic weekly paper from Perth, Australia.)

In an interview with Archbishop Hepworth, His Grace agreed to clarify some aspects of these reports for the *Messenger Journal* as follows:

It is possible for a church to come into union with the Bishop of Rome, in which case it is known usually as "a ritual church *sui iuris*" - that is a church with its own rite and canonical regulation. There are some twenty-eight of these churches, and they appoint their own bishops by synodical processes, and seek confirmation of the election from the Bishop of Rome.

Much of the Concordat of the Traditional Anglican Communion was designed to mirror the processes of a ritual church, a point noted by some Vatican officials. We have not anticipated that our present application would lead to this sort of structure - most of these rites are descended from ancient churches that have never been part of the Roman or Western rite. Of modern origin, however, are the Personal Prelatures and Apostolic Administrations that are essentially vehicles for specific groups to coalesce around their own episcopate for a particular pastoral reason.

We have taken the advice of those with whom we have been meeting, and not sought any particular structure. We understand that no existing canonical structure might prove appropriate. Since the idea of a Personal Prelature is itself a modern creation, dating only to the late Pope, from a structural point of view the Holy See is open to new forms of community within the Church.

We have simply asked, in the words of our letter, to "seek a communal and ecclesial way of being Anglican Catholics in communion with the Holy See, at once treasuring the full expression of catholic faith and treasuring our tradition within which we have come to this moment."

We have not sought to design something for ourselves. We have asked for the guidance of the Holy See, given the reality of our position and the mind of our episcopate.

We remain in quiet prayer, while growing our Communion in key parts of the world. We agreed, rightly, to allow the Holy See the opportunity to respond to the difficult problems that our letter undoubtedly caused. When there is a reply, I am committed to presenting it to a full meeting of our College of Bishops, and to formal meetings of each of the general synods of our churches that voted to support this initiative."

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*English readers may note that the speculation also featured in the Catholic Herald. The Vatican has in unofficial reply simply reaffirmed what was already public in the July 2008 letter. It may be thought to have committed itself to an answer, therefore, but not to any particular content of that answer or to any deadline.*