

Address by Bishop Mercer to our Canadian brethren at their recent Synod

"I am a Jew." So says St. Paul. A lynch mob is about to do him in. A Roman centurion to the rescue. Paul says to him, "I am a Jew." A moment or two later, the centurion allows St. Paul to speak to the mob. He repeats, "I am a Jew." This well-known text is in Acts chapters 21 and 22.

Life is full of opposites. Tall, short. Fat, thin. Day, night. It was self-evident to Paul's contemporaries that there was another pair of opposites: Jew, Christian. Either you were one, or you were the other. But Paul does not accept this. He does not say, "I used to be a Jew until I became a Christian." Paul does not say, "Because I was baptized into Jesus, because I believe in Jesus, I am therefore no longer a Jew." For Paul, it's not a case of either/or. It's a case of both/and. Paul writes to Rome, "I am (not *I was*) an Israelite of the seed of Abraham of the tribe of Benjamin." (Romans 11:1) "What advantage then hath the Jew? or what profit is there of circumcision?" (Romans 3:1) Much in every way. Jews were entrusted with the message of God.

To us and to our contemporaries, to Anglicans and to Roman Catholics, above all to journalists and newspapermen, it is self-evident that there is another pair of opposites: Anglican, Roman Catholic. Either you are one, or you are the other. In the fall of 2007, all the bishops and vicars general of the Traditional Anglican Communion unanimously approached the current Bishop of Rome. In effect we asked him, "Must it be either/or? Can it be both/and?" To our amazement, bewilderment and confusion, the Bishop of Rome answered, "Yes, you can be both Anglican and Catholic." The Bishop of Fulham in the Church of England, Chairman of Forward in Faith International, those in England, America and Australia who remained on in the Canterbury Communion to fight from within, explained to his own constituents, "The Pope is offering us not to become Roman Catholics but to become Anglicans in communion with Rome."

A headline in *The Catholic Herald*, a weekly Roman Catholic paper in England, read like this: "Pope calls Anglican bluff." It seemed to me that the paper was alluding to the prayer of St. Augustine, "Lord, make me chaste but not yet." Anglicans have long been praying for Christian unity. Anglican monks and nuns have been twinned, so to speak, with Roman Catholic monks and nuns in Europe. My own Community of the Resurrection, for example, is twinned with Benedictine men at Trier in Germany. Since the 1960s, Anglican and Roman Catholic bishops and theologians have been in careful and protracted dialogue about unity. They have published several agreed statements about doctrine. Earlier, in the 1920s, two scholars in my Community, Bishops Frere and Gore, were in such talks in Belgium. There is only one thing worse than not getting what you want, and that is getting what you want. We have wanted unity; so we claimed. But will our prayer turn out to have meant, "Lord give us unity, but not yet?" Has the Pope called our Anglican bluff?

Improbable as it will seem to you, I have, since my teens, been praying for this very thing, even though I'd never heard the word Ordinariate, and was hazy about the word Uniate. It seems a hopeless prayer to offer up. I loved the Anglican Church. I never wanted to cease being Anglican. But then I loved the Roman Catholic Church also. Such exemplars, saints and teachers in the past, such holy men and women, such contemporaneous and godly missionaries and martyrs in my own day in Zimbabwe. It seemed so silly in our circumstances for us to be opponents and competitors. Might it be possible to belong to both simultaneously? What an absurd dream it seemed at the time. How could God possibly grant my request? O ye of little faith! But when in London, for example, I'd go to Westminster Cathedral, kneel by the tomb of a Roman Catholic priest hanged, drawn and quartered by Anglicans in the reign of Elizabeth the First and ask that somehow we might be one, as once we were. In all sorts of places, I'd repeat my request, in the Church of the Holy Sepulchre in Jerusalem, by St. Peter's tomb in Rome, by St. Paul's tomb in Rome, in Canterbury Cathedral, in the Anglican Shrine of Walsingham, in my former cathedral in Bulawayo while Pope John Paul II was preaching at Prayer Book Evensong, or during unity talks which Anglicans and Roman Catholics were holding in Zimbabwe in the 1980s after John Paul II had been to pray with Archbishop Runcie in Canterbury Cathedral.

And now towards the end of my life and ministry, now during the reign of Elizabeth the Second, after a break of some 450 years, it will be possible to be both Anglican and in communion with Rome. No wonder I have difficulty in getting my head around this fact! No wonder I have difficulty in finding the exact words to describe this totally new prospect. Can this really be happening? Shall I live to see it? Shall I participate in it?

During the 450 years we have been alienated from Rome, the Holy Spirit has showered blessings upon us. I lay claim and shall continue to lay claim to them all. These godly people and their talents make me who I am. I do not, I shall never, repudiate them. Time would fail me to tell of my Church of Ireland godfather, the principal at my theological college in South Africa, the bishop who ordained me in Zimbabwe. Brethren in the Community of the Resurrection like Gerard Beaumont, Gabriel Sanford, Matthew Trelawney-Ross. Nuns like Sister Benedicta, Sister Eva, Mother Cecile. Apologists like C.S. Lewis, Dorothy L. Sayers, Charles Williams. Poets like John Donne, George Herbert, T.S. Eliot. Hymn writers like John Mason Neale, Charles Wesley, Bishop Ken. Missionaries like Monica Boatwright, Dorothy Maund, Arthur Shearly Cripps. Martyrs like Bernard Mizeki, Manche Masemola, the martyrs of Papua New Guinea. Pioneers like Robert and Sophie Gray, Wyndham Knight Bruce, Billy Gaul. Confessors like Fr. Benson, Fr. Palmer, Bishop de Catanzaro. Preachers like Austin Farrer, Jonathan Graham, John Wesley. Parish priests like Father Dolling, Father Lowder, Dr. Wirgman. Scholars like Dr. Pusey, Dr. Mascall, the brothers Henry and Owen Chadwick. The Book of Common Prayer, the King James Bible, the English Hymnal, Hymns Ancient & Modern. Composers and choirmasters Henry Purcell, Orlando Gibbons, Charles Villiers Stanford. Artists, architects and designers, Bodley, Pearson, Sir Ninian Comper, Martin Travers. Eccentric and lovable characters like Fr. Hope Patten, Fr. Wason, Sir John Betjeman. The writers Alan Paton, Thomas Traherne, Kenneth Kirk. Heroes and heroines of the Caroline Divines, of the Evangelical Revival, of the Oxford Movement, of missionary expansion round the world, of the restoration of the religious life, of works of mercy and of social reform, Florence Nightingale, Priscilla Lydia Sellon, Lord Shaftesbury, William Wilberforce, Prime Minister Gladstone. I note with pleasure that in some cases where Rome has accepted former Anglicans as full and uncompromising submissions, the submitters received their formation in Bible, doctrine, liturgy and faith from the Anglican Church: John Henry Newman, G.K. Chesterton, Gerard Manley Hopkins, Ronald Knox, John Bradburne.

To the end of his life St. Paul said, "I am a Jew." He meant of course a completed Jew, a fulfilled Jew, a Jew as he is meant to be, that's to say, a Jew in Christ, but a Jew all the same. I hope to be able to say, "I am an Anglican, a completed Anglican, a fulfilled Anglican, an Anglican in full and visible communion with the universal primate of the universal church, but an Anglican all the same."

Fr. Aidan Nichols, an ex-Anglican now a Dominican theologian, has written: "Anglo-Catholics are beyond a doubt as to doctrine, worship and devotion a displaced part of Catholic Christendom. And it is as such a part that I shall be now quoting from some of their lay spokesmen." The time has come for us to stop being displaced persons.

The Archbishop of Canterbury's coat of arms features a vestment called a pallium. It is white, Y-shaped, marked with little black crosses. It hangs over other vestments. It looks rather like a yoke. It is given by the Pope to the archbishops of ancient and important dioceses, as a mark of the close link between him and them. In 597, Pope Gregory sent St. Augustine to be Archbishop of Canterbury. Augustine's successors wore the pallium until the breach with Rome. It is time for the pallium to come off the coat of arms and to be worn over the Archbishop's shoulders once more. But if this can not yet be because of Canterbury's embrace of a liberal agenda, let us at least return to the rock from which Canterbury is hewn. As the ancient Celtic Church of Britain at the Synod of Whitby in 664 entered into full and visible unity with Rome, let us do the same.

The Pope's Apostolic Constitution is not addressed exclusively to us in the Traditional Anglican Communion. Some who are still in the Canterbury Communion and who belong to groups like the Prayer Book Society, Forward in Faith, the Church Union, the Federation of Catholic Priests, the Society of the Sacred Cross, the Society for the Maintenance of the Faith, the Guild of All Souls, the Confraternity of the Blessed Sacrament, the United Society for the Propagation of the Gospel, the Society of Mary, and religious of the Orthodox tradition, as well as those who belong to no organizations or guilds in a particular way, may want to respond to the Pope. In Canada and in England, once hears rumours or declarations of a parish here, of a clergyman there. Rumours may be unfounded. Those who belong to other Continuing Anglican jurisdictions, such as those which multiply in the USA, may want to respond to the Pope. If so, we shall be together with all these in the future Ordinariates. Initially, until growing numbers alter things, there will be one Ordinariate in each country. Those who gave up being Anglican in order to submit to Rome, may be interested in returning to their Anglican roots by joining us in the Ordinariate.

In the States, there has already been a pilot scheme, so to speak, called the Anglican Use. Episcopalians who went over with their rector, perhaps with their property and monies, were permitted to retain their Prayer Book tradition and hymnody, their way of worshipping and of organizing their parish life. One or two of these parishes grew with astonishing speed. One hears of one which began with twelve members, which now has twelve hundred members, which makes a handsome contribution to the Roman Catholic diocese, which has founded a school for children, from beginners to school leavers, complete with football team. It is not just disgruntled Episcopalians whom these parishes attracted. Parishes of the Anglican Use have won people from unbelief. Each year the Anglican Use hold a conference. This year, they invited Archbishops Hepworth and Falk, Bishops Moyer and Reid, to observe. Our TAC observers got a standing ovation. It may be that the seven or so parishes of the Anglican Use will join us in the Ordinariate. This Anglican Use has succeeded by showing stability and growth, by not blogging frenziedly in the manner of so many other Anglicans, and has won the trust of the Roman Catholic authorities.

I myself claim no expertise in holy matrimony, but I suspect that however much he and she may have been in love, that when it comes to settling down to live happily ever after, they discover there is no such thing as the perfect man or woman. He will leave his screw drivers and saws all over the living room; she will hang up her undies to dry in the bathroom. There is no reason to suppose that Roman Catholics will find us to be perfect, and vice versa. Adjustments may be as necessary in this union as in any other. We are not expected to approve or enjoy everything we find in Roman Catholicism. The Pope himself does not approve or enjoy everything in his own Church. He has likened some Roman Catholic celebrations of the Eucharist as more akin to a tea party than to a solemn proclamation of the Lord's death until the Lord comes again. (1 Cor. 11:26)

Some of the problems are likely to be with cultural practices rather than with official Roman Catholic doctrine. Cardinal Levada has said, "People imagine our Church to be monolithic but in fact it's a broad tent." A Roman Catholic priest recently said to me, "Until I went to seminary in Rome, I was a Little Englander. In Rome I discovered how many different cultures jostle together in one Church." A black man in Africa enquiring into Christianity and attending the funeral of a white man is likely to be repelled. "I am scandalized by Christians. Why, the whole service lasted no more than twenty minutes. Coffin in, coffin out. Nobody cried. No speeches. No party afterwards." A white man in Africa, enquiring into Christianity and attending the funeral of a black man is likely to be repelled. "I am scandalized by Christians. Five long hours. Fifty hymns. Twenty speeches. Everybody pretending to grieve, howling away. A party which lasted six hours." Each man is repelled, not by the Christian faith, but by the respective white and black cultures. An Eskimo with a fear of elephants enquiring into Christianity, and attending a parish communion in India, might be repelled. "I am scandalized by Christians. Two altar boys carrying lighted candles, followed by a decorated elephant, followed by Archbishop Hepworth in an ox cart drawn by clergymen in white." The Eskimo is repelled, not by the Christian faith, but by Indian culture.

As in the Canterbury Communion, so too in the Roman. If you can't get to one of our Prayer Book Services in one of our Ordinariate Parishes, and therefore seek out the hospitality and charity of a Roman parish, you may have to shop around. You may not care for a nun in jeans and blue hair singing "Michael Row the Boat Ashore." You may need to look for a Westminster Cathedral or Brompton Oratory for Palestrina or a Benedictine Abbey for plainsong.

Cardinal Levada has written, "Insofar as Anglican traditions express in a distinctive way the faith which we hold in common, the Anglican traditions are a gift to be shared in the wider Church. The unity of the Church does not require a uniformity that ignores cultural diversity. Our communion is strengthened by legitimate diversity, and so we are happy that these Anglicans bring with them their particular contributions." Many people have commented on or interpreted the Apostolic Constitution. One or two have been authorized to do so officially and with authority. One is Cardinal Levada himself whose address at Queen's University, Kingston, has been widely distributed. The other is the head of a university in Rome. This Father Ghirlanda concludes his comments by writing: "A flexible structures has been instituted. The Constitution and the Norms may be adapted in Decrees for each individual ordinariate in the light of particular local situations. As the Holy Spirit has guided the preparation of the Constitution, so may He assist in its application." In other words, there is a hint here about cultures, and there is a hint here that we may perhaps learn from possible mistakes and remedy them. Delicate negotiations are not free-for-all. It was not possible for all of you to meet in Rome members of the Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith. Those who have met them, know them to be our courteous, helpful and trustworthy friends, as you can see when you read the Cardinal's address in Kingston.

Those of us in established parishes may be satisfied with what we have. I'm all right, Jack. But we have to think of the ones and twos in distant places who seldom can get to Communion. We have to think about when we travel. There are very few traditional Anglican communities round the world. The Apostolic Constitution brings us into communion with millions and millions in many countries. Roman Catholic worship may not be our first preference, but Holy Communion is Holy Communion, Unction is Unction, Absolution is Absolution. Priests and people in all sorts of places may come to our aid in all sorts of practical ways. We must be realistic about the increasing hostility to Christians from secular authority. We must be realistic about the mounting onslaught from Islam. United we stand, divided we fall. "If a man prevail against him that is alone, two shall withstand him; and a threefold cord is not quickly broken." (Ecclesiastes 4:12)

But the pressure towards unity is motivated by more than such practical and realistic considerations. The Pope has written, "Many elements of sanctification and truth are found outside the visible confines of the Roman Catholic Church. Since these gifts of sanctification and truth belong to the Church of Christ, they are forces impelling towards catholic unity."

Our Lord prayed and prays for unity. We pray for unity. The Pope claims, "The Holy Spirit has moved groups of Anglicans to petition repeatedly and insistently to be received into full communion with the Catholic Church." I, for one, say *Amen* to the Pope's claim.

I am Anglican and Anglican I remain. But gloriously, surprisingly, unexpectedly in answer to prayer, I shall become an Anglican in full and visible communion with the universal primate of the universal church, and will the millions and millions who are also in communion with them.

To God be thanks!

+Robert Mercer, CR