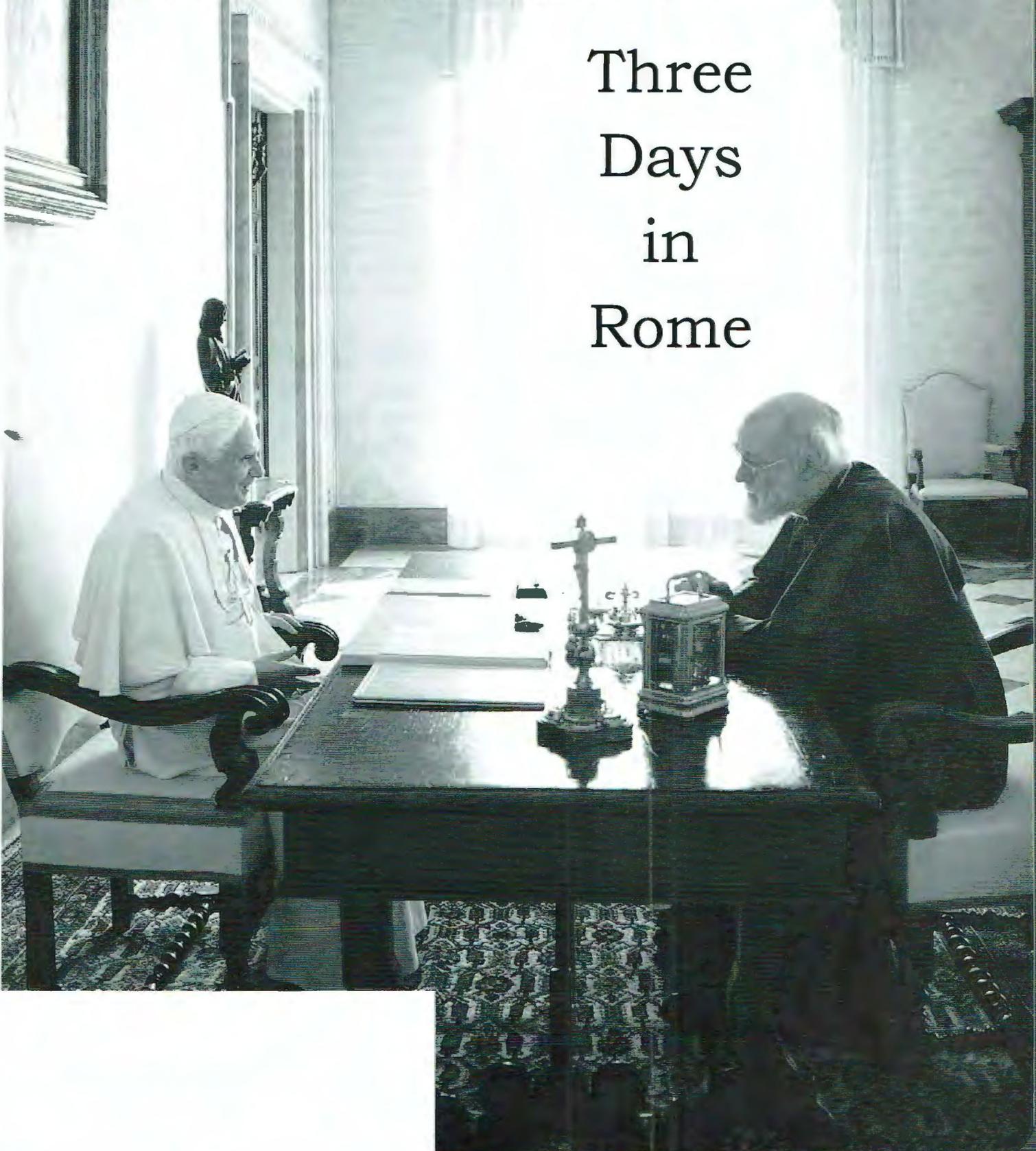


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Human Identity: Speculation or Revelation?

Hope for Christian Civilization

The Rt Rev'd C. FitzSimons Allison, the Very Rev'd William N. McKeachie, and the Rev'd Dr. R. William Dickson are pleased to announce the theme and dates for the 2010 Annual *Mere Anglicanism* Conference: *Human Identity: Gender, Marriage, and Sexuality – Speculation or Revelation?* to be held at St. Philip's Church, Charleston, South Carolina, from Thursday, January 21 through Saturday, January 23. The conference responds to the prophetic challenge issued by Bishop Mark Lawrence of South Carolina following this past summer's General Convention of the Episcopal Church, at which time he said:

Why are we losing this whole issue of human sexuality – both as a culture and as a church? We are approaching this whole issue as if it is in a vacuum, rather than in the whole context of begin to deal with our own compromises we will world and to those who press its agenda. ... We don't us as sexual beings, and then begin to answer that take a few verses out of the Bible and put those forward it says that God has made us male and and mother and be joined with his wife and the two the whole thing concludes with the "marriage" of Christ passages of the Bible, we're talking about the profound thrust of all of human history which began with Adam and Eve, male and female, and concludes with Jesus and the Bride at the Marriage Supper of the Lamb.



human sexuality. And I think that until we, as a Church, always come across as somewhat hypocritical to the do much thinking about the purpose for which God made question philosophically and biblically. Sometimes we forward and forget that from the Book of Genesis female in God's own image, a man shall leave his father become one, all the way to the Book of Revelation when and His Church! We're not just talking about seven

These are profound things we are dealing with and we need to put this whole controversy within that context.

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"A Vision for Being, Belonging, and Behaving in the Anglican Communion"

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"The Future of Anglican Christianity in North America"

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will sign copies of his new book
"Trust in an Age of Arrogance"

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this week | December 20, 2009



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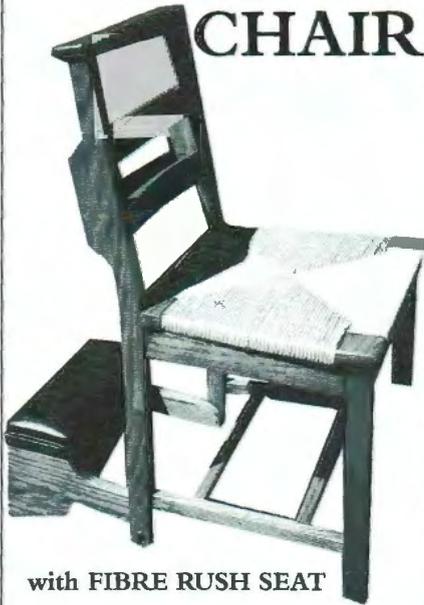
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news

Bishop MacDonald: 'Catholicity at Stake'

The Rt. Rev. Mark MacDonald has questioned Presiding Bishop Katharine Jefferts Schori's assertion that he must renounce his orders as a bishop of the Episcopal Church because of his ministry in Canada.

The former Bishop of Alaska and Assistant Bishop of Navajoland now serves as the Anglican Church of Canada's National Indigenous Bishop.

Bishop MacDonald told *The Living Church* he was "shocked and surprised" by the Presiding Bishop's remarks on his ministry, adding that he has "written to her asking for clarification."

"I am on loan to the Anglican Church of Canada under the PB's supervision. I have an unofficial position, with no set authority or jurisdiction," he said.

"I was in conversation" with the Presiding Bishop "well before I took the position" in Canada, Bishop MacDonald said. "I had never heard at all that this would be seen as a *de facto* renunciation of my orders."

Through her press officer, Neva Rae Fox, the Presiding Bishop has declined to answer questions about the orders of Bishop MacDonald and other bishops serving outside the Episcopal Church. On Oct 22, however, she sent an email message to the House of Bishops regarding the Rt. Rev. Keith L. Ackerman, SSC.

In that letter, she wrote that as Bishop MacDonald's ministry in Canada becomes permanent, "his loyalty will have to be to the Anglican Church of Canada, rather than The Episcopal Church, and a recognition of his renunciation of orders in this Church will be necessary."

Bishop MacDonald sees no such necessity. The Rt. Rev. Edward Leidel, retired Bishop of Eastern Michi-

gan, "is more official than I am," and is a congregational coach in the Diocese of Huron, Bishop MacDonald said, noting too that the Rt. Rev. Walter Jones, the former Bishop of South Dakota, became Bishop of Rupert's Land from 1983 to 1993. Neither bishop had to renounce his orders.

"I would like to see clarification from the PB on this issue," he said. "There has to be a better way. I would like to see our canons embody the understanding of the catholicity of the church."

The "indelibility of orders is not the issue," Bishop MacDonald said. The "Christological doctrine of the catholicity of the church is at stake."

(The Rev.) George Conger



Bishop MacDonald

**Massachusetts Bishops
Approve Blessings
for Same-Sex Marriage**

Clergy in the Episcopal Diocese of Massachusetts may now celebrate same-sex marriage ceremonies without restriction, including the practice of signing marriage certificates.

The Rt. Rev. M. Thomas Shaw, SSJE, announced the new policy, effective on the first Sunday of Advent, in a letter dated Nov. 29. Bishop Shaw cited the language of General Convention Resolution C056, which says that bishops, "particularly those in dioceses within civil jurisdictions where same-gender marriage, civil unions, or domestic partnerships are legal, may provide generous pastoral response" to church members.

Bishop Shaw included his two suffragan bishops, the Rt. Rev. Roy F. "Bud" Cederholm and the Rt. Rev. Gayle E. Harris, in the letter's language.

Bishop Shaw wrote that clergy may not use The Book of Common Prayer's marriage services to cele-

brate weddings for same-sex couples. Instead, the three bishops "ask that our priests seek out liturgical resources being developed and collected around the church."

After the announcement, Bishop Shaw told *The Boston Globe*, "It's time for us to offer to gay and lesbian people the same sacrament of fidelity that we offer to the heterosexual world."

Chicago Diocese Welcomes Missions, Chides Scouts

The Episcopal Diocese of Chicago has welcomed three new missions with a collective membership of more than 800 people.

The diocese welcomed First Asian Church, Bloomingdale; Our Lady of Guadalupe, Chicago; and Sagrada Familia-Holy Family, Lake Villa, during its annual convention Nov. 20-21 in the western Chicago suburb of Lombard.

Convention delegates voted to:

- Commended the Boy Scouts of America on its centennial (in February 2010), and urged the organization to "allow membership to youth and adult leaders irrespective of their sexual orientation, with all due sensitivity toward persons of nontraditional gender identity and expression."

- Rejected the tithe as the minimum standard of giving for Episcopalians. General Convention affirmed tithing in 1982 and reaffirmed it in 2009.

Sudanese Bishop Calls for Independent State

Establishing an independent state in the southern portion of Sudan would help relieve persecution of Christians, said Bishop John Zawo of the Diocese of Ezo during a visit to St. Stephen's Episcopal Church, Providence, R.I., on Nov. 17.

"We should not continue to be

second-class citizens in our own country," the 40-year-old bishop told his audience, which included students from Brown University, the Episcopal Campus Ministry group, Sudan scholars from the Naval War College outside Newport, and St. Stephen's parishioners.

Ezo is an area of continuing political conflict, on the border of the Central African Republic and the Democratic Republic of the Congo. It has endured conflict since 1983, with almost 2 million people killed and over 4 million displaced from their homes. For the past 26 years, children there have had no basic health care or educational opportunities. Many Christian leaders have been killed during this time, and the Muslim government in Khartoum does nothing to stop the deprivation and bloodshed despite the 2005 Comprehensive Peace Accord.

For the past several years, Ugandan guerillas from the Lord's Resistance Army have inflicted steady violence on the people of Ezo, forcing children into becoming soldiers and young girls into sex trafficking.

Bishop Zawo said he encourages his people to "focus their attention on God in the midst of misery and chaos."

Tom Bair, husband of the Rt. Rev. Geralyn Wolf, Bishop of Rhode Island, introduced Bishop Zawo. The Diocese of Rhode Island has a companion relationship with the Diocese of Ezo, which Mr. Bair said is approximately the same size.

In December 2008, Mr. Bair and Bishop Wolf traveled to southern Sudan to spend Christmas with Bishop Zawo and the people of Ezo. They witnessed firsthand the poverty and hardship of the area,

(Continued on page 15)



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Mr. Ian Boxall: Mr. Boxall is Senior New Testament lecturer at St. Stephen's House and a member of the theology faculty at Oxford University.

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L'Osservatore Romano-Servizio Fotografico photo

Rowan in Rome

‘Christian Friendships Are Immensely Valuable’

By Gerard O’Connell

The British media had billed the Archbishop of Canterbury’s Nov. 21 meeting with Pope Benedict XVI as a showdown, but the reality was quite different and resulted in a firm reaffirmation and consolidation of the official dialogue between the Roman Catholic Church and the Anglican Communion.

“I was very happy with the outcome of the meeting; it was as good as I could have hoped,” Archbishop Rowan Williams told journalists at the Anglican Centre in Rome after his audience with the pope. “I was very glad to hear the pope repeat his commitment to the continuing process of official dialogue between our two churches as churches.”

He revealed, moreover, that Pope Benedict was “extremely enthusiastic” about Phase III of the Anglican-Roman Catholic International Commission (ARCIC).

Archbishop Williams was pleased too because he had been able to talk frankly with the pope about *Anglicanorum Coetibus*, the Apostolic Constitution that the Vatican previewed on Oct. 20 and released on Nov. 9. He said their conversation lasted “just over half an hour.”

In a statement issued after the two leaders’ private conversation in the pope’s library, the Vatican said their discussions had focused on “recent events affecting

relations” between the two communions and noted “the shared will to continue and consolidate the ecumenical relationship between Catholics and Anglicans.”

The Vatican statement added that they had also talked about “how, over the coming days, the commission entrusted with preparing the third phase of the international theological dialogue between the parties (ARCIC) is due to meet.”

Speaking to reporters at the Anglican Centre, and in an earlier interview with Vatican Radio (tinyurl.com/ABC-VaticanRadio), Archbishop Williams revealed much about what they had discussed.

Pope Benedict had welcomed him as he arrived at the spacious library on the second floor of the Apostolic Palace. The two theologians and primatial leaders shook hands warmly, and then the pope led him to the table at which he speaks with heads of state and other distinguished visitors. They sat facing each other across the table — on which there was a cross and a clock, as well as pen and paper — and talked together in English.

Speaking to Vatican Radio shortly after meeting the pope, Archbishop Williams gave his account of what transpired.

“Naturally, I wanted to express some of the concerns

about the way in which the announcement of the constitution had been handled and received, because many Anglicans, myself included, felt that it put us in an awkward position for a time — not the content so much as some of the messages that were given out,” he said. “I needed to share with the pope some of those concerns, and I think those were expressed and heard in a very friendly spirit.”

Asked at the Anglican Centre whether the pope appeared to think any differently about the importance of consulting the archbishop, Archbishop Williams said, “I think that’s private, really.”

“We were disappointed, of course, that there hadn’t been more consultation, but I think that is partly a function of the way the Vatican works,” he said. “We accept that.”

The “main message” coming out of his conversation with the pope, he told Vatican Radio, was that “the constitution does not represent any change in the Vatican’s attitude to the Anglican Communion.”

“Indeed, the presentation of the constitution as some kind of dawn raid on the Anglican Communion misunderstands the process that happened and the actual nature of the constitution,” he said.

He reiterated that concept to the BBC. “There was nothing about the constitution that Anglicans could interpret as a kind of dawn raid,” he said. “We talked that through very thoroughly.”

“People become Roman Catholics because they want to become Roman Catholics and because their conscience is formed in a certain way and they believe this is the will of God for them and I wish them every blessing,” the archbishop told Vatican Radio. “I don’t think [the constitution] is a question of the Roman Catholic Church trying to attract by advertising or by special offers.”

At the Anglican Centre, he rejected a suggestion that the constitution had damaged ecumenical dialogue between the churches. “I think this is not true,” he said.

He described the constitution as “a pastoral measure for certain peoples and groups. It’s not a new ecumenism as some people are saying; it’s not a new departure replacing the continuing process of dialogue between the two churches as churches.”

Archbishop Williams said his conversation with the pope “reassured me that the course we are already on

is without interruption ... there isn’t a new style of ecumenism, there isn’t a new agenda.”

He disagreed with some colleagues who believed he should not have visited the pope at all: “I think one has to take a long view. Friendships are valuable, and Christian friendships are immensely valuable. We have a long-term experience of mutual understanding and cooperation and ultimately, of course, we hope and pray for visible unity, whenever that will come.”

After he and the pope had thoroughly discussed the question of the constitution, “we moved on from there to talk about more positive matters of cooperation.”

He said one of the issues was Phase III of the formal dialogue between the two churches. That dialogue began in 1967 with the establishment of ARCIC. The first phase ended in 1981, while Phase II lasted from 1983 to 2004. The archbishop said that “informal talks” between Anglican and Roman Catholic representatives would “set the agenda” for the commission’s long-term work.

“Everyone I have spoken to here is quite committed to carrying on with the ARCIC process of the inter-

national commission as before.

Two days later, representatives of the two sides met at the Anglican Centre in Rome and agreed that Phase III of the dialogue would focus on “The Church as Communion: Universal and Local.” In particular, the commission will look at how the local church relates to the universal Church.

The Vatican’s statement said the two leaders also discussed “the challenges facing all Christian communities at the beginning of this millennium, and the need to promote forms of collaboration and shared witness in facing these challenges.”

Archbishop Williams said at the Anglican Centre that he and the pope talked “a little bit about practical matters” and “the ecumenical situation,” and “some general themes around ethics and economics in our modern world, and how different Churches were reacting to that.”

He said they talked too about the pope’s “proposed visit to the U.K.” sometime in 2010 (probably September). Later, I learned that in his conversation with the pope, Archbishop Williams emphasized presenting John

(Continued on next page)

Archbishop Williams said his conversation with the pope “reassured me that the course we are already on is without interruption ... there isn’t a new style of ecumenism...”

(Continued from previous page)

Henry Newman as a very important figure for Anglicans as well as Roman Catholics. Sources in Rome expect the pope to beatify Newman, a theologian he greatly admires, during his visit to England.

After they concluded their private discussions, the archbishop presented his entourage to the pope, including the Rt. Rev. Christopher Hill, Bishop of Guildford. Walter Cardinal Kasper joined them too, together with Msgr. Mark Langham, who is the Vatican's desk officer for relations with the Anglican Communion. Then, in what many interpreted as a significant and highly symbolic gesture, Pope Benedict gave the Archbishop of Canterbury a gold pectoral cross.

Afterward, Archbishop Williams had a private lunch with the Father General of the Jesuits, Adolfo Nicolas, before returning to London.

Meeting the pope was the culminating moment of the archbishop's three-day visit to Rome. The archbishop's original purpose was to participate in a one-day symposium on Nov. 19 at the Jesuit-run Gregorian University to celebrate the centenary of Dutch-born Jan Cardinal Willebrands (1909-2006), one of the great pioneers of ecumenism. The symposium was a fitting tribute to Willebrands, who was one of the most influential figures in the Vatican's Office for the Promotion of Christian Unity for almost 40 years, and served as its president from 1969 to 1989.

While the lectures at the symposium's morning session were very interesting, particularly one by Father James Puglisi on "Cardinal Willebrands and Ecumenical Relations with Churches and Ecclesial Communities of the West," the best wine was kept for the afternoon session, when the archbishop and Walter Cardinal Kasper were the keynote speakers. Before the conference, Cardinal Kasper's only substantial comments on the constitution had come in an article, based on a conversation with him, published in the Vatican daily, *L'Osservatore Romano*.

Hundreds of people flocked to the afternoon session, including professors from Roman universities, ambassadors, priests and students from various colleges, an assortment of lay people and Ivan Cardinal Dias, the Indian-born prefect of the Vatican's Congregation for the



L'Osservatore Romano-Servizio Fotografico photo

Evangelization of Peoples, who had spoken at the Lambeth Conference in 2008.

In a highly challenging lecture (archbishopofcanterbury.org/2616), particularly at a time when identity politics has weighed heavily in the Roman Catholic Church, Archbishop Williams suggested reframing the ecumenical dialogue. He advocated placing greater weight on what the different Christian churches already agree on rather than on questions that still divide them. His suggestion seemed to echo the approach preferred by Pope John XXIII when he called the Second Vatican Council (1962-65).

Since Vatican II, Archbishop Williams recalled, the Roman Catholic Church has engaged in dialogues with other churches, including the Anglican Communion, and has reached "a considerable number of agreed statements" about what the Church of God really is. He noted that these "striking" agreements have been made available in a recent book, *Harvesting the Fruits: Basic Aspects of Christian Faith in Ecumenical Dialogue*, prepared by the Pontifical Council for Christian Unity.

That book, he said, shows that "the issues between Christians in the historic churches are not about the essential shape of our language concerning God and God's action in Christ." Rather, "as the ecumenical statements in varying words agree, the ongoing debate is not about these fundamentals, but about where the fullest realization of communion is to be found."

If this is true, he said, then "what exactly are the points that divide us?" Drawing on *Harvesting the Fruits*, he focused on authority, the nature of primacy, and "the way we think of the universal Church itself."

He suggested that there is an urgent need today to clarify "whether these continuing points of tension or difference imply in any way that the substantive theo-

logical convergence is less solid than it appears, so that we must still hold back from fuller levels of recognition of ministries or fuller sacramental fellowship." He not only reaffirmed the Anglican position on the ordination of women, but also spoke about the constitution — "the elephant in the room."

The papal provision for Anglicans, he said, "shows some marks of the recognition that diversity of ethos does not in itself compromise the unity of the Catholic Church, even within the bounds of the historic Western patriarchate."

But, he added, "it does not build in any formal recognition of existing ministries or units of oversight or methods of independent decision-making, but remains at the level of spiritual and liturgical culture, as we might say." As such, he said, the constitution "is an imaginative pastoral response to the needs of some; but it does not break any fresh ecclesiological ground."

He said "it remains to be seen whether the flexibility suggested in the constitution might ever lead to something less like a 'chaplancy' and more like a church gathered around a bishop."

Archbishop Williams summed up his lecture with these words: "All I have been attempting to say here is that the ecumenical glass is genuinely half-full, and then to ask about the character of the unfinished business between us."

He added: "For many of us who are not Roman Catholics, the question we want to put, in a grateful and fraternal spirit, is whether this unfinished business is as fundamentally church-dividing as our Roman Catholic friends generally assume and maintain. And if it isn't, can we allow ourselves to be challenged to address the outstanding issues with the same methodological assumptions and the same overall spiritual and sacramental vision that has brought us thus far?"

The archbishop's lecture was carried in full, in Italian, in *L'Osservatore Romano*. Pope Benedict would certainly have read it before they met.

Cardinal Kasper was the last to speak at the symposium, and in his impressive lecture on "The Legacy of Cardinal Willebrands and the Future of Ecumenism," also carried in the Vatican daily, he too addressed the question of the constitution. It is but "one fruit" of the ecumenical dialogue that has been going on between the Roman Catholic Church and the Anglican Communion since 1967, he said.

He presented it as a response by Pope Benedict to those Anglicans "who by the grace of God and reasons of conscience want to join the Catholic Church while preserving the legitimate elements of their liturgical and spiritual tradition."

He said this provision neither constitutes "a new ecumenism" nor marks "the end of the old," 42-year ecumenical dialogue between Anglicans and Catholics. On the contrary, he said, it should be seen as happening "exactly in conformity with [the Second Vatican Council's] Decree on Ecumenism (n.4), which clearly distinguishes between conversion of individual persons or groups of persons on the one hand and, on the other, ecumenism as dialogue with other Churches with the goal of full communion."

The German theologian-cardinal emphasized that both "individual or corporative conversion and ecumenical dialogue should be undertaken in the greatest possible transparency, tactfulness and mutual esteem in order not to entail meaningless tensions with our ecumenical partners."

After the lecture, he acknowledged that the drafting

"Can we allow ourselves to be challenged to address the outstanding issues with the same methodological assumptions and the same overall spiritual and sacramental vision that has brought us thus far?"

and publication of the constitution had not exactly been marked by the transparency he had advocated in his lecture. "I can only speak for myself," he said. "I insisted from the very beginning that the Archbishop of Canterbury be informed."

This did not happen, he added, "partly because the Anglican side too insisted very much on secrecy" but also "because we cannot go public too early because of the sensitivities of the discussion."

"But," he added, "there should be transparency in the process, and I think we have to learn this."

On Nov. 20, Cardinal Kasper and Archbishop Williams jointly led an Evening Prayer service at the Oratory of Saint Francis Xavier del Caravita, not far from the Anglican Centre and the Gregorian University, in the heart of Rome. The city's English-speaking Roman Catholic community founded the oratory in 2000, with an intentional ecumenical outreach. Several hundred people attended the service. The archbishop preached the sermon. The service concluded with the cardinal and archbishop jointly imparting the blessing. ■TLC

Gerard O'Connell reports from Rome on Vatican affairs for UCA News (Asia), The Universe (U.K.), Our Sunday Visitor and other news organizations.

Re-theologizing of Ecclesiology

The Archbishop of Canterbury's address at the Willebrands symposium in Rome on Nov. 19 has rightfully been read as a significant, and even bold, challenge, aimed first of all at policy makers at the Vatican, including presumably the pope himself. In this respect, the text offers a rare and unusually frank glimpse into the archbishop's current thinking about the Anglican-Roman Catholic relationship that merits careful reading and reflection.

Archbishop Williams's thinking about these matters has remained remarkably consistent throughout his career. At the same time, his Rome address apparently sought to lay out some conditions for a fruitful third round of ARCIC, soon to commence; and in this regard the archbishop structured his talk around an engagement and encouragement of what he takes to be the most helpful strand of ecumenical thought about the Church in the bilateral dialogues produced in the wake of Vatican II.

According to "the new style in ecclesiology rooted in Vatican II," a commitment is made to always speak about the Church theologically — thus explicating the "nature and character and even polity" of the Church in terms of a grounding in "the nature of God and of God's incarnation in history." This yields what Archbishop Williams calls the "twofold vision" at the center of the dialogues: "filial relation with God the Father as the realization of the human vocation; and, as an immediate corollary of this, communion with other believers, offered to the whole world as promise and hope." By placing these matters at the center of our doctrine of the Church — thus "re-theologizing ecclesiology," as he says — we have all together affirmed that remaining differences between divided Christian communities can only be addressed with reference to this center; and so must be shown to be similarly theological, or otherwise classified as "second-order" matters.

So far so good. And on this basis Archbishop Williams goes on to sketch an approach to three remaining nests of thorny questions among divided Christians: general questions about authority, including "the very possibility" of a Roman Catholic magisterium; particular questions about primacy, especially the papacy as "a single identifiable ministry of unity to which all local ministries are accountable"; and questions about the universal Church itself, particularly in the necessary balancing of local and universal responsibilities.

This is where the archbishop's essay heats up; and where his searching questions for his Roman Catholic interlocutors beget still more, and different, questions.

On all counts, the archbishop's approach presumes the givenness of a plurality of churches — Roman, Orthodox, Anglican, and beyond — and seeks to imagine how this plurality, and concomitant diversity, may be received as a gift without, as he says, "adjust[ing] our expectations downward in ecumenical dialogue," that is, without surrendering our commitment to full, visible unity. This makes sense to a point — along the lines of a "communion of communions" (here retrieved from Cardinal Willebrands), whereby families of churches would be united "not so much juridically or institutionally as in terms of lasting loyalty, shared theological method and devotional ethos." In this way we may hope "at the very least for joint means of decision-making between churches differently ordered in their systems of authority," and at most for an exchange of ministries and sharing of sacraments.

If we are to hope for a reconciled future for (several, or most of the) communions of churches, however, we must remember to speak not only positively about Christian plurality but penitentially. Precisely in and through our "independence" from one another, after all, have arisen countless sins — not least, in many cases, the very fact of institutional division — that have crippled our ecclesial and communal witness. In this case, it seems problematic and dishonest to speak about "the local community gathered around the bishop ... as itself the whole" of Catholicism if we do not in the same breath wrestle with the contradiction of love represented by overlapping jurisdictions, thence a push and pull, and competition, between "churches" in a given place. Likewise, in a context of impaired (and so forth) communion, even among Anglicans, a simple "mutual acknowledgement of integrity" is not the most obvious or best complement to our "limited but real common life."

We do, even now, share a "real but imperfect" communion, Roman Catholic authorities have affirmed: the communion of baptism into Christ's death. But this should properly serve as a goad to deeper communion still, and reconciliation, which requires something rather more costly than mutual recognition, primarily *because* we are committed to a thoroughly theological view of the Church. It requires repentance; and, indeed, confession of our incompleteness in division. Only in this way can our wholeness be restored, and healed — in Christ, incarnate and crucified.

Christopher Wells

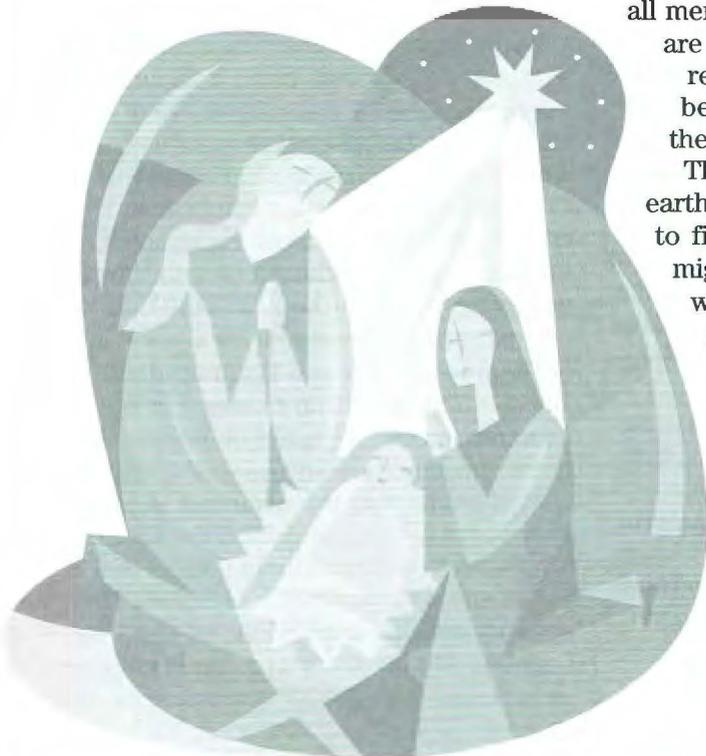
A Meditation for the Communion AT CHRISTMAS

Welcome thrice blessed Day! the desire of all nations, whose distant glories made the Father of the faithful to rejoice, and whole approachs filled the world with wonder and expectation: Thou wert ushered in with angelic hymns and celebrated ever since with anthems of praise because thou didst bring forth joy and a redeemer to mankind. Happy am I that I have a sacrifice of thanksgiving in my hand to express the delight which my heart doth feel. This holy table is the altar upon which I offer my acknowledgments for

all mercies, and oh how many, how great are those which this day brings to my remembrance! So infinite they cannot be expressed, and yet so excellent they must not be forgotten.

This day hath reconciled heaven and earth and made contradictions friends, to find a way to help us as if nothing might disagree when man was at peace with God. O my soul, summon all thy powers to admire and worship, for all is miracle and the height of wonder: Eternity begins to be, the Maker of all is made himself...the Word is made flesh and God becomes man, yet remains God still.

Excerpted from *A Companion to the Temple or A Help to Devotion in the Use of the Common Prayer* (1672-76)



Editorial

God With Us

In this seventeenth-century meditation on Holy Communion at Christmas (above), the Very Rev. Thomas Comber, Dean of Durham Cathedral (England), marveled that it was not incongruous to “remember [Jesus’] passion and praise thee for thy incarnation at once.” The nativity was, he wrote, “the first scene of thy passion, for it introduced thy death and that effected our salvation, so that I will remember both together.”

Dean Comber’s words remind us that for Christians, Christmas is more than the anniversary of Jesus’ birth long ago in Bethlehem. It is a celebration of God entering into humanity in an astonishing and perpetual way that offers new hope and new life to all humankind. God’s

grace and mercy are made known to us fully in the gift of his Son, a gift we continue to experience as Jesus abides with us.

So while Christmas is undeniably a time for nostalgia, it is a time of far more than looking back in remembrance. Our celebration of Christmas should remind us anew of God’s call to join him today, and every day, in bringing about the coming of his Kingdom. We are sustained in that mission when we come to the altar and are fed through Christ’s own life-giving Body and Blood in the Blessed Sacrament.

Let this greatest gift inspire and guide us as we work to bring peace on earth and offer good will to all. In the words of Dean Comber, “It is not enough, dearest Lord, that thou wast born for me, unless thou art also born again in me, and...become incarnate in my heart.”

Orthodox Past

The recent letter to the editor by the Rev. Winfred Vergara [TLC, Nov. 1] is an emblematic misreading of Western culture. The assault upon the Western Church in his letter is really an assault upon orthodoxy.

The historical record of the Episcopal Church in the 19th and early 20th centuries has many bright moments to be celebrated as the gospel was confronting heathen cultures. Before the Civil War, important work was being carried out by the church with the Oneidas in Wisconsin and the Chippewa in Minnesota. In 1868, Bishop Whipple, building upon the work of the Rev. J.L. Breck, submitted to the Board of Missions of the Episcopal Church a vigorous report in which he denounced the general mistreatment of Native Americans and urged the church to take action in remedying this situation. This led to the Commission of Indian Affairs to defend their rights. In the South, missionary Bishop Leonidas Polk made it mandatory in his diocese to instruct slaves in the faith, as well as in reading and writing to prepare them for their emancipation.

If the Episcopal Church continues to neglect its orthodox past, soon it may not even be able to critique itself, for only within the framework of orthodoxy is a community able to critique the past and seek justice in the present.

*(The Rev.) Thomas W. Allen
Church of the Holy Cross
Stateburg, S.C.*

Pray for the Church

If the Episcopal Church is acting prophetically in regard to women and homosexuals in the Church, we must understand that widespread reception of our insights will take at least a century. We are in a mode of discernment, trusting that we are following the Spirit, whose actions are mystery. We cannot know for sure.

We do, however, know the gifts of the Spirit: love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, generosity, faithfulness, gentleness, and self-control (Gal. 5:22-23). Where are they? Certainly not in the arrogance, self-righteousness, and hostility shown by all parties.

Recently the Bishop of South Carolina claimed that "the gospel of indiscriminate inclusivity has challenged the doctrine of the Trinity, the uniqueness and universality of Christ, the authority of Scripture, [and] our understanding of baptism" [TLC, Nov. 15]. What church is he talking about? I've served 23 years as a mission priest in the Diocese of Iowa. We're more inclusive than some dioceses, but our teaching remains orthodox on the core that Bishop Lawrence rightly treasures. Word and sacrament are alive and well among us.

Beginning this Advent, the prayers of the church I

serve have been acting on my concern for the whole Anglican family: TEC, the various separating groups, and the whole Anglican Communion. As the concluding collect of the Prayers of the People, we will pray the collect for ordinations and Good Friday that begins "O God of unchangeable power and eternal light: Look favorably on your whole Church."

*(The Rev.) Kathryn Campbell
Clermont, Iowa*

No Pledge

Your editorial "Differentiation and Communion" [TLC, Nov. 15] was, by and large, a thoughtful treatment of interesting developments in the life of the church. However, I read with concern and confusion the editorialist's assertion that "Ordained ministers of the Episcopal Church have pledged to participate in its councils," and cringed at the subsequent criticism of those in South Carolina who have chosen to withdraw from participation in the governing bodies of the Episcopal Church.

I just re-read the ordinal for a priest in the 1979 Book of Common Prayer and I cannot identify the source of any such "pledge." The closest that the ordination text gets to mentioning participation in church councils is in the introduction to the examination in which the bishop states that the ordinand is "called to ... take your share in the councils of the Church." This text is not found in the traditional ordinal and is not the subject of any response by the ordinand. There may be reasons to criticize the actions of the Diocese of South Carolina, but breaking a pledge is not one of them.

*William Barto
Fairfax, Va.*

Pertinent Essay

If Christopher Wells' essay [TLC, Nov. 29] is a sample of where THE LIVING CHURCH is going I shall be looking forward to more with great anticipation. I thought this a learned and prophetic article which introduces classics of ecumenical theology to a wider church audience at a very pertinent moment.

Since I have joined the faculty at Trinity and done more research in the life and work of Lesslie Newbigin I have become completely converted to the significance of the quest for visible unity. From his South India vantage point Newbigin saw the missionary scandal of the lack of visible church unity.

I heartily recommend *The Household of God*, Newbigin's lectures on ecclesiology. They break the heart with their frank accusation of our ecclesial carnality. Thank you for sounding this much needed theological note.

*(The Rev. Dr.) Leander S. Harding
Trinity School for Ministry
Ambridge, Pa.*

To the Ends of the Earth

"O God, let your face shine" (Psalm 80:3).

BCP: Micah 5:2-4; Psalm 80 or 80:1-7; Hebrews 10:5-10; Luke 1:39-49(50-56)

RCL: Micah 5:2-5a; Luke 1:47-55 or Psalm 80:1-7; Hebrews 10:5-10; Luke 1:39-45 (46-55)

The four Sundays of Advent begin with cosmic and powerful messages of judgment and the coming of the Lord, progress through themes of conversion that are applied to all humanity, and now conclude with an account of the small, particular, and personal.

The fourth Sunday always provides an account about the Virgin Mary, in whom the "small, particular, and personal" find their focus. From the First Sunday of Advent's theme of "the great day of the Lord" we now move to Bethlehem, which is "one of the little clans of Judah" (Micah 5:2), and to a meeting between two women in "a Judean town in the hill country" (Luke 1:39) — an inconsequential rural area far from the great cities. Yet, even these lessons are cosmic, though in a markedly different way from the banners and trumpets of the earlier les-

sons of Advent. It is the very "quietness" and "ordinariness" of today's lessons, with the theme of "smallness," that shows the immensity of God in a new way.

These lessons are most fitting before the Church commemorates the event in which the God of all creation was born as a helpless infant utterly dependent upon his parents and fully vulnerable to a dirty, rebellious, vicious and violent world.

Last Sunday's lesson pointed out the disconcerting truth that the path to holiness is built upon doing ordinary things for God, and today's lessons show us that God himself fills these ordinary things with himself. Although the lesson from Micah begins with the address to Bethlehem, it ends with the prophecy that the One who is destined to come from these inauspicious

beginnings, "shall be great to the ends of the earth" (Micah 5:4). The contrast of insignificant and cosmically critical is woven beautifully in the exultant words of Mary, found both in the optional extension of the gospel lesson and the canticle suggested as a response to the reading from Micah: "The Lord ... has looked with favor on the lowliness of his servant. Surely, from now on all generations will call me blessed."

It is in the person of the Virgin that we see closest the pattern that God shows repeatedly — that it is in ordinary, everyday things that his greatest works are customarily done. The sacramental life, the pursuit of virtue, the life of prayer all require only what is common and ordinary. This means that God and grace are always accessible to anyone at any time.

Next Sunday The First Sunday after Christmas (Year C), Dec. 27, 2009

BCP and RCL: Isaiah 61:10-62:3; Psalm 147 or 147:13-21; Galatians 3:23-25; 4:4-7; John 1:1-18

Look It Up

See how the Magnificat, Mary's response to Elizabeth's greeting, appeals to "peace and justice" Christians; "high church" people; Christian feminists; evangelical, Bible-oriented believers; traditionalists; and mission-driven activists.

Think About It

How does the lesson from Hebrews require the Incarnation, i.e. the birth of the Messiah as a human being?

THE LIVING CHURCH

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Apply the Platinum Rule

By Joseph Stapleton

More than ever people seem to be walking on eggshells around the mention of Christmas. I receive many "holiday" greetings and as many "holiday" cards. Rarely, though, do I find any acknowledgment that this is more than a season of joy and gift giving, of music and merriment.

At first I blamed this phenomenon on the ACLU for its work to wipe out Christianity from the public square. We can celebrate the winter solstice and we can welcome in the new year. But just don't mention the word Christmas.

Then I began to wonder whether the avoidance of "Christmas" greetings may just be a function of the Golden Rule: Do unto others as you would have others do unto you. If a "Merry Christmas" salutation would

offend you, it may offend others as well. Whether the recipient celebrates Christmas, Hannukah, Kwanzaa or any other event, a hearty holiday hello conveys the warmth of the season without offense. This works just fine for most people.

I was reminded, however, of what has been referred to as the Platinum Rule. Do unto others as others would have you do unto them. With the Golden Rule, I do not need to know what you find pleasing. I only need to know what is pleasing to me. In the application of the Golden Rule, I need to do only those things that I would be willing to have you do to me.

The Platinum Rule is a higher standard that requires that I understand or know something about you. If I know that you celebrate Christmas, I should wish you a Merry Christmas. The Platinum Rule would allow for



enthusiastic Christmas greetings directed to those who celebrate Christmas, and other types of religious greetings as the circumstances may require.

This year, apply the Platinum Rule. Don't be afraid to say "Merry Christmas" and proclaim that this is a season when the birth of Christ is celebrated. Send me a Christmas card, not a holiday card, and don't use a stamp that depicts a snowflake or a reindeer. Let's put Christmas back into the holiday season, where it should be.

Joseph Stapleton is a member of St. Thomas' Church Whitmarsh, Fort Washington, Pa.



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(SUDANESE, from page 5)

but also the deep faith of the Anglican population, many of whom have lost all their possessions and must take shelter in straw huts covered with tarpaulins.

Bishop Zawo asked his audience to call for the United States government to help stop the killing in Sudan.

In response to questions, Bishop Zawo said he believed the local population suffered less from religious persecution by the Muslim majority than from the racism of the government in Khartoum, which often pays equatorial Africans to convert to Islam, yet continues to treat them as inferior to the Arab population of the northern part of the country.

Phoebe Pettingell

Long Island Diocese Wants \$205,000 Returned

The Episcopal Diocese of Long Island has filed suit against two law firms, seeking to reclaim \$205,000 in legal fees, according to Court-house News Service.

Jakubik Law Firm and Silber Law Firm represented the majority of members at St. James' Episcopal Church, Elmhurst, N.Y., who voted to separate from the diocese and the Episcopal Church in 2005.

The former Episcopalians regrouped as St. James' Anglican Church, affiliated with the nascent Anglican Church in North America, and attempted to retain the parish buildings. The Supreme Court of Queens County ruled in favor of the diocese in March 2008.

To read daily news stories concerning the Episcopal Church and the Anglican Communion, visit
www.livingchurch.org

Appointments

The Rev. **Victor Hailey** is curate at St. James', 3100 Monkton Rd., Monkton, MD 21111.

The Rev. **Hal Hayek** is dean of Cathedral of the Incarnation, 4 University Parkway, Baltimore, MD 21228.

The Rev. **Jane Holmes** is regional dean-south region, Diocese of North Carolina; add: 2540 Bricker Dr., Charlotte, NC 28273.

The Rev. **Charles Messer** is rector of Calvary Rockdale, 667 Mount Rd., Aston, PA 19014.

Steve Ott is chancellor of the Diocese of Michigan, 4800 Woodward Ave., Detroit, MI 48201.

Resignations

The Rev. **Rebekah Hatch**, as assistant at Good Shepherd, Ruxton, MD.

Correction

The Very Rev. **Kate Moorehead** is dean of St. John's Cathedral, 256 E Church St., Jacksonville FL 32202.

Deaths

The Very Rev. **Werner H. Raasch**, dean of the cathedrals in the dioceses of Milwaukee and Springfield, died Nov. 12. He was 67.

A Milwaukee native, he earned degrees from the University of Wisconsin-Milwaukee, Marquette University, and the General Theological Seminary. He was ordained deacon and priest in 1981. He began his ministry as an assistant at Our Savior, San Gabriel, CA, 1981-84, and went on to serve as rector of Grace Church, Glendora, CA, 1984-89, and St. Stephen's, St. Louis, 1989-92. Dr. Raasch served as dean of St. Paul's Cathedral, Springfield, from 1992 to 2004, when he and his wife moved to Milwaukee to care for their elderly mothers. He served in pastoral leadership at St. Martin's, Brown Deer, prior to his call to All Saints' Cathedral, Milwaukee, in 2007. He is survived by his wife of 31 years, Elizabeth; his mother, Virginia; his sister, Kristine Raasch-Polly; and a niece, Kelli Polly.

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