

THE PERSONAL ORDINARIATE of the CHAIR OF ST. PETER

OFFICE OF THE ORDINARY

October 11, 2012

An Update from the Ordinary

The Personal Ordinariate of the Chair of St. Peter is now nine months old. Much has happened in that time, and we give God the glory for all of it, the challenges as well as the successes. One of the most significant moments came in mid-September when the Cardinal Archbishop of Galveston-Houston transferred to the Ordinariate the title to our principal church, Our Lady of Walsingham. In a similar way, the Diocese of Fort Worth is in the process of transferring St. Mary the Virgin, Arlington, to the Ordinariate. We have seen some twenty-two priests ordained and incardinated in the Ordinariate, with additional ordinations to come soon. Also, we will launch a new formation program for the second group of prospective candidates in Advent.

The Ordinariate is planning a pilgrimage to Rome for our clergy and their wives, to coincide with the Feast of the Chair of St. Peter on Feb. 22. And it really is a pilgrimage! We will set out to discover the apostolic foundations of the Church of Rome, to participate in the wonderful tradition of Lenten stational masses organized by the Pontifical North American College, and to meet some of the architects of the Ordinariates. We also hope to greet Msgr. Keith Newton and some of our confreres from the Ordinariate of Our Lady of Walsingham, who will be in Rome at the same time. And, God willing, there will be an opportunity to thank the Successor of St. Peter himself for the gift of *Anglicanorum coetibus*. Your prayers are earnestly requested!

This first year we have focused on establishing the structure of the Ordinariate and on clergy formation. Now we will be turning more intentionally to congregational development. If there is one thing that has impressed itself upon me these past months, it is that our congregations must be committed to outreach and growth. We cannot stay where we are. Our clergy and their congregations must be committed to evangelization. The Great Commission is at the heart of the Church's agenda: Truth has been given to be proclaimed. We must acquire the skills and nurture the gifts necessary to gather in a bountiful harvest of faith.

Who and What We Are: A Primer for Catholics

The Ordinariate is unique in the Roman Catholic Church; however, it comprises many elements similar to other Catholic structures, recognizable to all Catholics. Consequently, these familiar elements can help to define and explain the Ordinariate, our purpose, and our vision for the future.

In some ways, the Ordinariate is similar to a religious order. In the same way that the Franciscans and the Dominicans have distinct charisms or missions within the Church, we have a

distinct, two-fold charism or mission granted to us by the Holy Father. This charism must be taken into account in all decisions as we discern our way forward. We are (1) to minister to the pastoral and spiritual needs of all former Anglicans coming to the Catholic Church and (2) 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” (AC 3). The decisions we make to plot a course for the Ordinariate must be always with an eye toward both caring for the people specifically entrusted to our care and bringing the fullness of the Anglican patrimony to the Catholic Church. This is our commission, the commission the Holy Father gave us in *Anglicanorum coetibus*.

We sometimes receive questions about the relationship between the Ordinariate and certain traditionalist liturgical groups in the Catholic Church. In answer to these questions, I think the comparison between the Franciscans and the Dominicans is apt. Saints Francis and Dominic once met to see whether they might combine their efforts and form one religious order. Although they left their meeting with great respect for each other and for their individual missions, they realized that it was important for the Church that they keep their efforts distinct. We in the Ordinariate must recognize that our commission to care for former Anglicans and to introduce our distinctive patrimony to the Church is a full-time, life-long calling, similar to but separate from the recovery of the Extraordinary Form within Catholic life. While our goals might be similar, and while we might support each other’s charism, the charisms are not identical. To merge the two might divert the Ordinariate from its primary tasks. We must seek to be faithful to our own distinct charism and patrimony.

We are blessed to be a part of the Catholic Church and all of its liturgical riches. Sometimes it seems that coming into the Catholic Church is like dining at a smorgasbord – there are so many beautiful choices on the table that we are tempted to sample them all! I understand this desire, and I have encouraged my clergy to become involved in their local dioceses so that they are able to sample the riches that belong to the Church. They are welcome to assist at other local parishes, and to celebrate both the Ordinary and Extraordinary forms of the Latin liturgies in the traditions of those diocesan parishes for their parishioners. In this spirit, we even have had one priest of the Ordinariate supply in a local Eastern Catholic parish. I want our priests to share in the activities of the presbyterate of their local dioceses.

In many ways, the Ordinariate resembles the personal parishes found in many Latin dioceses. For example, in the same way that Hispanic, Italian, or Ukrainian parishes often reflect the distinct culture of their people, so too Ordinariate parishes must reflect the “the liturgical, spiritual and pastoral traditions” of our people. Here we must always go back to the Holy Father’s direction regarding our mission and our charism. The question must always and necessarily be, “Is it in keeping with our patrimony and tradition?” Our discernment that a practice is not of our patrimony in no way implies our judgment on its usefulness or spiritual worth. It simply means that we have made a decision to ensure that our parishes and communities reflect our own distinct patrimony as we strive to be faithful to the Holy Father’s vision.

We must take care too that we not increase membership in the Ordinariate by recruiting baptized Catholics who might be searching for more traditional forms of the liturgy, but rather with those

who are coming to the Catholic Church. The apostolic constitution is very clear on this point. As we begin this year of faith, with its emphasis on the New Evangelization, the Ordinariate has a tremendous opportunity to contribute to this essential work of the Gospel.

Moving Forward

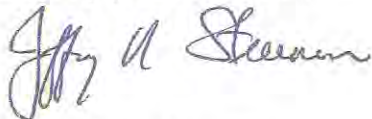
We have been working on a communications strategy that should, in the near future, greatly enhance our ability to share news and information throughout the Ordinariate communities. From time to time, certain blogs and websites have made harsh and angry judgments about the Ordinariate. These must be read with a discerning eye. At the initial press conference that launched our Ordinariate, I said that I hoped we would bring courtesy and manners with us. It has always been one of the hallmarks of Anglican life, at least in its ideal form!

The first principle of the Ordinariate is communion – to be in communion with St. Peter and his successors, to be in communion with those bishops in communion with the Bishop of Rome, to be in communion with the Catholic people, to seek communion with those separated from the Church – “that they may be one.” Some of us have come to the Ordinariate from situations full of conflict, much of it painful, some even scandalous. As a consequence, we have behaviors to be unlearned, obedience to be given, peace to be discovered. We do not want to replicate this disorder in our new ecclesial home. If difficulties should arise, the apostolic constitution is there to defend our distinct patrimony, but let us strive always to be Catholic! “The character of universality which adorns the people of God is a gift from the Lord himself” (CCC, 831). Our Anglican identity will find its true soul when united with the whole (CCC, 835).

Your Ordinariate leadership team has been working hard to lay a good foundation on which to build. It is a complex task that involves collaborating with two episcopal conferences, coordinating with two ecclesiastical delegates, and bringing together groups that formerly were not even in communion with each other. We have received unanimous support from the Canadian Conference of Catholic Bishops to create a deanery for the Canadian groups. I will have the privilege of addressing the United States Conference of Catholic Bishops about our progress at its November meeting. Rome has received the statutes for our governing council, and once we receive their approval, we will proceed to create a governing council, probably by year's end. Until now, three bishops are serving in this capacity. It is with deep gratitude that I acknowledge the wise counsel of Cardinal Wuerl, Bishop McManus, and Bishop Vann.

Pope Benedict recently sent us his blessings and good wishes, and I am deeply grateful to all of you for joining in this work of Christian unity that is so close to the Holy Father's heart.

Faithfully yours in Christ,



Msgr. Jeffrey Steenson
Ordinary

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