

Whither the Anglican Use in the Catholic Church?

*Among those in which Catholic traditions and institutions in part continue to exist, the Anglican Communion occupies a special place.*¹

THE Pastoral Provision for the Anglican Use is in many ways the first fruits of the ecumenical movement in the Catholic Church. Through this provision a real corporate reintegration of children of Reformation communities with the See of Peter has come about, which respects those aspects of Catholic tradition which have been preserved and fostered even in separation from the Catholic communion.

The great proponent of liturgical renewal, Lutheran convert and Catholic priest, the Reverend Louis Bouyer, recognized these preserved and recovered traditions, writing, “in the Church of England were found also some of the men who first perceived that the way to a true liturgical renewal lay neither in Protestantism nor in the Baroque mentality. And here also were some of the first men to see more or less clearly where the true way should lie. We need not be afraid to acknowledge this fact, for the worst of heretics may sometimes have some very useful truths to tell us...Nor were these men we have just mentioned, the Caroline Divines, the worst of heretics—far from it!”

“What was admirable about their work, and what had such a measure of success that it has endured even until our days...is a Divine Office which is not a devotion of specialists but a truly public Office of the whole Christian people. This Office has some defects...but, in spite of these defects, we must admit frankly that the Offices of Morning Prayer and Evensong...are not only one of the most impressive, but also one of the purest forms of Christian common prayer to be found anywhere in the world.”²

The Pastoral Provision, and *The Book of Divine Worship* which has been authorized for the use of the communities established under the provision, enshrine this tradition, and make it available to the wider Catholic community. But, as those of us who are part of the Anglican

Use congregations well know, ours is not a long-term solution. What will happen when our priest retires or dies? What if the next bishop of our diocese is hostile to the Pastoral Provision? Is there anything we can do to ensure that this *Use*, faithful to the Catholic heritage of English Christians, can be maintained? How can this Pastoral Provision, which we have experienced as a generous and merciful gesture on the part of the Church, be better enabled to serve as a bridge for those children of the English Reformation who wish to return to Catholic communion?

A glance at the recent history of two different groups in the Catholic Church will reveal that the best hope for the continuation of this *Use* is the erection of a *sui juris* Church; that is, a Church with its own law under an archbishop, himself under the jurisdiction of the bishop of Rome, which can maintain its liturgical and devotional traditions in full communion with the Church Catholic.

The Polish Catholics in America

By the end of the 19th century, the hierarchy in the United States was largely Irish. But increasingly, large numbers of the faithful were recent immigrants from Poland, the Ukraine, Italy, and the Baltic states. The Polish, in particular, chafed under the rule of the Irish bishops who seemingly turned a deaf ear to their pleas for respect for their customs and traditions. The 1880s and 1890s saw an increasing number of defections from the church, until finally at the dawn of the twentieth century the Polish National Catholic Church (PNCC) was formed.³ The Rev. Francis Hodur, a priest from Scranton, Pennsylvania was elected bishop of the new church and in 1907 he traveled to the Netherlands to be consecrated bishop by the Jansenist bishop of Utrecht. With this consecration, undeniably authentic apostolic succession was secured, and the new Polish denomination began organizing itself. One year later, the first Roman Catholic Polish priest, the reverend Paul Rhode, was selected as an auxiliary bishop for Chicago, and consecrated as the first Polish bishop for the United States.

While its numbers are small, the PNCC has many congregations in areas with large Polish communities, such as Western Massachusetts, Northeastern Pennsylvania, and Chicago. While we must lament the rupture of ecclesial communion represented by the PNCC, we can

see in this sorry chapter in the life of the Church in the U.S. a good example of what was meant by the fathers of the Second Vatican Council when they wrote “But in subsequent centuries much more serious dissensions made their appearance and quite large communities came to be separated from full communion with the Catholic Church—for which, often enough, men of both sides were to blame.”⁴

The breakdown of communion was not primarily doctrinal, but cultural misunderstanding and suspicion. The immigrant Polish Catholics brought to their new American homeland tensions and divisions that had arisen in their dismembered homeland (Poland having disappeared from the map of Europe after the Napoleonic wars), and which were characterized as making a decision about whether one was “a Catholic Pole or a Polish Catholic.”⁵ This conflict between the nationalist and clerical parties had no central leadership which could bridge the two parties’ differences, and the nationalist element had no desire to trade the Russian, Austrian or Prussian overlords they left in Europe for an Irish one in America. The Irish hierarchy in the United States, in its turn, had no real understanding of Polish Catholic culture and some prelates harbored prejudicial attitudes toward the Polish Catholics.⁶ Many Poles, feeling slighted and impatient to receive recognition despite their impressive work in creating a large network of parishes, schools, orphanages and hospitals, (St. Stanislaus Kostka parish in Chicago was, by 1900, likely the largest Catholic parish in the world⁷) left the communion of the Church to organize the PNCC. Greater sensitivity to the cultural and religious aspirations of the Poles, along with an earlier appointment of a Polish bishop might have kept the schism from ever forming.

Eastern Catholics in America

The Eastern Catholic Churches (also known, less correctly, as the Eastern Rite Catholics) although they are *sui juris* Churches, have been subject to “latinization” or the modification of Eastern liturgies and customs and modes of thought by the adoption of foreign, i.e., Latin Catholic, practices since the 16th century. But in the United States, one of the most significant latinizations occurred as a result of the Latin bishops reacting negatively to the married clergy of Eastern Catholics

who arrived during the great waves of immigration at the beginning of the twentieth century. In October 1890, the Sacred Congregation for the Propagation of the Faith responded to the American hierarchy's requests by ordering all married Eastern priests to leave America. This resulted in huge protests from clergy and people, because most of the Eastern Catholic clergy were married.⁸ Two years later this order was rescinded, but while married priests were now allowed to stay, their wives and children were ordered to return to their original countries. Yet another series of protests ensued. One Byzantine Catholic priest, Alexis Toth, after poor treatment by Archbishop John Ireland, left the Catholic communion, placing himself under the authority of the Russian Orthodox Archbishop of San Francisco, and led thousands of Ruthenians out of the Catholic church and into the Orthodox church.

Despite papal teaching that the "diversity of liturgical form and discipline of the Eastern Churches is approved in law...it has redounded tremendously to the glory and usefulness of the Church,"⁹ this pattern of treating Eastern Catholics with suspicion and without regard to their rights continued. According to one history of the Melkites and Maronites in the U.S., Latin bishops in the U.S. "rarely, if ever, understood or sought to understand the mentality, customs and traditions of their Eastern subjects, who were consistently treated as foreigners and "fake" Catholics."¹⁰

In the 1920s, the Latin Church bishops again petitioned Rome, which declared in *Cum Data Fuerit* that the secular clergy of the Ruthenian Rite who desired to emigrate to the United States must be celibate, and that married men were no longer to be ordained to the priesthood in the United States. This caused another series of violent disturbances within the Eastern Catholic churches of the United States, as loyalty to the Holy See and loyalty to traditions sanctioned for hundreds of years (and established in Canon Law!) were pitted against each other.^{8, 11} Ultimately, many thousands of Byzantine Catholics left the Catholic church and formed the American Carpatho-Rusyn Orthodox Church.⁸

Not only were thousands of souls lost to the Catholic Church due to Latin mistrust and misunderstanding of the Eastern Catholics, but the ecumenical implications have been disastrous. As Eastern Orthodox Christians contemplate reunion, they can only regard with

horror a fate they must believe would be theirs. Despite the terms of treaties like those in the Union of Brest-Litvosk and Uzhorod which established the Ukranian Catholic and Ruthenian Catholic Churches, the Eastern Catholics have been treated shabbily repeatedly by their overwhelmingly more numerous Latin brethren.

Finding a Path Forward

In their common declaration Pope Paul VI and Archbishop of Canterbury Donald Coggan stated: “Many in both communions are asking themselves whether they have a common faith sufficient to be translated into communion of life, worship and mission. Only the communions themselves through their pastoral authorities can give the answer. When the moment comes to do so, may the answer shine through in spirit and truth, not obscured by the enmities, the prejudices and the suspicions of the past.”¹² In addition to those Anglicans who have already come into communion with the Catholic Church via the Pastoral Provision, other Anglicans stand at the door and knock, awaiting entry¹³ as Anglicans who share the Catholic faith.

The experience of Polish Catholics and Eastern Catholics at the turn of the twentieth century in the United States has several lessons for Anglican Catholics: 1) The cultural differences between Anglican and the majority Roman-rite Latin Catholics will need to be patiently explained to our Latin bishops, and demonstrated to be fully Catholic even if different from customs of the wider Latin Church; 2) The ability of the Pastoral Provision to serve as a bridge to communion for Catholic-minded Anglicans, in both the Anglican Continuum and the Anglican Communion, is weak precisely because the status of Anglican Use Catholics depends not on right, but on positive law which can be changed at will. In order to make a true home for Anglican Catholics within the Church, and not a way-station, the Church needs to create a structure that will respect the legitimate traditions and rituals of Anglican Catholicism, unlike what occurred with some of the Eastern Catholics, for like the Eastern Catholics, Anglicans know that “Romanism and Catholicism are not synonymous and that Catholicism must remain open to every form of organization compatible with a unity of faith;”¹⁴ 3) the need for bishops who will be not only

ambassadors to and advocates for Anglican Catholics, but also leaders within the community; as this need was belatedly recognized for the Polish Catholics, with bishop Rhode acting as a center and a bond of communion, so Anglican Catholic bishops will serve as bonds between individual Anglican Catholics and with the Church Catholic.

This goal of a *sui juris* Church, which will succor and sustain the patrimony of Anglican Catholicism, is in the hands of divine providence and the pastors of the Church. We must hope that it will be a further fruit of the ecumenical movement, a work of the Spirit in reconciling the dispersed children of God, that they may be one.

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