

**October 21, 2009**  
**For Immediate Release**

***Anglican Society of Catholic Priests Responds to Vatican Decision***

New Haven, CT Today a group of Anglican clergy responded to the Vatican's recent decision to open the way for disaffected Anglicans to enter into full communion with the Roman Catholic Church. Robert Hendrickson, the Director of Communications for the Society, released a statement acknowledging that for those Anglicans who disagree with recent developments within Anglicanism, "such a move may make some sense." He went on to point out that for many in the catholic tradition of Christianity, "such changes are a natural extension of our understanding of the evolution of Tradition in the life of the Church."

Hendrickson also points out that though the move appears to highlight the differences between Anglicanism and the Roman Catholic Church over recent developments, it actually highlights the "amazing degree of overlap" between two ecclesial bodies over a wide degree of theological questions and spiritual practices. Here he agrees with the Archbishop of Canterbury, Rowan Williams, who said in an earlier joint statement with the Archbishop of Westminster, that this news was an outgrowth and fruit of continued ecumenical dialog between the two bodies.

In the wake of the Vatican decision and in a time of tremendous tension within Anglican bodies, the Society is reiterating its invitation for Anglican clergy in the Catholic Tradition of the church to come together in a place of peace. Hendrickson says the Society is "a place for the complexity of difference to meet the simplicity of devotion." The Society is hopeful that this devotional response to a troubled church will provide the peace many believe has been found lacking over the past several years.

The Society of Catholic Priests in the Episcopal Church and the Anglican Church of Canada draws its heritage from a similar Society founded in the Church of England in the nineties. Though this province of the Society is still preparing for its own Inaugural Assembly from November 9-10 in New Haven, CT, it already has almost eighty priests on the rolls and several bishops interested in supporting its life. The Society exists to help all clergy flourish as priests in the Catholic Tradition of the Church and to encourage spiritual growth and Catholic Evangelism. More information on the Society can be found at their website: <http://www.theSCP.org/>.

***The full statement follows:***

In light of the announcement by the Vatican of the creation of new ecclesiastical structures to make room for disaffected catholic-minded Anglicans to move over to the Roman Catholic Church, it seems important for catholic-minded Anglicans who have long been an integral part of the Anglican Communion to reassert their understanding of catholicity and tradition within Anglicanism.

The Society of Catholic Priests, formed the the early 1990s in the UK, has established a new branch of the Society in North America. Its mission is to promote priestly spirituality and catholic evangelism within the Episcopal Church and the Anglican Church of Canada. Interestingly the announcement by the Vatican, while seemingly highlighting differences between the Anglican Communion and the Vatican over issues of ecclesiology, sexuality

and ordination points to a more durable fact. There is an amazing degree of overlap between these two bodies across a range of theological issues that make such a move possible. Our catholic heritage within Anglicanism makes such an initiative feasible.

For those priests who find themselves unable, on a variety of grounds, to remain Anglican in good conscience, such a move may make some sense. While Anglicanism has developed varied patterns of authority and different systems for decision making, many feel drawn towards the more centralized structures and the official understandings of Roman Catholicism.

On the other hand, anglo-catholics have found the openness of the Anglican tradition, allowing for a wide range of views and different approaches, to reflect the realities of life in the Body of Christ as it is lived out in history and the world. For many within the catholic tradition, recent changes are a natural extension of our understanding of the evolution of tradition within the life of the Church. The catholic tradition has never been about simply safeguarding narrowly explicit interpretations of scripture but about engaging the contributions and experience of all the members of the Body of Christ in the life of the Church.

Our very sacramental and liturgical life is an outgrowth of our understanding of the value, indeed the essential nature, of human experience in expressing the life of a living Christ among us. Worship of a living God is expressed in a living tradition, and utilizes the fruit of the earth and the work of human hands, both of which are essential to the nature of catholicity.

As new questions face the Church, new rites evolve to address the human experience. The catholic tradition is one that lives in and confronts the complexities of the world as it is in all of its myriad grace and potentiality as well as in its vexing questions and dilemmas. The Church, at times is both anchor and sail in society. Its catholicity is that which holds fast to the essential in the face of volatility and proclaims newness of life when it is necessary.

In the face of division and anger, the Society of Catholic Priests is offering a life together that holds fast to the traditions of the Church while making room for the movement of grace, charity, and hope. It gives a non-anxious place for priests who are looking to find a place of rest amidst the eddies of church life. It is a place for the complexity of difference to meet the simplicity of devotion. It is a Society that looks to center itself in the mainstream of the Church, on the Prayer Book, and in our tradition. Our lives have been consecrated to the service of the Church and the Society of Catholic Priests welcomes those looking to be still, refrain from anger, and hope again for the unity of the Church in all of its diversity.

Robert Hendrickson  
Communications Director  
The Society of Catholic Priests  
*North American Province*

The Society of Catholic Priests in the Episcopal Church and the Anglican Church of Canada exists to help all clergy flourish as priests in the Catholic Tradition of the Church and to encourage spiritual growth and Catholic Evangelism. More information on the Society can be found at our website: <http://www.theSCP.org/>. Those interested in registering for the Inaugural Assembly of this province of the Society may do so at <http://thescp2009assembly.eventbrite.com/>.

Any press that would like to be present at the Assembly may request press credentials from the Society's Director of Communications, Robert Hendrickson, at [rhendrickson@theSCP.org](mailto:rhendrickson@theSCP.org) or 203.676.2290.

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