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Free Market Competition Intensifies Between Rome and Canterbury

Ken Briggs | Oct. 20, 2009 NCR Today

This just in: the Episcopal response to Pope Benedict marketing plan to Anglicans:

Dear Benedict,

Hope this finds you in the pink of health as you prepare for the influx of Anglicans. As the Westminster cardinal and the Canterbury Archbishop said the other day, this marks the triumph of ecumenism.

Thanks a whole bunch for your special invitation to join the Roman Catholic Church. And that you'll create a sort of Ellis Island to process whole lots of us at a time. To paraphrase you, it's all for the purpose of welcoming "your tired, your poor, your huddled masses yearning to be free."

I would be remiss if I didn't shout out to Roman Catholics to give us a look. Hospitality goes both ways. We're open for business.

To be honest, your exiles would have to adjust to some harsh realities if they decided to sign in with us. For one thing, they'd have to go along with the ordination of women. And another. They'd have to give up a streamlined system of ruling the church that gives all the power to the (male) clergy and hierachy. No more church conventions where lay people and priests share authority. One boss.

Then there's the gay thing. If your potential escapees don't know it already, gays and lesbians are allowed into the priesthood and now as bishops. For someone whose been led to believe that all the gays in the priesthood best keep it to themselves, the Episcopal church can be eye-opening.

They'd also have to give up papal infallibility.

Given those potential snags, we think there are plenty of Roman Catholics who may see our teachings as God's will. I know you would love to debate that over a beer, but such is the case. We think there are Catholics who believe that we, over the course of 400 years, have detected a thing or two about where the Holy Spirit is leading.

Next time you're in town, let's have lunch. Who knows, by then St. Thomas church, built by J.P Morgan himself, may have gone "over to Rome," while St. Malachy's could be flying the red, blue and white of Episcopal nation.

Yours in advance of the parousia, J. Hinkle Washburn +

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