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Vatican releases rules for ex-Anglicans, insists 'no change' on celibacy

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Almost three weeks after announcing plans to welcome Anglicans who want to become Catholics, the Vatican today released a legal blueprint for the creation of new structures for these potential converts. According to an apostolic constitution and complementary norms issued this morning, those structures will have wide latitude to incorporate elements of Anglican tradition ? though not latitude without limits.

Pointedly, a Vatican statement released this morning insists that permission to have married priests in these new structures does not betoken ?any change in the church?s discipline of clerical celibacy.?

The apostolic constitution, titled *Anglicanorum Coetibus* (?On Groups of Anglicans?) was released today in Rome by Cardinal William Levada, Prefect of the Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith.

Among the highlights:

- The new structures, which are essentially non-territorial dioceses called ?personal ordinariates,? will be erected within the borders of a national bishops? conference, and there can be more than one within each conference. While the document says ordinariates will be created ?in consultation? with a bishops? conference, ultimately the Vatican?s Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith is in charge.
- tMembership is for former Anglicans. Catholics who have never been Anglicans are not ?ordinarily? eligible, unless they belong to a family that?s part of an ordinariate ? though the term ?ordinarily? suggests there may be circumstances in which a Catholic who?s never been Anglican can nevertheless join one of these structures.
- tMass and the other sacraments will be celebrated according to the Anglican tradition, using books approved by the Vatican.
- t?As a rule,? only celibate men should be made priests. However, former Anglican ministers who are married may be ordained Catholic priests while remaining married. On a case-by-case basis, the leaders (called ?ordinaries?) of these new structures can also ask Rome?s permission to ordain other married men who have never been Anglican ministers.
- tFormer Catholic priests who became Anglicans can?t be priests, and likewise men in ?irregular? marriages are ineligible.
- tFormer Anglican bishops not recognized as bishops in the new ordinariates may nevertheless take part in bishops? conference meetings (with the status of a retired bishop), and may ask Rome?s permission to wear the insignia of a bishop.
- tPriests will be permitted to have a ?secular? job outside the church, with the permission of their ordinary ? perhaps a concession to the reality that at least at the beginning, these ordinariates are likely to struggle with financial resources.
- tIn a concession to the collaborative style of governance within Anglicanism, the ordinariates are required to have a Governing Council (with at least six priests) that will have a deliberative vote on matters such as

proposing new ordinaries to Rome, approving candidates for the priesthood, and creating or suppressing parishes, centers of formation and religious congregations. The ordinariates are also required to have Pastoral Councils, while for normal dioceses they are encouraged but optional.

- tOrdinaries will have the power not only to ordain priests and erect parishes, but also to create new religious orders of men and women under their jurisdiction.
- tClergy of an ordinariate are to assist the diocese in which they live, and likewise clergy of the diocese can be made available to assist with the activities of the ordinariate.
- tCandidates for the priesthood in an ordinariate will study alongside other Catholic seminarians, but may also have their own program of formation.

The full text of the apostolic constitution and complementary norms may be found on the Vatican Web site [1].

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