

Anglican-Catholic Dialogues Discuss Marriage, Physician-assisted Suicide



Representatives of Canada's Anglican and Catholic churches recently met for five days of diverse discussions characterized by candour and charity. The joint and separate meetings of the Anglican-Roman Catholic Dialogue of Canada and the Anglican-Roman Catholic Bishops' Dialogue of Canada took place November 8-12, 2014 at the Queen of Apostles Renewal Centre in Mississauga, Ontario.

The discussions included the Anglican Church of Canada's current discernment about expanding its canonical definition of marriage to include same-gender couples. In a spirit of broad consultation, the Anglican Church has invited the input of its ecumenical partners on this question, and the members of both dialogues engaged in a frank and friendly theological exchange. The Anglican-Roman Catholic Dialogue will continue these discussions on marriage, as well as related ecclesiological questions, and produce a statement for the Anglican Church of Canada's consideration.

The members of the dialogues also welcomed as a guest Monsignor Jeffrey Steenson, the head of the Personal Ordinariate of the Chair of Saint Peter. The Ordinariate was created by the Roman Catholic Church in 2009 as a means by which Anglicans or former Anglicans who wished to come into full communion with the Bishop of Rome could do so corporately, while still maintaining certain aspects of Anglican patrimony.

Monsignor Steenson outlined the Ordinariate's development in North America and engaged in a candid and respectful dialogue about how different paths for Anglicans and Roman Catholics to fuller, visible unity may coexist.

In a related discussion, the members of the Anglican-Roman Catholic Bishops' Dialogue of Canada reviewed their pastoral guidelines on clergy moving from one communion to the other. They also explored what the two churches might be able to say in common about physician-assisted suicide, an issue that has resurfaced on the national agenda.

Next steps were also determined for a common witness project called *Did You Ever Wonder...* This series of video and textual reflections offers responses from our shared Anglican and Catholic traditions on some of "life's big questions".

The gathering included a commemoration of the 50th anniversary of the Second Vatican Council's Decree on Ecumenism, *Unitatis Redintegratio*, which initiated the Roman Catholic Church's involvement in the ecumenical movement and identified the restoration of the full visible unity of the church as one of its principle concerns. A liturgy celebrating the Decree's anniversary was held at Saint James' Cathedral in Toronto on November 9. It was attended by the members of both dialogue groups, by His Eminence Thomas Cardinal Collins, the Catholic Archbishop of Toronto, and by Archbishop Colin Johnson, the Anglican Archbishop of Toronto. The liturgy was followed by a presentation which included addresses by the Rev. Dr. Alan Hayes, Dr. Michael Attridge, and Dr. Harry McSorley.

The official theological dialogue between the Anglican Church of Canada and the Roman Catholic Church in this country (under the aegis of the Canadian Conference of Catholic Bishops) began in 1971. Four years later, a second bilateral dialogue was established between Canadian Anglican and Roman Catholic bishops.

Both dialogues are dedicated to helping Canadian Anglicans and Roman Catholics become more aware of the existing high level of theological agreement our two churches already share, and helping them find ways to tangibly express that unity in mission together.

The members of the Anglican-Roman Catholic Dialogue of Canada are:

Anglican

The Rt. Rev. Linda Nicholls (co-chair)
The Rev. Dr. Eileen Conway
The Rev. Dr. Kevin Flynn
Dr. Joseph Mangina
The Rev. Canon Dr. David Neelands
The Ven. Bruce Myers (staff)

Roman Catholic

The Most Rev. Donald Bolen (co-chair)
Dr. Catherine Clifford
Mr. Julien Hammond
The Rev. Dr. Raymond Lafontaine
The Rev. Alexander Laschuk
Mrs. Annette Hrywna (staff)

Ecumenical observer

The Rev. Dr. Matthew Anderson (Evangelical Lutheran Church in Canada)

The members of the Anglican-Roman Catholic Bishops' Dialogue of Canada are:

Anglican

The Rt. Rev. Barry Clarke (co-chair)
The Rt. Rev. Peter Coffin
The Rt. Rev. David Irving
The Rt. Rev. Michael Oulton
The Most Rev. John Privett
The Ven. Bruce Myers (staff)

Roman Catholic

The Most Rev. Gary Gordon (co-chair)
The Most Rev. Brian Dunn
Mgr François Lapierre, P.M.É.
The Most Rev. John S. Pazzak, C.Ss.R.
The Most Rev. Albert Thévenot, M.Afr.
Mr. Kyle Ferguson (staff)

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