

**Barnett-Cowan, Alyson**

**From:** Timothy Tan [ttimothy@MAILHOST.NET]

**Sent:** Wed 12/3/2003 10:05 PM

**To:** aifw@mylist.net

**Cc:**

**Subject:** [Aifw] [news] In The Northwest: Tumult over gay bishop threatens reconciliation

**Attachments:**

SEATTLE POST-INTELLIGENCER

[http://seattlepi.nwsource.com/connelly/150849\\_joel03.html](http://seattlepi.nwsource.com/connelly/150849_joel03.html)

In The Northwest: Tumult over gay bishop threatens reconciliation  
Wednesday, December 3, 2003

By JOEL CONNELLY

SEATTLE POST-INTELLIGENCER COLUMNIST

Advent is for Christians a season of hope and anticipation that precedes Christmas. But this year it is a time of splintered hopes for Seattle's Roman Catholic Archbishop Alex Brunett.

Brunett has made ecumenical dialogue the touchstone of his 45 years as a Catholic clergyman.

He once was host for Jewish rabbis at a service at the Shrine of the Little Flower in Royal Oak, Mich., a church that was base for the 1930s anti-Semitic "radio priest" Father Charles Coughlin.

As Catholic co-chairman of the Anglican-Roman Catholic International Commission, Brunett was set to host -- in Seattle -- a February meeting due to produce a landmark common statement of faith.

A chill has come over the commission's work, however, in the wake of the consecration of V. Gene Robinson, a non-celibate gay, as an Episcopal bishop in New Hampshire.

The Seattle session is being put off. The Most Rev. Frank Griswold, presiding bishop of the Episcopal Church in the United States -- who officiated at Robinson's consecration -- has resigned as the Anglican co-chairman of the ecumenical panel.

Just back from meetings in Rome, Archbishop Brunett revealed in an interview that Catholic officials have received a startling overture from Episcopalians who refuse to recognize Robinson.

"We were approached by a whole Episcopal diocese about coming into the Roman Catholic church, as perhaps Anglican Rite Catholics," Brunett said. He declined to identify the diocese.

Under Pope John Paul II, the Roman Catholic Church has held fast to the concept of a celibate clergy and to passages in Scripture that reject sexual intimacy between those of the same sex.

The 1998 Lambeth Conference, a worldwide gathering of Anglican and Episcopal bishops, adopted a similar stand. It proclaimed that homosexual people are "loved by God," but it condemned homophobia and rejected homosexual practices as "incompatible with Scripture."

Specifically, the Anglican bishops turned down the "legitimizing or blessing of same-sex unions" and rejected the ordination to the priesthood or episcopate of "those involved in such unions."

"Episcopal bishops came back here and totally ignored the resolution," said Brunett, a Catholic observer at Lambeth.

The Episcopal Church -- which is the American branch of the 77 million-member global Anglican Communion -- has since marched to the beat of its own conscience.

Same-sex unions are blessed in the Diocese of Olympia, and many other places across America. The Episcopal General Convention in August approved Robinson's elevation to bishop.

The result has been uproar, a rebellion by conservative dioceses and parishes across the United States, and moves by Anglican bishops in Africa, Asia and Australia to censure or sever ties with the U.S. church.

"I can't tell you how much anger I hear from Anglican bishops around the world," Brunett said.

"It puts us on the spot," he added. "We don't have any disagreement with the Anglican Church. It is that this section of it, the Episcopal Church, has decided to separate itself from the Anglican Communion."

"The (Episcopalians) who oppose this have nowhere to run," he added.

The tides of religious factionalism may seem a world away from the Northwest's very secular culture.

Not so. Inhabiting the least "churched" corner of America -- with only 25 to 30 percent of the population belonging to a religious community -- churches have needed cooperation to exercise any influence.

The Northwest's spirituality goes beyond the Judeo-Christian tradition -- witness the Buddhist presence in Seattle as well as Native American religious symbolism and observance.

Brunett, appointed archbishop of Seattle in 1997, has been acutely sensitive to the local culture.

The archbishop's installation came in two parts: A service representing all religious traditions was followed, a day later, by a Catholic Mass.

As well, Brunett has used outreach and cooperation to push back at a secular culture that, at times, seems intent on marginalizing and managing religion.

With aid from evangelicals, he fought back -- hard -- when King County Executive Ron Sims sought to prohibit large churches in rural King County, on grounds that churches cause urban sprawl.

Brunett was a mover in a landmark outreach to Native Americans, a pastoral letter by 12 Northwest bishops that decried the irresponsible damming, pollution and overfishing of the Columbia River.

Beautifully written, the prelates' letter -- "The Columbia River Watershed: Caring for Creation and the Common Good" -- called for "an integrated

spiritual, social and ecological vision for our watershed home, a vision that promotes justice for people and stewardship of creation."

Still, Archbishop Brunett's most intense ecumenical work has come with Catholicism's closest spiritual neighbor, the Anglican Communion, whose the sacramental worship closely resembles the Catholic Mass.

The upcoming Catholic-Anglican meeting was to have culminated in signing of what would have been called the Seattle Document.

The commission was dealing with such issues as joint baptisms and joint marriage ceremonies, along with dialogue on the role of Virgin Mary. .

"It's kind of all lost," said Brunett. "They (the Episcopalians) are kind of out doing their own thing."

"I have respect for all people. I try to be very positive. I want to help the Anglican Communion resolve this issue. ... I really feel a mission, having vested time in this dialogue. I have devoted my life to this."

Likely, however, the Anglican split won't be resolved -- despite Herculean efforts by the archbishop of Canterbury, the Most Rev. Rowan Williams, to hold together his feuding bishops and fractious flock.

And as spiritual neighbor, the Catholic Church may indeed find dissident Episcopalians knocking at its door.

---

P-I columnist Joel Connelly can be reached at 206-448-8160 or [joelconnelly@seattlepi.com](mailto:joelconnelly@seattlepi.com)

© 1998-2003 Seattle Post-Intelligencer

---

Aifw mailing list  
[Aifw@mylist.net](mailto:Aifw@mylist.net)  
<http://mylist.net/listinfo/aifw>