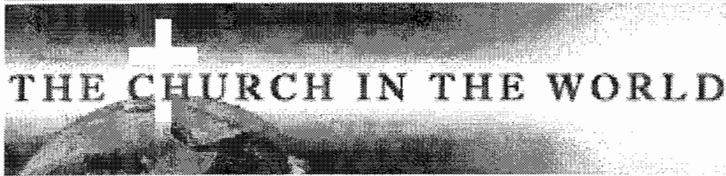


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Liturgical Calendar

Vatican acts over gay bishop's consecration

Dialogue between the Catholic Church and the Anglican Communion has received its first setback since the American Anglicans consecrated an actively gay bishop last month. The Vatican said on Tuesday it was suspending a meeting in the United States scheduled for February which had intended to work on a common statement of faith between Catholics and Anglicans. The meeting "would have to be put on hold" because of "ecclesiological concerns" raised by "recent developments within the Anglican Communion", according to a statement by the Vatican's Council for the Promotion of Christian Unity, whose president is Cardinal Walter Kasper.

But the unity council was at pains to point out that the decision to suspend talks applied only to the International Anglican-Roman Catholic Commission for Unity and Mission (IARCCUM) and not to the Anglican-Roman Catholic International Commission (Arcic), which it described as the "main instrument of theological dialogue" between the two Communion. Arcic, which looks at the contention between Catholics and Anglicans in areas such as their understanding of authority and the Eucharist, was set up in 1970, and will complete its current phase of dialogue in 2004.

The younger IARCCUM was established in 2001 to bring bishops in both Communion together in order to find practical ways to express and promote the agreements resulting from Arcic's 35 years of work. Its main project has been the drafting of a statement expressing points of faith shared by Anglicans and Catholics. The body, which was suggested by the then Archbishop of Canterbury, Dr George Carey, was seen at the time as a major development and an important indication of the continued will by both Churches to collaborate in spite of differences over the ordination of women. But the idea of expressing a shared faith is being seen as doubtful at a time when the consecration of Canon Gene Robinson as bishop has raised the question of what faith the two sides shared.

Ecumenical fallout from that consecration had been widely predicted. In an otherwise warm visit to Rome in early October, the Archbishop of Canterbury, Dr Rowan Williams, received a clear warning from both Pope John Paul II and Cardinal Walter Kasper that the decision by the Episcopal Church of the United States (Ecusa) to ordain Gene Robinson as Bishop of New Hampshire would have consequences for Catholic-

Anglican dialogue. Pope John Paul told Archbishop Williams on that occasion that "as we give thanks for the progress that has already been made, we must also recognise that new and serious difficulties have arisen on the path to unity" (*The Tablet*, 11 October).

There were indications last week that the Vatican was also planning to suspend Arcic. But on 26 November its Anglican co-chairman, Bishop Frank Griswold, wrote to the Archbishop of Canterbury to submit his resignation. He did so, "not without regret, but in the interest of not jeopardising the present and future life and work of the commission". As Ecusa's presiding bishop, Bishop Griswold consecrated Gene Robinson. He had been Arcic's co-chairman since 1999.

Anglican sources in Rome said the resignation had been prompted by Cardinal Kasper's failure to attend a regularly scheduled informal Arcic session on 25-26 November at which Bishop Griswold was present in his capacity as co-chairman, along with his Catholic counterpart, Archbishop Alexander Brunett of Seattle.

But *The Tablet* understands that the resignation was the result of a private meeting in Rome on 25 November, the day before Griswold's resignation letter, between Cardinal Kasper, president of the unity council, and Canon John Peterson, secretary general of the Anglican Consultative Council, an advisory body made up of member provinces of the Anglican Communion over which Dr Williams presides. The unity council later said that the topic under discussion was "the future of Anglican-Roman Catholic dialogue" in the light of "recent developments within the life of the Anglican Communion". It is thought that the resignation of Bishop Griswold was the price for averting the threatened suspension of the next Arcic meeting scheduled for 28 January. Participants in the meeting, the latest in a series of the last four years in Dublin, Paris, Vienna and Palm Beach, Florida, will work on an agreed statement on the Virgin Mary. It is not yet clear who will co-chair the meeting alongside Archbishop Brunett. The meeting could be postponed if a new Anglican co-chairman has not been named.

Lambeth Palace, the London seat of the Archbishop of Canterbury, announced Bishop Griswold's resignation on 29 November. On Tuesday Cardinal Kasper's council issued its statement announcing that as a result of the concerns raised at the Kasper-Peterson meeting it had decided to "put on hold" the IARCCUM plenary session scheduled for early February. But the council made clear that IARCCUM's sub-committees would continue to meet, and that overall dialogue with the Anglican Communion continues. It said a new committee would be formed to "reflect jointly" on the implications of the Robinson ordination. The issues include the nature of unity or communion within the Church, how authority is exercised, the question of doctrinal and disciplinary boundaries, the development of doctrine and the interpretation of Scripture. Sources in Rome said the decision by the Archbishop of Canterbury to include the Catholic Church in the Anglican Communion's future discernment was being seen as testament to the achievements of Arcic over 35 years.

Forward in Faith North America, a leading organisation of conservatives in Ecusa and the Canadian Anglican Church, welcomed Bishop Griswold's resignation. Its President, Fr David Moyer, said he "praised God" for it, since Rome would now be able to speak to orthodox Anglicans. "The work of Arcic can get back on track with the same intensity it once had", he told *The Tablet*.

An English Catholic bishop who has been a part of the IARCCUM conversations said on Tuesday he had been saddened by the news of their suspension. The Bishop of Portsmouth, Crispian Hollis, said there had been "indications of real and genuine progress" in the dialogue and said he prayed that the suspension would be temporary.

He said the IARCCUM conversations were not just with the Church of England but with the whole Anglican Communion. "In such conversations we need to know, on the level of Church, who we are talking to" while "the Anglicans themselves need to be able to speak in such a way that they are confident of being representative of the whole Anglican Communion", he said in a statement, adding that "present circumstances make that very difficult".

(Peggy Polk in Rome and Richard Major in New York contributed to this story.)

Rome

Praying for peace in Advent. "The world has great need for peace", Pope John Paul II declared with evident emotion when he spoke on 30 November before leading pilgrims in the midday Angelus prayer from his study window overlooking St Peter's Square.

"I think in a special way with deep sorrow of the latest episodes of violence in the Middle East and on the African continent", John Paul said. "I renew my appeal to the leaders of the great religions: let us join forces in praying for non-violence, pardon and reconciliation."

Calling Advent a "journey of expectation and hope", the Pope said that preparing for Christmas should "reawaken in us and in the entire world the hope for peace", which, he said, "is built by laying down the weapons of rancour, vendetta and every form of egoism".

The next day, he sent his condolences to the Spanish Prime Minister, José María Aznar, over the "unjustified violence" that killed seven Spanish intelligence agents in Iraq. In a telegram signed on his behalf by Cardinal Angelo Sodano, the Vatican secretary of state, the Pope expressed sadness over the "execrable terrorist attack" that took the lives of agents "carrying out their peace mission".

The Pope again spoke of peace again on 1 December in a brief address to a delegation from the Simon Wiesenthal Centre in Paris. Rabbi Marvin Hier, the centre's founder and dean, presented the Pope with its Humanitarian Award for 2003 in recognition of his "lifelong friendship toward the Jewish people".

The delegation accompanied its award with a request to the Pope to declare suicide bombings "a crime against humanity". John Paul has condemned such attacks when they have occurred in Israel, Iraq and elsewhere but has urged attempts to prevent them by tackling poverty and injustice as their root cause.

Europe

Pope sends support and prayers to Istanbul. The Pope has used the visit of a papal delegation to the spiritual leader of the world's Orthodox Churches to urge a "communion of purpose" to restore Christian unity.

Visiting the Ecumenical Patriarch, Bartholomew of Constantinople, at his Istanbul headquarters on 30 November, the Vatican delegates said they were sensitive to Turkey's suffering after a string of recent terrorist attacks (*The Tablet*, 29 November) left nearly 50 people dead and hundreds injured.

"We are living difficult moments in the world, and we go there aware of the