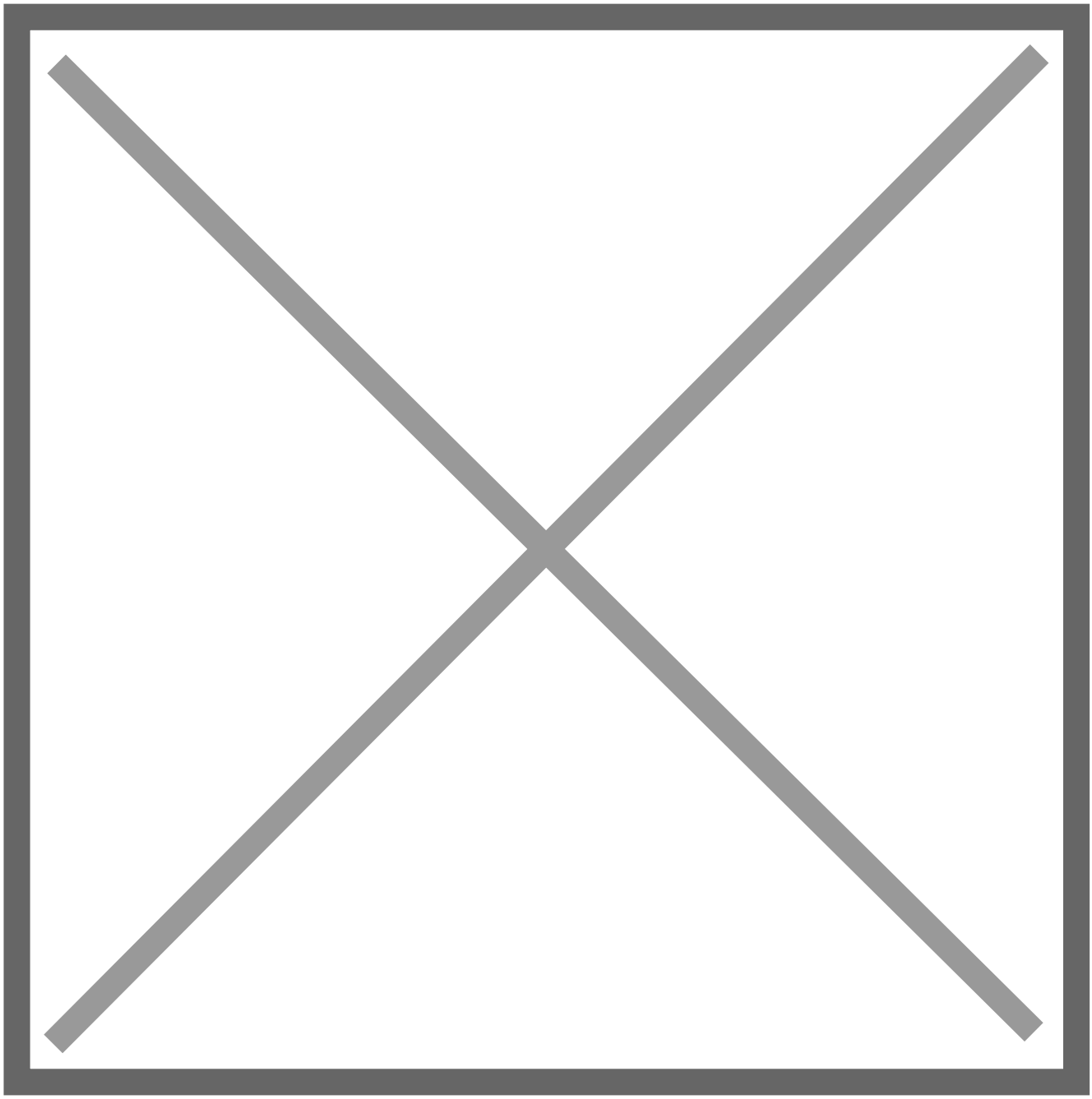
Vatican
Vatican News



Deacon Brian Wehrle, center, participates in a procession at the conclusion of a special Mass celebrated according to the Divine Worship: The Missal at the Basilica of St. Patrick's Old Cathedral in New York City Jan. 11, 2026, the feast of the Baptism of the Lord. The missal, approved by Pope Francis in 2015, provides the form of Mass used in the personal ordinariates established under Pope Benedict XVI to provide a permanent home for the Anglican patrimony in the Catholic Church and

reflects that liturgical tradition. (OSV News/Gregory A. Shemitz)

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The Vatican's Dicastery for the Doctrine of the Faith has released a new document describing the "Anglican heritage" of the Catholic Church's personal ordinariates as a permanent reality that makes a "distinctive contribution" to the Church's evangelizing mission.

Published on the dicastery's website March 26, the Vatican document stressed that the Anglican patrimony of the ordinariates founded under Pope Benedict XVI's 2009 apostolic constitution *Anglicanorum Coetibus* — ordinariates informally known as "the Anglican Ordinariate" — is "a living reality" that "looks to the future in the transmission of the faith to future generations."

The Vatican said the ordinariates — which bring with them a patrimony from the Church of England that developed for nearly 500 years following the Reformation — offer "a unique reflection of the face of the Church and a distinctive contribution to the living richness of her identity as 'one, holy, catholic, and apostolic.'"

"The patrimony they have inherited, therefore, not only equips the Ordinariates to welcome communities and individuals into full communion but also continues to shape their distinctive participation in the Church's mission well into the future," it

stated.

The document followed a March 1-3 meeting between the bishops leading the Catholic Church's personal ordinariates and the head of the dicastery, Cardinal Victor Manuel Fernández.

Bishop Steven Lopes of the Ordinariate of the Chair of St. Peter, one of the bishops who attended that meeting, told OSV News that the Vatican document is "certainly a fruit of the reflection that the Holy See engaged in with the bishops."

"The document affirms that there is a distinctive way that the faith was lived and celebrated and articulated in an English context, and that distinctive way is still valid and, in fact, fruitful for the evangelizing mission of the Church today," he said.

Regarding what the Anglican patrimony is in the Catholic Church, the Vatican document noted Fernández's observation during the homily he gave at the 2024 episcopal ordination of Bishop David Waller of the Ordinariate of Our Lady of Walsingham, which covers the United Kingdom.

"In the case of the Ordinariate, the Catholic faith is inculturated among people who experienced the Gospel in the context of the Anglican Communion," the prefect preached, noting how elements of the rich Anglican tradition "are now lived out in the fullness of Catholic communion."

The Vatican document identified seven distinctive traits of this patrimony that it proceeded to describe in detail under the following headings: "a distinctive 'ecclesial ethos'"; "evangelization through beauty"; "direct outreach to the poor"; "pastoral culture"; "the family and the domestic church"; "Scripture and preaching"; and "spiritual direction and the sacrament of penance."

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Regarding the ordinariates' "ecclesial ethos," the Vatican noted they are "marked by the broad participation of both clergy and laity in the life and governance of the Church," with a culture "grounded in relationships" that is "inherently consultative and collaborative."

It also drew attention to the ordinariate culture as welcoming converts into Catholic communion while maintaining its unique spiritual identity. It noted that this culture "is centered on a living sense of tradition that seeks to remain faithful to what has been received while also recognizing the place of organic development."

The Vatican document also drew connections between the importance of beauty in the ordinariates' evangelizing mission — in divine worship, sacred music and sacred art — and another defining element of their Anglican patrimony: "direct outreach to the poor."

"In the Ordinariates, beauty in worship and holiness of life are brought to bear in the concrete realities of the neighborhood," the document observed. "This reflects a deeply incarnational theology: to go out from divine worship to seek Jesus among the poor and those in want."

The importance of beauty for the ordinariates "is meant to draw individuals and communities into full participation, body and soul into the work of the Savior."

Lopes explained the document refutes the false gap between "the smells-and-bells crowd and the social justice crowd." He pointed out that St. John Henry Newman, the 19th- century doctor of the Church who came into full Catholic communion from Anglicanism, was part of an Anglo-Catholic movement in England that insightfully linked "the beauty of worship with direct service to the poorest of the poor."

"And the document cites Newman directly, who, as a Catholic priest, as an Oratorian, certainly dedicated a lot of his priestly ministry to the slum," he said.

Lopes pointed to two of his ordinariate parishes living that same ethos today where "because of an experience of God's beauty and holiness, we reflect it back to those whom God loves."

He said at St. Thomas More Parish in Scranton, Pennsylvania, "part of their parish identity is the transformation of that neighborhood, which is the poorest ZIP code in the state of Pennsylvania."

He also pointed to the ordinariate's Mount Calvary Church in Baltimore, which has "beautiful worship" coupled with a "marvelous music program."

"And people are serving breakfast Saturday morning at the bus stop to the folks at the methadone clinic across the street from the church," he said.

The Vatican document also acknowledged how praying together the Divine Office or Liturgy of the Hours — a practice shaped by the Book of Common Prayer tradition — was "essential" to the ordinariates' pastoral culture where the rhythm of "divine worship and daily life" are linked.

Regarding preaching, it noted that the ordinariates' patrimony "includes a strong tradition of preaching grounded in Scripture," informed by the Church's tradition, particularly the Fathers of the Church.

The document also linked the ordinariates' pastoral accompaniment of the family in their journey of faith with the Shrine of Our Lady of Walsingham in England, often called "England's Nazareth," noting "the home is understood as the first place where the faith is learned and lived."

The Vatican document underscored how the mystery of the Incarnation was central to understanding the ordinariates' living patrimony.

"The dignity of each person, the role of beauty, the richness of liturgical expression, concern for the poor, and reverence for the domestic church all flow from this same source: the Son of God, our only Savior (cf. Acts 4:12) and Mediator before the Father (cf. 1 Tim. 2:5), who,
having become incarnate among us (cf. Jn. 1:14), suffering for us (cf. 1 Pt. 2:21), and rising from the dead, opened for us the way 'so we too may walk in newness of life' (Rom. 6:4)," it stated.

Lopes said "the most important thing" about the Vatican document, in his view, is that it puts to rest a view that the ordinariates were a "transitory" bridge to help people from an Anglican tradition become Catholic. It makes clear, he said, that these ordinariates have "a role and an identity in the Catholic Church going forward."

"There's something distinctive, and unique, and properly its own that the ordinariate is meant to live, and therefore contribute to the vitality of the Catholic communion," he said.