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Australian bishop: 'Traditional' Anglicans should convert

by Anthony Barich by Catholic News Service

PERTH, Australia -- Traditionalist Anglicans who remain in the Anglican Church rather than taking up Pope Benedict XVI's offer of an Anglican ordinariate are wasting their time and spiritual energy clinging to a dangerous illusion, said the Vatican's delegate for the Australian ordinariate.

Melbourne Auxiliary Bishop Peter Elliott, a former Anglican, urged Anglicans at a Feb. 26 festival in Perth to take up the pope's offer of "peace."

"I would caution people who still claim to be Anglo-Catholics and yet are holding back," he told *The Record*, Catholic newspaper of the Archdiocese of Perth, Feb. 26. "I'd say 'When are you going to face realities?' because there's no place for a classical Anglo-Catholic in the Anglican Communion anymore."

In November 2009, Pope Benedict announced his decision to erect personal ordinariates for former Anglicans who wanted to enter into full communion with Rome while preserving liturgical and other elements of their Anglican heritage, including a certain amount of governing by consensus.

Those coming into the ordinariates are the "last fruits" of the Anglicans' Oxford Movement started in 1833 by Blessed John Henry Newman to restore Catholic identity in the Anglican Church, Bishop Elliott said. But he warned that times have changed and events have taken a "new and confronting turn."

"These realities seem to be lost on some Anglo-Catholics who are tempted to make a desperate last stand by just staying where they are," he told the festival, which drew more than 100 people, including the Archbishop Barry Hickey of Perth and his auxiliary, Bishop Donald Sproxton.

"Permit me to suggest that it is a waste of time and spiritual energy to cling to such a dangerous illusion.

Valuing the Catholic faith should not be confused with polemics," Bishop Elliott said.

"Let me quietly invite you to lay down weapons of controversies that are now pointless, to set aside endless intrigues which lead nowhere, to walk away from futile conflicts which cannot build up the body of Christ in charity. Accept the invitation of the vicar of Christ on earth.

"The gentle man who reaches out to you in 'Anglicanorum Coetibus' has no ulterior motives," he said, referring to the apostolic constitution that set up the ordinariates. "His apostolic offer is clear. There is no deception here. He calls you to peace."

The prelate also dismissed suggestions that the pope's offer would hinder ecumenism. Rather, it has kick-started it, he said.

"Recently it has been announced that the ARCIC (Anglican-Roman Catholic International Commission) process will continue. Anyone tempted to add 'in spite of the papal offer of the ordinariate' should reflect whether in fact it is the papal offer that has kick-started ARCIC once more," he said.

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"With reference to these ongoing conversations, I would argue, as I have said elsewhere, that, far from damaging ecumenism, the ordinariates will provide a lively stimulus for better relations between Anglicans and Catholics.

"In this regard let us pray that the forthcoming ARCIC discussions on the church as communion and Christian ethics will go well," he said.

Bishop Elliott added that the ARCIC conversations and the fruit of these conversations will also be honored in the new ordinariates.

Australian Anglo-Catholics hope to establish their ordinariate by Pentecost, June 12, by which time up to 60 Anglican clergy from Australia and the Torres Strait islands hope to have been ordained Catholic priests.

Momentum is gaining among traditionalist Anglicans across the world to take up Pope Benedict's offer.

Australian Archbishop John Hepworth, primate of the Traditional Anglican Communion, which claims 400,000 members globally, has asked the Vatican's Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith to appoint bishop delegates for India, parts of Africa, Latin America, the Torres Strait, Puerto Rico and Japan following decisions of Anglicans there to enter the Catholic Church through ordinariates.

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