

Reference ID	Created	Released	Classification	Origin
<u>09VATICAN113</u>	<u>2009-11-09 12:12</u>	<u>2010-12-10 21:09</u>	<u>CONFIDENTIAL</u>	<u>Embassy Vatican</u>

VZCZCXRO3157

PP RUEHDBU RUEHFL RUEHKW RUEHLA RUEHNP RUEHSL RUEHSR

DE RUEHROV #0113/01 3131202

ZNY CCCCC ZZH

P 091202Z NOV 09

FM AMEMBASSY VATICAN

TO RUEHC/SECSTATE WASHDC PRIORITY 1182

INFO RUEHLO/AMEMBASSY LONDON PRIORITY 0010

RUEHZL/EUROPEAN POLITICAL COLLECTIVE

RUEHROV/AMEMBASSY VATICAN 1221

Monday, 09 November 2009, 12:02

C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 01 OF 03 VATICAN 000113

SIPDIS

EO 12958 DECL: 11/9/2034

TAGS PGOV, PREL, PHUM, KIRF, UK, VT

SUBJECT: THE VATICAN AND THE ANGLICANS: OPPORTUNITY OR OPPORTUNISM?

REF: VATICAN 82

VATICAN 00000113 001.2 OF 003

CLASSIFIED BY: Rafael Foley, Polchief. REASON: 1.4 (b), (d) Summary

¶1. (C) The upcoming visit of the Archbishop of Canterbury to Rome November 21 will take place with the background of the Vatican's far-reaching decision to facilitate the conversion of disaffected Anglicans to Catholicism. Embassy contacts approving the measure interpret it as a bold and appropriate response to the legitimate request of conservative Anglicans. Skeptics worry that it will weaken and change the tone of dialogue between Catholics and other Christian denominations, and that it will accentuate tradition at the expense of accommodation. Critics see it as opportunistic preying on the internally divided Anglican Communion. While Archbishop Williams has said that the Vatican decision is in a sense a consequence of Anglican-Catholic dialogue, the Vatican informed but did not seek the Archbishop's approval before announcing the decision. End summary.

Go It Alone

¶2. (C) On October 22, POL/ECONOFF spoke with XXXXXXXXXXXX. XXXXXXXXXXXX said that the Pontifical Council for Christian Unity, which is responsible for ecumenical dialogue--i.e., relations with non-Catholic Christian Churches--is concerned about the effect of the announcement on the ongoing dialogue with the

Anglican Church and has resisted pressure to put out a statement in support of the decision.

¶3. (C) During the press conference announcing the upcoming release of the "apostolic constitution" that will set the implementing mechanism to bring in particular groups of Anglicans, Cardinal Levada--Prefect of the Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith-- reported that Archbishop Rowan Williams knew about the Vatican decision "a month earlier." However, XXXXXXXXXXXX said that the Anglican leadership was most likely only notified on October 19, when Levada and Williams met. Another source XXXXXXXXXXXX told poloffs that when Williams expressed concern about the implications of the announcement, Levada responded that the Vatican had already made its decision and was moving forward with it.

Most appealing to conservatives

¶4. (C) In a separate conversation, British Ambassador Francis Campbell told Ambassador Diaz that if many Anglicans decide to join the Catholic Church in response to the Vatican's--yet to be released--new rules, the Vatican could face unforeseen obstacles. Campbell cited the difference between the Anglican Stipend and Catholic Allowance as chief among them. Because of the need to provide for families, Anglican priests are paid far more than their Catholic counterparts. With many parishes already financially stretched, a large transition of Anglican converts could overwhelm the financial resources of many dioceses. Within the Anglican Church, the groups most likely to join with Rome tend to be the most conservative. This is particularly true in the U.S., because the issues dividing Anglicans--the ordination of women and acceptance of homosexuality--are more prominent in the United States than elsewhere. Other Embassy contacts and media analysis agree that it is the Anglican conservative groups that will find it most appealing to become Catholics in groups that would be allowed, according to Levada, to maintain most of their Anglican traditions--except the Anglican freedom to openly voice dissent. Anglicans who take the Vatican's offer will be expected to accept Papal rule.

¶5. (SBU) In a recent article, Vatican specialist and author John Allen (U.S.) concluded that "when the dust settles, the centuries-old breach between Rome and Canterbury will remain

VATICAN 00000113 002.2 OF 003

intact." In this view, the apostolic constitution will not make the Catholic Church in the U.S. or elsewhere more conservative, because the numbers of converts will not be significant. Worldwide, he writes, there are 77 million Anglicans (including 2.2 American Episcopalians), while there are 1.2 billion Catholics. An Embassy contact pointed out that it is entirely possible that conservative Anglican bishops may also decide not to join the Catholic Church and bring their parishes with them, because they will have to relinquish their positions as bishops. The apostolic constitution will allow Anglican priests to become Catholic priests, but Anglican bishops would not come in as bishops.

The harshest critic

¶6. (SBU) The harshest public criticism for the decision has come from a former friend of the Pope, the Swiss theologian Hans Kung. In an article published in several major European newspapers, Kung states that "having brought back the extreme anti-reformist faction of the Pius X fraternity into the fold, Pope Benedict now hopes to fill up the dwindling ranks of the Catholic Church with Anglicans sympathetic to Rome". For all its color, Kung's criticism is not

influential with mainstream Catholics, according to an Embassy contact who is himself skeptical about the wisdom of the apostolic constitution. Kung, XXXXXXXXXXXX adds, comes across as personally bitter and has used such a strong language in criticizing the Pope that moderate reformists would not want to be associated with him or his opinion pieces: "with Kung, it is all about Kung."

Views from the Pope's loyalists

¶7. (SBU) Embassy contacts who are most loyal to the Pope and are the first to defend his decisions have explained the announcement about the apostolic constitution as the charitable response to the legitimate Catholic longings of specific Anglican groups. An Opus Dei professor of theology told poloffs that the Vatican was not so much acting, but reacting, to the petition that the Traditional Anglican Communion -an association of churches that is separate from the Anglican Communion and reportedly has hundreds of thousands of members worldwide--made in 2007 to unite with the Catholic Church, provided the Vatican allowed it to maintain its Anglican rites.

¶8. (SBU) The Pope's response, the professor adds, is very progressive, because it allows for greater diversity of rites within the Catholic Church, and because it permits individuals who are already forming a community to come to the Church together (what the Church calls a "corporate" conversion) as oppose to asking them to undergo the more daunting individual conversion. (Note: with respect to the diversity of rites, another Embassy contact said that some of the Anglican rites that the apostolic constitution may allow are very traditional, for example in the use of Latin for the masses. End note). For the professor, the Pope is redefining ecumenism (i.e., the process of uniting the once-upon-a-time single Christian family) by moving from the "getting to know you" ecumenical dialogue to specific ecumenical action with measures that make it easier for a greater union to materialize, even if incompletely.

¶9. (SBU) The professor also maintained that the apostolic constitution does not have anything to do with a relaxation of priestly celibacy. Currently, former Catholic priests who have left the Church to become married Anglican priests are already banned in Canon (Church) law from re-entering the Catholic Church as priests. He also notes that, even if the number of married (convert) priests will increase, there will be no married bishops in the Catholic Church, just like there are married priests but no married bishops in the Oriental Catholic Churches.

Comment: winners and losers

VATICAN 00000113 003.2 OF 003

¶10. (C) As the dust settles, it is possible to see the winners and losers of the Pope's decision. On the winning side is Cardinal Levada, the American "Faith Czar" who will have a direct say on the final form of the new procedures. Also on the winning side are Vatican officials and theologians in tune with the Pope's preference for depth of conviction over broadening the appeal of the Christian message. Traditionalists groups who cherish the use of Latin and older rites also gain, as their practices get reinforcement from unexpected quarters. Anglicans wishing to convert to Catholicism also come out stronger, as their options increase. The Pope's own anti-secular agenda also wins. In uniting traditionalist Anglicans with the Catholic Church, the Pope is bringing together

two groups strongly committed defending to Europe's Christian heritage--a theme he strongly champions.

¶11. (C) On the losing side, the Archbishop of Canterbury and Cardinal Kasper, the German prefect of the Pontifical Council for Christian Unity who has lead with increasing difficulty--since Cardinal Ratzinger became Pope--the Vatican's ecumenical dialogue. Archbishop Williams was already in a very difficult situation trying to hold together an increasingly-divided Anglican Communion. Among his critics who want nothing to do with the Vatican, recent events "confirm" him as the weak leader they always said he was. Cardinal Kasper, who might have been intentionally spared from the difficult trance of standing next to Levada when the announcement was made (he was out of the country), also loses. The ecumenical dialogue will continue, but it will be a different dialogue now. His ecumenical interlocutors will not help but to wonder if anything that Kasper says really matters. Finally, those who might have hoped that changing attitudes towards a variety of social issues (homosexuality and women's ordination among them) in non-Catholic denominations might lead the Vatican to reconsider its own position have reasons to be disappointed. End Comment. DIAZ