



Pope Francis greets Anglican Archbishop David Moxon, the Archbishop of Canterbury's representative to the Vatican, during his general audience on January 25.

PRESS WATCH - As Catholics and Anglicans come together, the Church of England pulls apart

In many ways, the Catholic Church and the Anglican Communion are on closer terms

than they have ever been in their history. Despite this relationship, the situation for Anglo-Catholics in the Church of England itself is getting worse: An Anglo-Catholic bishop withdrew his nomination as the Anglican Bishop of Sheffield due to protests over his opposition to the ordination of women, [Fr. Dwight Longenecker](#) writes in *Crux*.

There was a kind of ecumenical triumph for the Anglicans in Rome last weekend. For the first time ever, the beautiful service of Choral Evensong was sung in St. Peter's Basilica.

Anglican Archbishop David Moxon, director of the Anglican center in Rome, presided, the Choir of Merton College, Oxford sang, and English Archbishop Arthur Roche, Vatican Secretary of the Congregation for Divine Worship and the Discipline of the Sacraments, preached.

It was the sort of event both Anglicans and Catholics could not have imagined just sixty years ago. Furthermore, the little triumph of church unity comes just five months after Pope Francis and Archbishop of Canterbury Justin Welby celebrated Vespers together at the Basilica of San Gregorio al Celio in Rome.

In addition, last month Pope Francis observed the 200th anniversary of the foundation of the Anglican church of All Saints in Rome by visiting the church and blessing an icon.

For those who are unfamiliar with the Anglican service of Evensong, it is a version of the monastic offices of Vespers (evening prayer) and Compline (night prayer) adapted by the Reformation Archbishop of Canterbury.

Over the centuries, the Anglicans have maintained the medieval monastic tradition of male voice choirs. Originally the choirs would have been composed of monks and boys from the abbey schools. Now the choirs are based in a few Oxford and Cambridge colleges that had monastic roots, as well as Anglican cathedrals.

Anglicans not only maintained the medieval choral tradition, but they also developed and enriched the tradition with new settings of the psalms and canticles for the evening and night offices. To participate in Choral Evensong in the ancient soaring collegiate chapels and cathedrals of England is one of the long lasting treasures of the Anglican patrimony, and it is one of the great gifts Anglicans can share with Catholics.

Unfortunately, while Anglican voices were raised in praise in the magnificent setting of St. Peter's in Rome, things continue to be turbulent at home in England.

In January, the Church of England bishops published a long awaited report affirming that marriage can only be between one man and one woman. However, London's *Guardian* newspaper [reported](#) that "Gay campaigners within the church denounced the report as "cruel" and an "utter failure" that could herald an increase in clerical disobedience over issues around sexuality."

The disobedience is already widespread. In September *The Guardian* [also reported](#) that the Anglican bishop of Grantham- The Right Rev. Nicholas Chamberlain is the first Church of England bishop to not only admit that he is gay, but that he is in a (celibate) relationship with another man. Meanwhile the Right Rev. Nick Holtham- another senior Anglican bishop- has gone public with his support of same sex marriage.

If the same sex turmoil isn't enough, the Church of England was rocked last month when their much celebrated tolerance took a hard knock. The Bishop of Burnley, the Right Rev. Philip

North, worked as a suffragan (assistant bishop) in the northern diocese of Blackburn. As a traditionalist Anglo-Catholic, Bishop North is opposed to women's ordination.

However, trying to keep the Anglican boat steady, North was promoted to be the Bishop of Sheffield. The fact that he would not ordain women, and would not recognize the ordination of his fellow bishops who are female, infuriated Anglican liberals and he was subjected to "highly individualized attacks" in the media by senior members of the Church of England.

North's subsequent withdrawal of his acceptance as Bishop of Sheffield put the final nail in the coffin of the Church of England's attempts to have both women bishops and bishops who resist the innovation.

Monsignor Andrew Burnham -a former Anglican bishop and one of the leaders of the Ordinariate of Our Lady of Walsingham-thinks the experiment is over and Bishop North should swim the Tiber.

Writing in London's *Catholic Herald*, Burnham explained why he left to become Catholic, "I left the Church of England when, in 2008, it became clear what the inexorable trajectory had become. Wherever it leads, it doesn't lead to orthodoxy,

and will always be shipwrecked on the rocks of secular liberalism and cultural Marxism. Secular liberalism rejects the Church's notion of the complementarity of the sexes - male and female having separate and distinct roles within the economy of salvation - and cultural Marxism would do away entirely with the biblical teaching on marriage and the family."

Pope Francis's overtures to Anglicans, and Choral Evensong being celebrated in St Peter's, are certainly important symbolic gestures, but the ongoing divisions within Anglicanism itself over human sexuality, the sacraments, and doctrine will mean that such overtures must remain not much more than symbolic gestures.

++++++

First published in Crux, March 18, 2017

++++++

The inclusion of an article in Press Watch does not imply endorsement by CNI. Rather it is an endeavour to present articles from a variety of view points for consideration by CNI readers.

++++++