

**Characteristics of the Anglican Heritage as
Lived in the Ordinariates Established Under
the Apostolic Constitution *Anglicanorum Coetibus***

24 March 2026

During the Plenary Meeting of the Bishop Ordinaries of the Personal Ordinariates established under the Apostolic Constitution *Anglicanorum Coetibus* (2009), held at the Dicastery for the Doctrine of the Faith from 1 to 3 March 2026, His Eminence Cardinal Víctor Manuel Fernández, Prefect, invited the Bishops to describe the lived experience of the patrimony at the heart of their Ordinariates, as it relates to how they have received and integrated elements that came from the Anglican tradition.

The Bishops affirmed that, notwithstanding the vast geographical distances encompassed by their Ordinariates—from Inverness to Devon, from Edmonton to Orlando, from Perth to Sydney to Guam, and beyond—a core shared identity is indeed evident among Ordinariate communities wherever they are found.

This shared identity is rooted in a common path of following Christ that has led them into full communion with the Catholic Church. In entering, they brought with them that “worthy patrimony of piety and usage”¹ to which Pope Saint Paul VI referred when speaking about the Anglican heritage. It was precisely to enable such groups to enter into Catholic communion together, while preserving this patrimony, that Pope Saint John Paul II approved the Pastoral Provision in 1980, and that Pope Benedict XVI later promulgated the Apostolic Constitution *Anglicanorum Coetibus* in 2009. The Constitution itself describes this patrimony as “a precious gift [...] and a treasure to be shared.”²

In reflecting on the meaning and place of this patrimony, the Bishops recalled the homily that Cardinal Fernández gave at the episcopal ordination of Bishop David A. Waller at Westminster Cathedral on 22 June 2024. In that context, he observed that “the existence of the Ordinariate [...] reflects a profound and beautiful reality about the nature of the Church and the inculturation of the Gospel, as a rich English heritage. For the Church is one, and the Gospel is one, but in the process of inculturation, the Gospel is expressed in a variety of cultures. In this way, the Church acquires a new face [...] In this process, the Church not only gives but is also enriched. For, as Saint John Paul II

¹ PAUL VI, *Homily for the Canonization of Forty Martyrs of England and Wales* (25 October 1970): AAS 62 (1970), 753.

² BENEDICT XVI, Ap. Const. *Anglicanorum Coetibus* (4 November 2009), III: AAS 101 (2009), 987.

taught, ‘every culture offers positive values and forms which can enrich the way the Gospel is preached, understood and lived.’”³

The Ordinariate, the Prefect further affirmed, represents one particular expression of that reality: “In the case of the Ordinariate, the Catholic faith is inculturated among people who experienced the Gospel in the context of the Anglican Communion. As they entered into full communion with the Catholic Church, it was enriched. We can say, therefore, that each Ordinariate represents one of the faces of the Church, which, in this case, receives certain elements of the rich history of the Anglican tradition: elements that are now lived out in the fullness of Catholic communion.”⁴

Therefore, in response to the Prefect’s invitation to describe the lived experience of the patrimony, the Bishops identified several traits that they consider to be characteristic of the spiritual and pastoral heritage of the Ordinariates.

1. A Distinctive “Ecclesial Ethos”: The Bishops first spoke of a distinctive “ecclesial ethos,” marked by the broad participation of both clergy and laity in the life and governance of the Church. This culture, grounded in relationships that shape the ecclesial life of each Ordinariate, is inherently consultative and collaborative. It is also characterized by a capacity to welcome converts into Catholic communion while preserving the uniqueness of their spiritual history. Moreover, it 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.

2. Evangelization Through Beauty: A theme that emerged several times in the discussion was the importance of beauty—yet not as an end in itself, but insofar as it has the power to lead us to God; it thus has an inherent evangelizing power. Therefore, divine worship, sacred music, and sacred art are understood both as means of bringing us into communion with God and as instruments of mission. The beauty they convey is meant to draw individuals and communities into full participation, body and soul, in the work of the Savior, who is the “image of the invisible God” (Col. 1:15) and the “refulgence of [the Father’s] glory” (Heb. 1:3).

3. Direct Outreach to the Poor: The Bishops identified direct outreach to the poor as a defining element of the patrimony. In the Ordinariates, beauty in worship and holiness

³ Card. Victor Manuel FERNÁNDEZ, *Homily for the Episcopal Ordination of Bishop David A. Waller* (22 June 2024), III, 8.

⁴ *Ibid.*, III, 9.

of life are brought to bear in the concrete realities of the neighborhood. This reflects a deeply incarnational theology: to go out from divine worship to seek Jesus among the poor and those in want (cf. Mt. 25:40).⁵ As a practical example, the crowds that gathered in the streets of Birmingham at Saint John Henry Newman's funeral were there not only on account of his scholarship, but also because he was the priest who served them in their need.

4. Pastoral Culture: The Ordinariates promote a pastoral culture in which divine worship and daily life are profoundly interconnected. While this could be said of many parish communities, what is distinctive in this context is a liturgical, almost monastic rhythm drawn from the English spiritual tradition. Essential to this is the communal praying of the Divine Office, which is understood as the prayer of the whole People of God (cf. Ps. 119:164; Eph. 5:19).⁶ This shared life of prayer also shapes a distinctive approach to forming and sustaining parish communities.

5. The Family and the Domestic Church: Another strong emphasis the Bishops articulated centers on the importance of the family and its role as “the domestic church.”⁷ They noted that the Shrine of Walsingham is often called “England’s Nazareth.” Just as Nazareth, in the words of Pope Saint Paul VI, is “the school of the Gospel,”⁸ where we learn to observe, listen, meditate, and grasp the mystery of the Son of God within the Holy Family, so also the home is understood as the first place where the faith is learned and lived. Central to this is the appreciation of the Sacrament of Matrimony and the role of parents as the primary educators of their children in the faith.⁹ Parish life in the Ordinariates, therefore, seeks to support parents in this sacred responsibility of handing on the faith to their children (cf. Dt. 6:6-7; Joel 1:3) and to accompany families as they grow together in Christ. This vision leads to an organic approach to formation that is centered in the parish and the family, and that prioritizes lifelong intellectual formation for all the members of Christ’s Body.

6. Scripture and Preaching: The Bishops further noted that the patrimony includes a strong tradition of preaching grounded in Scripture, recognizing that nourishing people intellectually is an integral part of nourishing their souls (cf. Mt. 4:4). Here the theme of beauty reappears: encountering Christ in the splendor of the liturgy and in the

⁵ Cf. F. WESTON, “Our Present Duty” (Anglo-Catholic Congress, London, 12 July 1923).

⁶ Cf. SECOND VATICAN ECUMENICAL COUNCIL, Const. *Sacrosanctum Concilium* (4 December 1963), par. 100: *AAS* 56 (1964), 124.

⁷ Cf. SECOND VATICAN ECUMENICAL COUNCIL, Dogm. Const. *Lumen Gentium* (21 November 1964), par. 11: *AAS* 57 (1965), 15-16.

⁸ PAUL VI, *Address at the Basilica of the Annunciation* (5 January 1964): *AAS* 56 (1964), 167.

⁹ Cf. SECOND VATICAN ECUMENICAL COUNCIL, Decl. *Gravissimum Educationis* (28 October 1965), par. 3: *AAS* 58 (1966), 731-732.

proclamation of the Word are not understood as separate realities, but as two dimensions of the same encounter.¹⁰ In the Ordinariate communities, this is lived out with a strong foundation in the Tradition (especially the Fathers of the Church) and with an appreciation for the role of reason in harmony with and in service of faith.

7. Spiritual Direction and the Sacrament of Penance: Finally, the Bishops emphasized the importance of spiritual direction and the Sacrament of Penance. They explained that they have inherited an approach to these elements of the care of souls that prioritizes giving each person time and accompanying them as they encounter Christ the Good Shepherd (cf. Jn. 10:11-16; Lk. 15:4-7).

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Considering these characteristics together, one sees how central the mystery of the Incarnation is to the patrimony preserved in the Ordinariates. 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).

Finally, insofar as this patrimony is a way of receiving and living out the faith, the clergy and faithful of the Ordinariates recognize that it is a living reality, which looks to the future in the transmission of the faith to future generations (cf. Ps. 22:30-31; 78:4-7; 102:18). 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. In this way, as the Ordinariates grow organically, they 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.”

¹⁰ Cf. SECOND VATICAN COUNCIL, Constitution *Sacrosanctum Concilium* (4 December 1963), pars. 7, 48-51; *AAS* 56 (1964), 100-101, 113-114; *Catechism of the Catholic Church*, pars. 1088, 1346.