



Malines Conversations Group

Sorores in Spe

**“SISTERS IN HOPE OF THE RESURRECTION”:
A FRESH RESPONSE TO THE CONDEMNATION OF
ANGLICAN ORDERS (1896)**

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[Abstract]

Sorores in spe resurrectionis (sisters in hope of the Resurrection) argues that there is an overwhelming body of evidence in favour of revising the negative judgment on Anglican ordinations expressed in Pope Leo XIII’s Apostolic Letter *Apostolicae Curae* (1896). The ecclesial and sociocultural contexts *then* and *now* are significantly different. Through the intervening years, there has been a vast development of ecumenical exchange, cooperation and dialogue – including the groundbreaking Malines Conversations (1921-6). Anglicans and Catholics are now committed to “walking together” on a way of reconciliation, harmony and common witness to the gospel. Important resources for the proposal to revise the judgment on Anglican orders include the insights of the 20th century Liturgical and Ecumenical Movements, the teachings of the Second Vatican Council and telling symbolic gestures from Church leaders. To these should be added reflection on the revised rites of ordination, both Anglican and Catholic. Much theological wisdom can be found in contemporary ordination rites to support a renewed understanding of the ministry of all the baptized, deacons, priests and bishops. A broadened understanding of ecclesiality, mystery, participation and *anamnesis* has encouraged us to look again with fresh eyes at the reality of the Church as the People of God and the Body of Christ beyond the confines of separated ecclesial bodies. Taking into account all of this evidence, both historical and theological, the Malines Conversations Group believes it is time for the negative judgment of *Apostolicae Curae* on Anglican ordinations to be revised so that our two communions can more fully embrace one another as “sisters in hope of the Resurrection.”

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“SISTERS IN HOPE OF THE RESURRECTION”: A FRESH RESPONSE TO THE CONDEMNATION OF ANGLICAN ORDERS (1896)

[General introduction: rationale for this document]

1) *Sorores in spe resurrectionis* (sisters in hope of the Resurrection) is what is written on the shared tomb of Queen Mary Tudor and Queen Elizabeth I in Westminster Abbey, London. Mary and Elizabeth were by birth half-sisters, daughters of Henry VIII of England by different mothers, at enmity for most of their lives. Mary was the monarch of England's short-lived counter-reformation; Elizabeth is often regarded as England's first Anglican Queen. At the canonisation of forty reformation martyrs in 1970, Pope St Paul VI spoke hopefully of the day when the Roman Catholic Church will be able to embrace “her ever beloved sister in the one authentic communion of the family of Christ.” Since then, our two communions have grown substantially in unity of faith and service. Much has been achieved. But, there is still much to address.

One major issue yet to be resolved is the negative judgement on Anglican ordinations in Leo XIII's apostolic letter *Apostolicae Curae*. The Malines Conversations (1921-26) met in the shadow of this document. Instead of pursuing a debate via statements in adversarial posture, the participants preferred a method of dialogue and exchange.

It is in this spirit that the Malines Conversations Group offers the following text.¹ This group believes that the painful matters of 1896 need to be addressed before handling further questions of gender and ordination. The theological worldview of the late nineteenth century was thoroughly different from our own. After over a century of liturgical revision and theological dialogue, we now walk together, encouraged to live,

¹ The Malines Conversations Group is an informal ecumenical study group of Roman Catholics and Anglicans who have been meeting since 2013 to carry forward the discussions begun at Malines in 1921. Just as the participants in the Malines Conversations did, we have sought to keep our respective authorities informed about our discussions and we have met in a spirit of friendship, seeking better to understand what are the impediments to unity today and how we can contribute to deeper reconciliation.

pray and work as if we were already one. In the words of Pope Francis and Archbishop Justin Welby's Common Declaration, "We are impatient for progress that we might be fully united in proclaiming, in word and deed, the saving and healing gospel of Christ to all people." Bitter enmity is a thing of the past. Our communions are sisters in hope of the Resurrection.

I. HISTORICAL SECTION ON ANGLICAN-ROMAN-CATHOLIC RELATIONS

[*Apostolicae Curae* and *Saepius Officio*]

2) In 1896, Pope Leo XIII published the Apostolic Letter, *Apostolicae Curae*, which gave his considered judgment about the necessity for those ordained priest (and therefore those ordained bishop) by Anglican rites to be re-ordained if they were to become Catholic priests. A preparatory Commission, which studied the question, was divided and failed to come to a conclusion. Their views were summarised before being referred to the Holy Office whose members voted unanimously against the recognition of Anglican Orders. The Pope followed this guidance, using teaching affirmed by the Council of Trent to argue that in the Church of England Ordinals of 1550, 1552 and 1662 there was a *defect of form* and a *defect of intention*: (i) a *defect of form* because it was not made clear that the priest received "the power 'of consecrating and of offering the true Body and Blood of the Lord' in that sacrifice which is no 'mere commemoration of the sacrifice offered on the Cross';" (ii) a *defect of intention* because "if the rite be changed, with the manifest intention of introducing another rite not approved by the Church and of rejecting what the Church does, and what, by the institution of Christ, belongs to the nature of the Sacrament, then it is clear that not only is the necessary intention wanting to the Sacrament, but that the intention is adverse to and destructive of the Sacrament." The Pope concluded, "We pronounce and declare that ordinations performed according to the Anglican rite have been, and are, absolutely null and utterly void." Though the precise words were not used, the apostolic succession of Anglican bishops was considered to have been broken at the Reformation.

A year later, *Saepius Officio*, a response signed by the Archbishops of Canterbury and York, was published. Though it speaks of the Catholic Church as “a sister Church of Christ” (II), it rejects *Apostolicae Curae* as “a letter [...] aimed at overthrowing our whole position as a Church” and goes on to challenge both its presuppositions and its reasoning. *Saepius Officio* argues that, according to a close reading of the Anglican ordinals and the tradition recognised as apostolic by both the Church of England and the Church of Rome, the judgment of *Apostolicae Curae* was profoundly wrong. It was damaging not only to confidence in Anglican ordinations but, by the same token, to confidence in Catholic and Orthodox ordinations because a number of widely-used early ordination rites could be said to have similar defects of form and intention. It maintains that, “In overthrowing our orders [Pope Leo] overthrows all his own, and pronounces sentence on his own Church.”

[The Malines Conversations]

3) The investigation that preceded *Apostolicae Curae* was prompted by an initiative taken by two friends – Lord Halifax (d. 1934), a prominent, ecumenically-minded high church Anglican layman and Abbé Fernand Portal (d. 1926), a Vincentian Catholic priest committed to the reunion of ‘separated Christians’. They believed that Pope Leo XIII, with his apparent broadmindedness, might be open to the recognition of Anglican orders. Despite their profound disappointment after the judgment of 1896, twenty-five years later Halifax and Portal saw in the Lambeth Appeal of 1920 – an initiative by the Anglican bishops directed primarily towards reconciliation with the ministry of nonconformist traditions as well as a concern to bring about closer relations with the Christian East – an opportunity for Anglican-Catholic reconciliation.

The Malines Conversations, hosted by Cardinal Désiré-Joseph Mercier, Archbishop of Malines (d. 1926), consisted of five sessions between 1921 and 1926 in which first six, and then ten, Roman Catholic and Anglican ‘friends’ addressed what they saw as the most divisive issues between their communions: the exercise of authority by the Bishop of Rome (the relation between the jurisdiction of the Bishop of Rome and the

jurisdiction of all the bishops, both individually and collegially); the identification of new dogmas (specifically, the definition of the Immaculate Conception of Mary (1854), and Papal Infallibility (1870)) as “*de fide*” (to be held by all the faithful); and the condemnation of Anglican ordinations as “absolutely null and utterly void.”

At the fourth meeting, Cardinal Mercier surprised the participants by reading out a paper he had commissioned from “a canonist” entitled *L’Eglise Anglicane Unie non Absorbée*. The paper, later known to be by the Belgian Benedictine Lambert Beauduin (d. 1960), sketched, in effect, a possible ‘uniate’ status for Anglicans in a reunited church, which would accord patriarchal dignity to the Archbishop of Canterbury by the symbolic gift of the *pallium* from the Pope and would allow to Anglicans their own corpus of Canon Law, together with their own rites and structures. At a brief, final meeting, shortly after the deaths of Cardinal Mercier and Abbé Portal, complementary reports of the Conversations were drawn up by the remaining Anglican and Catholic participants.

[ARCIC and IARCCUM]

4) The Second Vatican Council (1962-5) transformed the ecumenical relations of the Catholic Church. A renewed understanding of the Church in all its dimensions as sacrament (*Gk mysterion*), as People of God before it is an institution, and the life of the Church as communion (*koinonia*) in Christ through the creative activity of the Holy Spirit, was set out in the Dogmatic Constitution on the Church (*Lumen Gentium*). It was made clear in the Decree on Ecumenism (*Unitatis Redintegratio*) that ecumenism could no longer be based solely on an invitation to ‘return’ to communion with Rome (‘unionism’) such as was made by Leo XIII in his encyclical *Satis Cognitum* (1896), which was published three months before *Apostolicae Curae*, and by Pius XI in his encyclical *Mortalium Animos* (1928). *Unitatis Redintegratio* affirmed the ecclesial reality and the spiritual fruitfulness to be found in the Orthodox, Anglican and Reformation traditions:

For those who believe in Christ and have been truly baptised are in some kind of communion with the catholic church, even though this communion is imperfect. [...]

Our separated brothers and sisters also celebrate many sacred actions of the christian religion. These most certainly can truly engender a life of grace in ways that vary according to the condition of each church or community; and must be held capable of giving access to that communion in which is salvation. (3)²

In affirming the importance of ecumenical dialogue (11), the Decree on Ecumenism noted that, “Among those [communions] in which catholic traditions and institutions in part continue to subsist, the Anglican communion occupies a special place.” (13) Within four months of the close of the Second Vatican Council Archbishop Michael Ramsey met with Pope Paul VI. In their Common Declaration they committed their respective communions to “a serious dialogue which, founded on the Gospels and the ancient common traditions, may lead to that unity in truth, for which Christ prayed.”

The Anglican-Roman Catholic International Commission (ARCIC) began its work in 1970. Its agreed statements in three phases on the eucharist, ministry and ordination, authority, justification, the nature of the Church, ethics, the role of Mary, and synodality offer rich theological resources for Christian teaching and reflection. They testify to an intimate family likeness between our traditions which reveals a communion already shared. The process of reception remains ongoing in the lives of both our communions: some elements of the agreements already in place will surely need further work. The International Anglican Roman Catholic Commission on Unity and Mission (IARCCUM), established in 2001, has promoted the practical outworking of ARCIC’s rich agreements as Catholic and Anglican bishops pursue their shared mission in their own contexts.

[The language of symbols]

5) In the century since the Malines Conversations, the relationship between Catholics

² Quotations from the documents of the Second Vatican Council are taken from Norman P. Tanner SJ ed., *Decrees of the Ecumenical Councils* (London: Sheed and Ward and Washington DC: Georgetown University Press, 1990), volume II.

and Anglicans has not only developed through dialogue, agreed statements and joint declarations. An essential counterpoint has emerged in the language of symbols, chiefly through the exchange of gifts. Since St Paul VI's gift of his episcopal ring to Archbishop Michael Ramsey in 1966 (which pre-dates the first meetings of ARCIC), Anglican bishops have received pectoral crosses from popes, the Anglican priest and scholar Henry Chadwick was given a stole, and in 2016 in the church of San Gregorio al Celio Archbishop Welby was presented with a replica of the head of the crozier of Pope St Gregory the Great, which he used the next day at Vespers. The context of this presentation was the commissioning by the Pope and Archbishop of nineteen pairs of Anglican and Catholic bishops from all over the world for joint mission and pastoral work.

Visits of Archbishops to Popes, the attendance of Anglican bishops at *ad limina* visits and Roman Synods, the visits of St John Paul II and Benedict XVI to England and the offering of joint blessings have cast our relationship in a thoroughly new light. Such actions interpret and develop our theological dialogue. They make visible the practical implications of what we say together. We currently, however, experience a dissonance between theory and practice. The language of signs and symbols reveals a different, deeper reality about mutual recognition which extends beyond the brusque, negative theological judgment of ordination rites in 1896. We need an honest assessment of what all this means. We need an *aggiornamento* of theory and practice. The way in which we publicly and formally speak about one another should surely now reflect what has been said and done through this rich language of signs and symbols.

[Conclusion of the historical section]

6) The extent to which our bishops are able to pursue joint mission, to which we are able to share in a common proclamation of the Gospel and agree on much more than simply the fundamentals of the faith, prompts us to articulate again the question posed by Archbishop Rowan Williams at a symposium in Rome (2009). Archbishop Williams argued that any detailed questions about the ordained ministry need to take place in the context of what Anglicans and Catholics have said together about the nature of

the Church, baptism and Eucharist, and *koinonia*. Archbishop Williams posed the question: when so much has now been agreed on subjects of first-order importance, “is it really justifiable to treat other issues as equally vital for [the Church’s] health and integrity?” Equally, we join in asking: can statements which were made about one another’s life and identity prior to our rediscovery of such a deep and shared sense of identity and mission, still be deployed as if such growth in mutual recognition, both explicit and implicit, had not taken place?

II. THE HERMENEUTICS OF TRADITION AND SALVATION

[The Ecumenical and the Liturgical Movements]

7) Whereas the previous section sketched a picture of important historical events, the purpose of the present one is to show there has also been development at an intellectual and spiritual level. For this reason, this section begins with the Liturgical and Ecumenical Movements which culminated in the Second Vatican Council, and aligns itself closely with the teachings of that Council. In the very first paragraph of the first document the Council promulgated – the Constitution on the Sacred Liturgy – it identifies as two of its aims “to improve the standard of daily Christian living among Catholics [*fideles*]” and “to encourage whatever can contribute to the union of all who believe in Christ.” The Council went on to say that it “sees the taking of steps towards the renewal and growth of the liturgy as something it can and should do” (SC 1).

The twentieth century witnessed the emergence and flourishing of the Liturgical and Ecumenical Movements. Much inspiration can be drawn from their ideas, proposals and concrete achievements. We should note that these movements were at root organically linked. Much attention was paid to worship in the Ecumenical Movement and many representatives of the Liturgical Movement were profoundly engaged in ecumenism. It is no exaggeration to say that a deepened sense of the liturgy was a motor for ecumenical *rapprochement*. The example of Dom Lambert Beauduin’s lifelong endeavour is only one of many worthy of mention in this context.

The Liturgical Movement excelled in different things. First and foremost, there was a strong commitment to the human situation of many Christians. The Liturgical Movement intended to transform the life of all the baptized by deepening their understanding of the liturgical year, the Eucharist, and the other sacraments. Second, an immense amount of work was done by scholars such as the Anglican Benedictine Gregory Dix (d. 1952) to illuminate the origins and history of the liturgy, with an emphasis on the first five centuries, and with respect to the interpretation of liturgical source texts. This scholarly work has left an indelible mark on the liturgical reforms in the later part of the twentieth century. Third, there were profound new theological and spiritual insights into the nature of the liturgy. Primary among them is the awareness that the concept of *mysterium* (*mysterion*) by and large covers the meaning of the word *sacramentum*. Use of the original Greek word *mysterion* became a central focus of theological thought and reflection about Christian liturgies and the potential thereof is far from exhausted – as with other rich fruits of the Liturgical and the Ecumenical Movement.

[Mystery and apostolic succession]

8) A broad and deep understanding of *mystery* (*mysterion*) can guide us in discussions concerning the complex reality of apostolic succession and the part played therein by both bishops and worshipping communities. Since “what has been handed down from the Apostles’ includes everything which helps the people of God to live a holy life and to grow in faith” (DV 8), apostolic succession is above all about the sharing of the whole apostolic faith, about belonging to the community that proclaims that faith, about a common appeal to the apostles, and about communicating the faith to others. We have come to understand apostolic succession as faithful transmission of all the various aspects of ecclesial life which constitute the Church as a living communion. The believer is invited to *participate in a mystery* – not solely to give intellectual assent to doctrine. The succession of laying on of hands in ordination to the great sees of the Church, as described by Irenaeus of Lyons, witnesses to a wider apostolic succession

in faith, worship and ministry. This is a succession in the gifts and ministries given to the whole Church by the Holy Spirit. This wider understanding of apostolic succession has been crucial for the profound liturgical renewal which both our traditions have experienced and in which each has influenced the other.

[Vatican II: Revelation and history]

9) The Second Vatican Council underscores the intrinsic relation between the concept of mystery and divine revelation. It speaks about a plan of revelation which “unfolds through deeds and words bound together by an inner dynamism, in such a way that God’s works, effected during the course of the history of salvation, show forth and confirm the doctrine and the realities signified by the words, while the words in turn proclaim the works and throw light on the meaning hidden in them. By this revelation the truth, both about God and about the salvation of humankind, inwardly dawns on us in Christ, who is himself both the mediator and the fullness of all revelation” (DV 2). The plan of God’s revelation implies the hope of salvation for all humankind. What we know about it relies on a covenant made manifest in the history of the people of Israel and the Church. God spoke in many and diverse ways through the prophets but crucially also through Christ (cf. Heb 1:1-2), the Word of God (Jn 1:1), who became flesh and lived among us, and whose glory “full of grace and truth” (Jn 1:14) was seen on earth. In other words, it was possible through the Incarnation to see the invisible in visible reality. It became possible to participate in the mystery of the transformation of creation in Christ and to “discern what is the will of God, what is good and acceptable and perfect” (Rom 12:2). It became possible to present our “bodies as a living sacrifice,” which is our “spiritual worship” (Rom 12:1).

[Vatican II: The Church as Body of Christ]

10) Furthermore, the Second Vatican Council highlighted the importance of continuously looking for a better understanding of where and how the saving mystery of Christ is at work. It famously called for a scrutiny of the signs of the times in the

light of the gospel (GS 4) and for God's people to work to "discern the true signs of God's presence and purpose in the events, needs and desires which it shares with the rest of modern humanity" (GS 11). It is only by doing this competently, keenly and honestly that the Church can move on its journey of hope towards the fullness of the Kingdom of God. So, "an earnest of this hope and sustenance for the journey have been left by the Lord to his followers in the sacrament of faith" which we call the Eucharist, "the supper of brotherly and sisterly communion and the foretaste of the heavenly banquet" (GS 38).

The image of the Body of Christ, which is prominent in *Lumen Gentium*, is to be understood in both an ecclesial and in a sacramental way. As often as the Eucharist is celebrated, "there is represented and produced the unity of the faithful who make up one body in Christ (see 1 Cor 10, 17). All people are called to this union with Christ, who is the light of the world; from him we come, through him we live and towards him we direct our lives" (LG 3). "By the communication of His Spirit, [Christ] constituted his sisters and brothers, gathered from all nations, as his own mystical body. In this body, the life of Christ is communicated to believers, who by means of the sacraments in a mysterious but real way are united to Christ who suffered and has been glorified." (LG 7). Christ is "the head of the body which is the church. He is the beginning, the firstborn from the dead," ... "He perpetually distributes the gift of ministries in his body which is the church; and with these gifts, through his power, we provide each other with helps towards salvation, so that doing the truth in love, we grow up in all things into him who is our head" (LG 7).

[Vatican II: All the baptized participate in Christ's *triplex munus*]

11) The work of Christ in and for His Church is characterized by a diversity of ministries, which, in Christian tradition, have been related to three *munera* ([sets of] gifts, functions) associated with His being Priest, Prophet and King. As *Walking Together on the Way* (2017), a document from ARCIC III, clearly puts forward (§ 52), Christ's *triplex munus* (threefold office) constitutes a model for discipleship and for imagining

ways in which humankind can share in and benefit from His sanctifying grace. All the baptized are co-workers in the Lord's vineyard in different capacities. They are called to the 'apostolate,' to apostolic service. "In the church there is diversity in ministry but unity in mission. The office and power of teaching in the name of Christ, of sanctifying and ruling, were conferred by him on the apostles and their successors. Lay people, sharing in the priestly, prophetic and kingly offices of Christ, play their part in the mission of the whole people of God in the church and in the world" (AA 2). They "have their office and right to the apostolate from their union with Christ their head. They are brought into the mystical body of Christ by baptism, strengthened by the power of the Spirit in confirmation, and assigned to apostleship by the Lord Himself. They are consecrated as a royal priesthood and a holy people (see 1 Pt 2, 4-10), so as to offer spiritual sacrifices in all their works and to bear witness to Christ throughout the world. Through the sacraments, especially the holy eucharist, that charity which is the soul of the whole apostolate, is imparted to them and nourished" (AA 3).

[Conclusion of the second section on theological and hermeneutical development]

12) The Second Vatican Council offers a solid theological and hermeneutical basis for questioning the approach and judgment of *Apostolicae Curae*. In anchoring faith, Church and theology in God's mystery as God Himself communicated it to humankind, inviting his Church to participate fully in His unique work of redemption and orienting us towards the realisation of His Kingdom, the Council promoted a powerful dynamic of liturgical renewal, mission and service to the world. The counterpart to a theology which is in this way determined both by Christology and by the action of the Holy Spirit is a comprehensive anthropology, i.e. an integral view of human persons, cultures, and societies, to which both the sciences and the humanities can fruitfully contribute. The study of how human beings interact with each other both visibly and in more implicit ways, how they employ signs and language and are sensitive to and attached to symbolic realities, supports the Church's endeavours to indicate more generously how God's grace and salvation are operative in the world. As a corollary, it makes a difference whether one looks at reality only from the standpoint of a reductive epistemology (i.e.

through the perspective of what can be stated with absolute certainty as opposed to what is only probable or possible) or whether one approaches reality through a soteriological lens. The latter option equips one to do full justice to the desires, hopes and beliefs people have and to the gestures of charity which they perform. Taking into account the complex and fascinating nature of communication both human and divine is vital for the development of a more nuanced view on ministry, priesthood and communion than the one which was underlying *Apostolicae Curae*.

III. CHURCH, EUCHARIST AND MINISTRIES: ORDERS AND ORDINATION

[Catholic rites of ordination in the Roman rite]

13) In line with the foundational hermeneutic laid out in the previous section, the present section aims at drawing primarily on the *lex orandi* of the Church to formulate an integrated vision of the sacrament of ordination embracing the diaconate, the priesthood and the episcopate. This vision gives us the basis for new proposals to heal the hurt caused by *Apostolicae Curae* and those aspects of its interpretation which harmed the very fabric of the Church. After much shared study, we feel compelled to present a view of what is entailed by ordination and priesthood which significantly differs from and even questions the view underlying the judgment that Anglican ordinations must be seen as “absolutely null and utterly void.”

Like all the other dimensions of the liturgical life of the Church, the liturgy of ordination in the Roman rite was significantly revised after the Second Vatican Council. This is yet another crucial factor indicating that the situation has drastically changed since 1896. It was widely agreed during and after the Council that there were serious theological reasons for improving the rites of ordination. A crucial factor making for revision was the need for a clearer focus on Christ’s priesthood, replacing allegorical interpretation of various passages in the Old Testament. Another factor was the need for a more straightforward profiling of the diaconate, which could now be entered as a distinctive, lifelong ministry.

In the revised rites, the Liturgy of the Word and the homily of the presiding bishop receive more explicit attention. The Liturgy of the Word is followed by the examination of the candidates, the litany of the saints while the candidates prostrate themselves, the laying on of hands in silence and the prayer of ordination which is an extended prayer for the Holy Spirit to make fruitful the ministry of a deacon, priest or bishop. This prayer of ordination is of central importance to the celebration and has therefore been very carefully drafted on the basis of ancient sources. Traditional explanatory rites such as the *traditio instrumentorum* (the handing over of the instruments) are less prominently profiled than before. The accompanying pastoral instructions emphasize that a time must be chosen which enables as many people as possible to attend the ceremony, for it is without doubt a high point in the forming of true communion. Moreover, the revised rites of ordination have themselves already undergone a revision.

The current text, *De ordinatione Episcopi, presbyterorum et diaconorum*, dates from 1990 and replaces an earlier *editio typica* from 1968. The present liturgical book underlines the central role of the bishop who possesses the fulness of priesthood, the priests' participation in the priesthood of the bishop, and deacons' integral participation in the Church's ordained ministry.

[Anglican rites of ordination, with particular reference to the Church of England]

14) As with other Churches of the Anglican Communion, the ordination rites of the Church of England have been thoroughly revised – after consultation with Roman Catholic scholars amongst others and with a keen awareness of the critique of *Apostolicae Curae*. The revision of the Anglican Ordinals of 1550, 1552 and 1662, which in the Church of England culminated in *Common Worship Ordination Services* (2007), was intended to make clearer the ways in which Anglicans understand each ministerial 'order' to participate in the mission and ministry of Christ and to serve the life and worship of the Church. The Form and Manner of Making of Deacons, The Form and Manner of Ordering of Priests and The Form of Ordaining or Consecrating of an Archbishop or Bishop was replaced with The Ordination of Deacons, The Ordination of Priests, also called Presbyters and The Ordination and Consecration of a Bishop.

Each rite has a similar structure. There is a preface with a common introduction and a brief introduction to the order of ministry to be conferred. The presiding bishop sets out an understanding of that order which is clearly based on the New Testament, before asking a series of questions which invite the ordinands publicly to declare their prayerful commitment to various aspects of the particular ministry to be bestowed. The questions conclude with three addressed to the whole congregation: “Brothers and sisters, you have heard how great is the charge that these ordinands are ready to undertake, and you have heard their declarations. Is it now your will that they should be ordained? (*It is.*) Will you continually pray for them? (*We will.*) Will you uphold and encourage them in their ministry? (*We will.*)” The ninth century hymn *Veni Creator Spiritus* (“Come, Holy Ghost, our souls inspire”) follows, though for the ordination of deacons it is optional, and after that comes The Litany. The ordination prayer itself mirrors the prayer over the water in baptism and the prayer of consecration in the Eucharist. It begins with extended praise and thanksgiving, before the presiding bishop moves to the laying on of hands with the words:

Send down the Holy Spirit on your servant N

For the office and work of a deacon/priest/bishop in your Church.

The prayer concludes with prayer for the Holy Spirit to make fruitful the ministry of a deacon, priest or bishop. For all three orders of ministry, this is followed by the gift of a Bible.

Over recent years, the Churches of the Anglican Communion have revised their Ordinals better to reflect local experience of the Gospel, whilst remaining faithful to Scripture and the tradition of a threefold ministry of bishops, priests and deacons inherited from the apostolic Church. This work has been done at a time when liturgical scholars have strong ecumenical links and are familiar with the fruits of liturgical reform in other Churches. Anglicans and Catholics have consulted one another and drawn upon common sources. The result has been a convergence in the structure and content of Catholic ordination rites and the rites used by the Churches

of the Anglican Communion – whilst certain clear differences of emphasis remain. Most Anglican bishops and priests are now ordained using rites which have been radically changed from those condemned in 1896 as “absolutely null and utterly void.”

[The ministry of the baptized]

15) The ARCIC Statement on Ministry and Ordination (1973), which sets out a consensus shared by the Anglican and Roman Catholic members of the Commission, notes that, “The ordained ministry can only be rightly understood within [a] broader context of various ministries all of which are the work of one and the same Spirit” (2) and that, since “[t]he life and self-offering of Christ perfectly expresses what it is to serve God and man [...] [a]ll Christian ministry, whose purpose is always to build up the community (*koinonia*), flows and takes its shape from this source and model” (3). The ministry of the baptized, lay and ordained, is thus understood as a participation in the ministry of Christ. The ministry of all the baptized – lay people, deacons, priests and bishops – represents for each the call of the Spirit to serve the whole body of Christ in a distinctive way.

[The diaconate]

16) A remarkable renewal of the diaconate has taken place in both Anglicanism and Roman Catholicism. No longer is it seen as little more than a stepping stone on the way to priesthood. The distinctive role of the deacon has long been evident in the liturgies of Eastern churches. As a fruit of the Liturgical Movement, it has in recent years been made clearer in western liturgies. The model for ordination to this diaconal role was the selection of the Seven, “men of good standing, full of the Spirit and of wisdom” to serve (*diakonein*) at tables during the daily distribution of food by the Jerusalem Church (Acts 6:1ff). They “stood before the apostles who prayed and laid their hands on them,” commissioning them for their task. Writing to the Magnesians, Ignatius of Antioch declares that the ministry of the deacons is nothing other than “the diaconate (*diakonia*) of Jesus Christ” (*Mag.* 6:1).

The Dogmatic Constitution on the Church from Vatican II (*Lumen Gentium*) set out an understanding of the diaconate which describes both the liturgical and pastoral role of deacons. It also made provision for the revival of a permanent diaconate which might include married men. This provision was further clarified and elaborated in a motu proprio of 1972, *Ad pascendum*, and a Directory for the Ministry of Permanent Deacons issued by the Congregation for Clergy in 1998. In an address to permanent deacons and their families Pope St John Paul II fittingly considered them to be “active apostles of the new evangelization.” The revised Ordinal of the Church of England no longer speaks of “the Making of Deacons” but the Ordination of Deacons to emphasise their place as a distinct order of ministry within the Church.

When an understanding of the diaconate, which is deeply rooted in the ministry of Jesus Christ and expressed in remarkably similar ordination rites, is shared by both our traditions, it seems untenable that there should be no mutual recognition of ministry at this point.

[Priesthood]

17) The ARCIC I statement on *Ministry and Ordination* concluded that the goal of the ordained ministry is “to serve the priesthood of all the faithful” (7). Furthermore, our communions can together affirm the liturgical and sacramental ministry of the presbyterate: “Presbyters are joined with the bishop in his oversight of the church and in the ministry of the word and the sacraments; they are given authority to preside at the eucharist and to pronounce absolution” (9). They preside when the church meets to make “the memorial of the sacrifice of Christ” (13) which, as the ARCIC I statement on *Eucharistic Doctrine* says, is “no mere calling to mind of a past event or of its significance” (5). Both the statement on *Eucharistic Doctrine* and on *Ministry and Ordination* use the Greek term *anamnesis* for this sacramental memorial: “The Commission believes that the traditional understanding of sacramental reality in which the once-for-all event of salvation becomes effective in the present through the action of the Holy Spirit, is well expressed by the word *anamnesis*” (*Eucharistic Doctrine, Elucidation 5*) – as

used in the New Testament (1 Cor 11:24-25; Luke 22:19) and quoted at every Eucharist in the western tradition: “Do this in memory of me.”

The concept of *anamnesis* implies *participation* by means of the sacrament in the original event. To celebrate the Eucharist in obedience to Christ’s command is to “enter into the movement of his self-offering” (*Eucharistic Doctrine*, 5). In presiding at the Eucharist, Catholic and Anglican priests share a conviction that all priesthood derives from the High Priesthood of Christ, they have a strong sense of the need for priestly intercession in and for the community that each priest serves, and are clear that ordination allows for entry into an “apostolic and God-given ministry” (*Ministry and Ordination*, 14).

[Episcopate]

18) In both our traditions, the ministry of a bishop is one of “oversight” (Gk *episkope*), with responsibility for the flourishing of a specific local church: that “portion of the people of God that has been entrusted to their care” (LG 23). For Roman Catholics, the teaching of Vatican II on the collegial authority and responsibilities of bishops as shepherds of the People of God (cf. LG 18-27) has led to renewed understanding of episcopal ministry within the Body of Christ. Anglicans have benefited from this enrichment, much of which is in accord with Anglican understanding of episcopal ministry.

The ARCIC I statement on *Ministry and Ordination* speaks of this responsibility as involving “fidelity to the apostolic faith, its embodiment in the life of the Church today, and its transmission to the Church of tomorrow” (9). The bishop provides sacramental leadership through presidency at the Eucharist, through the blessing on Holy Thursday of chrism and other oil which is distributed to parishes for anointing at baptisms and on other liturgical occasions, and in pastoral care.

The ministry of the bishop is symbolised liturgically by the service of footwashing. The bishop is to be a servant of unity within and among the churches; a model of holiness through whom the people of the diocese, lay and ordained, are encouraged in their

discipleship. The bishop is to maintain the catholicity of the Church, locally and more widely, by exercising “care for all the churches” (2 Cor 11:28). The bishop is to be a faithful preacher and teacher of the apostolic tradition, bringing the good news to those who are not members of the Church and working “to equip the saints for the work of ministry, for building up the body of Christ until all of us come to the unity of the faith and of the knowledge of the Son of God, to maturity, to the measure of the full stature of Christ” (Eph 4:12-13).

In the light of this shared understanding of episcopal ministry, it can be seen that the intention and the form of episcopal ordination according to contemporary Anglican ordinals and according to the contemporary Roman rite are remarkably similar. Both make explicit the intention sacramentally to do what the Church has always done in ordaining bishops. As a consequence, the notion that God acknowledges one and rejects the other seems untenable.

[The celebration of ordinations]

19) As shown above, there are profound liturgical and theological similarities between our Churches when it comes to the rites of ordination and the understanding of the diaconate, priesthood, and episcopate. However, there are also differences, which have to do with the nature of the relation between deacons and priests on the one hand and bishops and dioceses on the other. With time, there have matured within our communions differing traditions with different customs, differences in formal arrangements and different policies. We can, however, say without reservation, that the episcopal structure of our Churches and the ministries of bishops, priests, deacons and laypersons are interpreted as playing a major role in God’s plan of salvation. The practice of the Church has roots in Jesus’ ministry itself, the testimony and activities of the apostles, the New Testament, the earliest Christian communities followed by a centuries-long tradition of ministerial action and theological reflection.

This layered structure is an important token of the continuity of authentic Christian living throughout the ages. It makes a living connection between Jesus’ time, our time,

and the time to come. When baptized Christians gather for the liturgy of ordination, when they open the Scriptures to listen to God's Word, when they have these words clarified through preaching, often by the liturgical president, when they sing psalms and hymns, when they join in prayers of thanksgiving, blessing and petition, when special prayers are said with laying on of hands for the Holy Spirit to bestow the gifts of the ministries of the diaconate, the priesthood or episcopate upon tried, examined and well-selected candidates, and when all share in the Eucharist together, receiving and forming the Body of Christ (cf. Augustine, *sermo* 272), one must conclude there is such a density of sacramental grace that a narrow focus on the question as to whether the form and formula of the ordination rite are precisely correct can actually obscure the mystical reality of what is taking place.

[The ordination of women in the Anglican Communion]

20) The ordination of women in many parts of the Anglican Communion as deacons, priests and bishops has, for Catholics and for some Anglicans, raised new questions about the authenticity of Anglican ministry. Leo XIII judged that, "ordinations carried out according to the Anglican rite have been, and are, absolutely null and utterly void." This judgment on Anglican ordinations according to the rites of his time was quite independent of later magisterial judgments, both Catholic and Anglican, about the ordination of women. These were made on largely different grounds. We believe it would be quite wrong to use the differing positions taken on the ordination of women by our two communions as a reason not to address the adverse judgment of Pope Leo on the Anglican ordination rites that had been used up to the time of *Apostolicae Curae*. The fact that women can, in most Anglican provinces, now be ordained, does not in itself mean that the Pope's condemnation of 1896 must be applied to the present situation.

[Recognition beyond mere language]

21) There is, upon close analysis, an overwhelming amount of theological evidence that the delicate issue as to whether our churches can mutually, and fully, recognize the

validity of each other's rites of ordination can finally be resolved. In spite of historical separation, the tension generated by sharp judgments and firm response and an atmosphere for too long dominated by resentment, suspicions and intolerance – which often resulted in ignorance and fear of the other – the reality of such recognition is already bursting through. Even if this reality has not yet been adequately captured in the right language, even if it has not yet been asserted in the proper document, and even if it is not yet supported by an overall ecclesial discourse and shared mentality, we believe that the recognition of Anglican orders must indeed have drawn closer. The contextualisation of *Apostolicae Curae*'s most central statement is no longer a mere dream or a pious illusion. The affirmation of Thomas Aquinas that the act of faith does not halt at what can be enunciated about it but at the enunciated reality itself (*actus autem credentis non terminatur ad enuntiabile sed ad rem* – *STh II-II* q. 1, art. 2, ad. 2) is helpful at this point. Applied to our case, this would imply that the recognition of Anglican orders does not ultimately depend on any kind of statement but on a reality lived among Christians – a reality received in faith, strengthened by hope, and apprehended through love.

IV. THE HOPE OF HEALING

[A call for reconsideration]

22) The last decades have shown that theological maturing, methodological *ressourcement* (return to the sources) and mutual reconsideration of what divides us, is not only possible but has already resulted in historical agreements between Churches that have been separated for many centuries. The Joint Declaration on the Doctrine of Justification (JDDJ) between the Roman-Catholic Church and the Lutheran World Federation (1999) “is shaped by the conviction that in their respective histories our churches have come to new insights” (JDDJ, 7) and that remaining differences in the explication of basic truths of the doctrine of justification “are no longer the occasion for doctrinal condemnations.”

Five years before, in the Common Christological Declaration between the Catholic Church and the Assyrian Church of the East (1994), the two Churches noted that though they had been separated since the Council of Ephesus (430) by the different ways they express their doctrine concerning the divinity and humanity of Christ, they could now “recognize the legitimacy and rightness of these expressions of the same faith and [...] respect the preference of each Church in her liturgical life and piety.” This common declaration has resulted in another historic document, the Guidelines for Admission to the Eucharist Between the Chaldean Church and the Assyrian Church of the East (2001), which unconditionally recognizes the validity of the historic Anaphora of the Apostles Addai and Mari even though it does not contain the words of institution.

Thus, the recognition, by the Catholic Church, of the full ecclesiality of the Assyrian Church of the East (2), has led to a careful study of the Assyrian liturgical texts and sacramental theology. This resulted in the judgement that “the words of Eucharistic Institution are indeed present in the Anaphora of Addai and Mari, not in a coherent narrative way and *ad litteram*, but rather in a dispersed eucharological way, that is, integrated in successive prayers of thanksgiving, praise and intercession.” The Roman Catholic recognition of the validity of the Eucharist of the Assyrian Church of the East, which shows a remarkably flexible application of its own theological categories, was made possible *practically* by the acknowledgement of this Church “as a true particular Church, built upon orthodox faith and apostolic succession” (2) – rather than the other way round (i.e. the recognition of the validity of sacraments leading to the recognition of authentic ecclesiality).

The Common Christological Declaration between the Catholic Church and the Assyrian Church of the East and the Guidelines for the Admission to the Eucharist between the Chaldean Church and the Assyrian Church of the East demonstrate that, where there is sufficient underlying convergence of theological understanding and intention, omission of particular “forms of words,” however significant, need not be a bar to mutual recognition.

[A call for recontextualisation]

23) As we have studied the painful historical estrangement between the Church of England and the Roman Catholic Church, we have been struck by how much change there has been in the last century. Since the time of the Malines Conversations, Anglicans and Catholics have learnt to pray together and for one another, our shared study of Scripture and tradition has brought renewal, we have engaged in joint projects of dialogue, discipleship and witness, we have experienced growing friendship. In a world utterly transformed since the end of the nineteenth century, facing difficulties and threats on a scale beyond imagining at that time, we have learnt what it is to share a common hope. We long for our Churches to be able to embrace one another as sisters in Christ.

As we have reflected together, we have learnt how the condemnation of Anglican ordinations was based upon a theological method, historical understanding, church-political considerations and ecumenical approaches which were of their time. The response in *Saepius Officio* used a similar method to powerful effect. We are not of that time and we regret the damage caused should such a condemnation be allowed to remain in place and applied to contemporary Anglican ordinations. Such a notion represents a loss of hope. We believe that the condemnation of Anglican ordinations in 1896 needs to be recontextualised in part because, as we have tried to show, the focus of *Apostolicae Curae* was exclusively on Anglican rites which are now rarely used. The ordination rites of both our traditions have since 1896 been radically revised in the light of the remarkable ecclesiological and liturgical renewal of the twentieth century.

Our reflection on the Decree of Ecumenism (cf. para 4 above) has provided us with further reason to hope that the judgment of *Apostolicae Curae* can now be seen in a new light. We have noted the words of *Unitatis Redintegratio* that “our separated brothers and sisters also celebrate many sacred actions of the christian religion [which] most certainly can truly engender a life of grace” and that, “among those [communions] in

which catholic traditions and institutions in part continue to subsist, the Anglican communion occupies a special place” (UR 3, 13). Where such elements of the apostolic faith have been faithfully passed on over many years and have manifestly borne fruit in the life of grace – including, and perhaps especially, amongst Anglicans – it seems to us this surely points to the Holy Spirit’s presence in the ordained ministry of that communion.

In the spirit of the friendship at the heart of the Malines Conversations, we have together concluded (i) that the condemnation of contemporary Anglican ordinations because of the perceived deficiencies of rites from the past needs to be re-examined. We also suggest (ii) that the implied judgment that the apostolic succession of the Church of England was lost at the Reformation should be re-examined in the light of contemporary ecclesiological and liturgical understanding of the variety of means by which apostolic succession takes place within authentic traditions of Christian life and worship.

V. CONCLUSION

[A further step on the path of synodality?]

24) Pope Francis and Archbishop Justin Welby have frequently spoken of Roman Catholic and Anglican Christians as walking together “on the way” – commending the synodality of the Church by alluding to the likely derivation of the Greek word *synod* from the roots “together” (*sun*) and “way” (*hodos*). As we walk together, we talk and as we talk we understand the presence of Christ in new ways (cf. Lk 24:13-27). We reflect on the experience of our Churches and our experience as Christian persons. Much has changed since the condemnation of Anglican ordinations in 1896.

The Malines Conversations Group has reflected a great deal on the experiences which through more than a century have drawn our communions and their individual members so much closer together. Where we once walked apart we now walk together in friendship and love. For both our communions, it would be nothing less than a recognition of our ecclesial experience if the condemnation of 1896 were to be seen

as inapplicable to contemporary Anglican ordinations. The judgment made *then* does not accord with the reality into which the Spirit has led us *now*. We do not expect that if this reappraisal were to happen ecclesial communion would immediately be restored but our two communions would have taken a significant step along the road on which we are rediscovering our commitment to one another as *sisters in hope of the Resurrection*.