

## THIRD COLLOQUIUM OF ANGLICAN AND ROMAN CATHOLIC CANON LAWYERS

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Pope Gregory I advised Augustine of Canterbury to choose from each particular Church what is godly, religious and sound and gathering it all together, as it were on a dish, place it on the table of the English for their customary diet. Since then, Rome and Canterbury have lost their former unity, and the Archbishop of Canterbury has become the focus of an Anglican Communion spread far beyond the Church of England. All this came to mind as we gathered in Rome from 30 May to 2 June 2002 for our latest colloquium. The metaphor of a 'dish' can also stand for the conviviality that accompanied our canonical search for greater unity without loss of legitimate diversity.

The theme of the colloquium was Church membership and the process of Christian initiation. We met in the Angelicum, the pontifical university of the Dominican Order. Outside the conference room used for our meetings, there is a large statue of Pius V; poignantly, he was the pope who in 1570 excommunicated Queen Elizabeth I. We held formal and informal meetings, but in addition on the Saturday we were welcomed at the Pontifical Council for Promoting the Unity of Christians by its head, Cardinal Kasper. There followed a meeting with two representatives of that Council, an official from the Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith and one from the Pontifical Council for Legislative Texts.

This was the third colloquium, following the one held in Rome in 1999 on Church property and that at Windsor Castle in 2000 on clergy discipline. The participants were much the same as had met previously, and consisted of 6 Anglican and 6 Roman Catholic canonists, with the addition of a Roman Catholic theologian of ecumenism. The basic theme was divided up into 6 topics: the concept and consequences of Church membership; preparation and celebration of baptism; recognition, conditional baptism and registration; confirmation and eucharist; belonging to a parish of choice; and termination of membership.

The first step in our methodology required the exchange in advance of the colloquium of a paper from an Anglican and from a Roman Catholic canonist on each of the topics discussed. Once in Rome, each pair of canonists presented to the whole group a summary of highlights of their papers for discussion. At the final session, each pair proposed for general approval a number of essential propositions. Over 30 such propositions emerged. The revised papers, the main points made in discussion and the agreed propositions will form the basis of an 'overview' of the colloquium to be written jointly by an Anglican and a Roman Catholic participant. This will be included in the published proceedings of the colloquium.

The available papers were examined critically, with an open mind, and as a result even fundamental initial assumptions were found to be in need of refinement. In particular, there emerged a consensus on the inadequacy of the concepts of 'membership' and 'termination'. As tends to happen in ecumenical discussions, occasionally there was lively debate between members of the same denomination. Some issues which may well invite further reflection concern the possibility of there being a right to baptism, the need to be explicit about the kind of intention required to baptise validly, the acceptability of considering baptism as entry into 'the Church' rather

than a particular denomination, and finally the relationship of baptism to eucharist and confirmation, including in ecumenical situations.

During our stay, we were privileged to make a calm and uncrowded visit to the Sistine chapel. Looking with some awe at Michaelangelo's vast painting of the Last Judgement, I recalled the challenging and demanding words of St Paul to Christians: 'Accept one another, then, for the sake of God's glory, as Christ accepted you' (Rom 15:7). Baptism should lead to full communion.

## ECCLESIASTICAL LAW SOCIETY RESIDENTIAL CONFERENCE

*Safeguarding the Sacred in Society*

4–6 April 2003  
St John's College, Durham

The Society's conference in 2003 will be over the weekend of Friday, 4th to Sunday, 6th April, at St John's College, Durham. The topic will be 'Safeguarding the Sacred in Society: the Future role of the National Church'. The aim will be to examine the changing nature of the relationship of Church and State in England and its practical legal implications.

Speakers at the conference will include Professor David McLean, the Bishop of Winchester and Lord Justice Laws. A theological perspective will be provided by Canon John Inge of Ely and there will be insights from the continent by Bishop Andreas Aarflot of Norway and by Professor Gerhard Robbers of the University of Trier in German.

St John's College is in the centre of the city of Durham, close to the cathedral, on the same site as Crammer Theological College. It is hoped that the conference will include opportunities to visit the ancient the library in the Cathedral and the Castle of the Prince Bishops of Durham which now houses University College of the University. Members are encouraged to book early on the application form circulated with this issue or obtainable from the Executive Officer.