



Personal Ordinariate of the Chair of St. Peter

usordinariate.org

Media Backgrounder | February 2013

QUICK FACTS

- Established by the Vatican
- Similar to a diocese, but national in scope
- For former Anglican clergy and groups seeking to become Catholic
- Communities are fully Catholic, but retain aspects of their Anglican heritage, including in liturgy

NORTH AMERICA

- Established Jan. 1, 2012
- U.S. and Canada
- 1,600 members
- 36 communities
- 30 priests
- Led by Msgr. Jeffrey Steenson

UNITED KINGDOM

- Established Jan. 15, 2011
- 1,350 members
- 40 communities
- 81 priests
- 2 communities of nuns
- Led by Msgr. Keith Newton

AUSTRALIA

- Established June 15, 2012
- 210 members
- 7 communities/3 in process
- 9 priests
- Led by Very Rev Harry Entwistle

As of February 18, 2013

The Ordinariate of the Chair of St. Peter is a national structure, similar to a diocese, that was created by the Vatican in 2012 for former Anglican communities and clergy seeking to become Catholic. Once Catholic, the communities retain many aspects of their Anglican heritage, liturgy and traditions. Priests must apply for ordination as Catholic priests and first complete an approved formation program.

United States and Canada

Based in Houston, Texas, the Ordinariate includes communities throughout the United States and Canada.

Our Lady of Walsingham in Houston is the principal church. Other large communities include St. Luke, Bladensburg, MD; Christ the King, Towson, MD; Church of the Incarnation, Orlando, FL; and St. Thomas More, Scranton, PA. Ordinariate groups and clergy are located in areas such as California, Iowa, Alabama, New York and South Carolina; Edmonton, Victoria, Ottawa and Calgary.

Leadership

Monsignor Jeffrey N. Steenson is the Ordinary. A Catholic priest since 2009, he is the former Episcopal Bishop of Rio Grande; is based in Houston, Texas; and is a full member of the United States Conference of Catholic Bishops and the Canadian Conference of Catholic Bishops. He is not a bishop (he is married), but as Ordinary, Msgr. Steenson has the

privileges of a bishop, with one major exception: he cannot ordain priests.

He grew up on a farm in North Dakota. He attended Harvard Divinity School and received a doctorate from Oxford University in 1983. He was ordained an Anglican priest in 1980, and was an Episcopal bishop from 2004-2007, when he resigned to become Catholic. In 2009, he was ordained a Catholic priest for the Archdiocese of Santa Fe.

History

In November 2009, in response to repeated and persistent inquiries from Anglican groups worldwide who were seeking to become Catholic, Pope Benedict XVI issued an apostolic constitution called *Anglicanorum coetibus* (pronounced Anglican-orum chay-tee-boose). This document authorized the creation of “ordinariates.” The communities are Catholic yet retain elements of Anglican heritage and liturgical practice. Ordinariates also have been established by the Vatican in the United Kingdom (2011) and Australia (2012).

In Feb. 2012, the Ordinariate of the Chair of St. Peter sponsored a symposium, *The Mission of the Ordinariate*, featuring Archbishop Gerhard Müller, prefect of the Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith on his first official visit to the United States. The talk is online at usordinariate.org/symposium.



Personal Ordinariate of the Chair of St. Peter

usordinariate.org

Frequently Asked Questions | February 2013

Is there precedent for this?

The ordinariates are new in that they provide a way for Anglicans to enter the Church in a corporate manner; that is, as a group or community, while also retaining some of their Anglican heritage and traditions. However, there are other Catholic ordinariates, such as military ordinariates that are responsible for Catholics serving in the armed services and that work in collaboration with local bishops.

Are Ordinariate communities part of local dioceses?

No, they are part of the Ordinariate of the Chair of St. Peter. However, Ordinariate communities and clergy are encouraged to have close relationships with the dioceses in which they are located and many of the priests receive faculties to assist in diocesan parishes.

Is the Ordinariate a separate Rite within the Catholic Church?

No. The Ordinariate is a separate use within the Latin Rite. Ordinariate communities celebrate a liturgy based on the traditional Anglican liturgy, though they may also use the *Roman Missal*.

What is the process for an Anglican priest to become a Catholic priest?

Anglican clergy seeking to be ordained as Catholic priests must first complete an extensive process that includes background checks; an endorsement by the local Ordinary; approval by the head of the Ordinariate and by the Vatican; completion of an approved Ordinariate formation program; and an examination.

Celibacy is the norm for the clergy. Permission has been given on a case-by-case basis by the Pope for former Anglican priests who are married to be ordained Catholic priests for the Ordinariate. If widowed, they may not remarry.

What liturgy is used?

The liturgy looks very similar to a traditional Anglican liturgy. At this time, parishes typically use the *Book of Divine Worship*, a liturgical text that incorporates Anglican prayers and material. The *Roman Missal* also is authorized for use.

How do laity become members of the Ordinariate?

Anglican laity are required to undergo a period of preparation, to apply in writing to join the Ordinariate, and to be confirmed as Catholics, as others entering the Church do. The approved formation process currently includes study of the *United States Catholic Catechism for Adults*.

Can lifelong Catholics join the Ordinariate?

The Ordinariate was formed in response to repeated and persistent inquiries from Anglican groups who were seeking to become Catholic. While lifelong Catholics are welcome to attend Masses in an Ordinariate parish, they would be members of a regular diocese and diocesan parish unless a close family member is eligible to join the Ordinariate.

Does an Anglican who wants to become Catholic have to join the ordinariate?

No. An individual may seek to join the Ordinariate, with the Anglican-use heritage, or a diocesan parish. In either case, the person must follow all of the usual requirements to become Catholic.

A priest in the United States may also apply to be a diocesan priest under the Pastoral Provision.

How many Ordinariates are there?

There are three Ordinariates: Our Lady of Walsingham in the United Kingdom; Chair of St. Peter in the United States and Canada; and Our Lady of the Southern Cross in Australia.