

Anglican bishops becoming Catholics

Communion for Anglican bishops becoming Catholics



Three Anglican bishops who are converting to Roman Catholicism have taken holy communion at Westminster Cathedral, with three ex-Anglican nuns.

Ex-bishop of Ebbsfleet Andrew Burnham, the former bishop of Richborough Keith Newton and John Broadhurst, previously bishop of Fulham, oppose women bishops. They are expected to be ordained as Catholic priests on 15 January. They plan to join the special "ordinariate" for former Anglicans within the Roman Catholic church.

Catholic Bishop Alan Hopes said up to 50 Anglican clergy could convert before Easter. The move has been enabled by a Vatican scheme intended to provide a welcome for Anglicans who are unhappy over issues such as the consecration of women bishops and the Church's attitude to homosexuality. It intends to allow them to maintain a distinct religious identity and spiritual heritage within a section of the Roman Catholic Church, known as an ordinariate.

'Flying bishops'

All three bishops officially resigned from their duties with the Anglican Church on Friday. They had served as "flying bishops", caring for parishes which objected to the ordination of women.

The nuns left their Anglican community at Walsingham in Norfolk after they expressed interest in joining the ordinariate. One of them, Sister Wendy Renata, said she felt "fantastic" after formally being welcomed by the Catholic Church.

"I've wanted to do it for years. I've finally done it," she said. Some members of the former bishops' families also received communion.

Bishop Hopes - himself a former Anglican vicar - said opposition to women bishops was one of the reasons for the converts' resignations from the Church of England.

More importantly, he added, "most of them have been journeying, seeking the fullness of truth, and they found it in the Catholic Church."

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