

ECUMENICAL MADNESS:

Anglican "Vespers"
at the Vatican



An unprecedented ecumenical prayer service is set to take place inside St. Peter's Basilica. "On March 13 [in 2017]," says the Anglican Centre in Rome, "for the first time ever, Anglican Choral Evensong [roughly equivalent to Catholic Vespers] will be celebrated at the altar of the Chair of St. Peter in St. Peter's Basilica at the Vatican."¹

The service, scheduled for 3:00 p.m., will be led by Archbishop Moxon from the 1662 Book of Common Prayer, which supplanted the Roman Missal and Breviary in Protestant England centuries ago, and will feature choral music sung by the Choir of Merton College (Oxford University). Catholic Archbishop Arthur Roche, the current Secretary of the Congregation for Divine Worship and the Discipline of the Sacraments, will be preaching at the event.

Note that this service will take place at the altar of the Chair of St. Peter (symbolic of his primacy and universal jurisdiction) on March 13, the very anniversary of Pope Francis' election as the Successor of St. Peter. Is this not terribly ironic (not to mention scandalous), considering the Church of England was established for the express purpose of evading – or rather, *usurping* – papal authority?

Worship in Common Forbidden

Many Catholics today have either forgotten or never been taught that such "ecumenical gatherings" are in fact condemned by the constant teaching of the Church. Prior to the novelty of "dialogue" found in the Vatican II documents *Unitatis Redintegratio* (Decree on Ecumenism) and *Nostra Aetate* (Declaration on the Relation of the Church to Non-Christian Religions), such *communicatio in sacris*

(worship in common) was strictly forbidden.² Why? Because such events not only expose Catholics to false doctrine and practice, they also imply to non-Catholic participants there is no need to convert to the one true Church for salvation.

And yet the truth remains: *extra Ecclesiam nulla salus*, "outside the Church there is no salvation."³ This dogma of the Faith is firmly rooted in the teaching of Holy Scripture, the unanimous agreement of the Church Fathers, the ancient Creeds, and the infallible definitions of Councils and Popes.

The *Roman Catechism*, also known as the *Catechism of the Council of Trent*, teaches about the unique origin and character of the Catholic Church as follows:

"For the Holy Ghost, who presides over the Church, governs her by no other ministers than those of Apostolic succession. This Spirit, first imparted to the Apostles, has by the infinite goodness of God always continued in the Church. And just as this one Church cannot err in faith or morals, since it is guided by the Holy Ghost; so, on the contrary, all other societies arrogating to themselves the name of *church* must necessarily, because they are guided by the spirit of the devil, be sunk in the most pernicious errors, both doctrinal and moral."⁴

This is certainly true of the Anglican Communion, a schismatic and heretical sect devoid of Apostolic succession (no valid priesthood, although they pretend otherwise)⁵ and founded on the sinful whim of a once staunchly Catholic monarch.

Origins of Anglicanism

The trouble in England began during the reign of King Henry VIII (r. 1509-1547). Shortly after his accession to the throne as a young man, he married Catherine of Aragon, daughter of the King and Queen of Spain and widow of Henry's late older brother, Arthur. Although Henry produced a laudable refutation of Martin Luther's errors ("Defense of the Seven Sacraments") in 1521, for which Pope Leo X (r. 1513-1521) bestowed on him the title "Defender of the Faith," he was notoriously unfaithful to his wife and even fathered a child by a mistress. Between the tragic loss of several children born of Catherine (some were stillborn, others died in infancy) and his infatuation with other women, Henry sought to have his marriage to Catherine declared null in 1527 by Pope Clement VII (r. 1523-1534) in order to marry his female interest at the time, Anne Boleyn. Pope Clement steadfastly refused over the next several years to grant the requested declaration of nullity due to a lack of sufficient grounds, so Henry decided to take matters into his own hands. In direct violation of Our Lord's absolute prohibition against divorce, he "put away" his lawful wife and attempted a second marriage to Anne Boleyn in January 1533. A few months later, Archbishop Thomas Cranmer of Canterbury (newly appointed by the King) likewise betrayed the Faith by declaring Henry's marriage to Catherine to be null and his new union with Anne to be valid.⁶

In response to this outrageous crime, Pope Clement rightfully issued a Bull of Excommunication against Henry (1533), who responded in kind through the Act of Royal Supremacy (1534), a new law by which the King was declared to be the "Supreme Head" of the Church of England. It was for refusing to cooperate with this unjust law or take the mandatory oath recognizing Henry as head of the Church in England that St. Thomas More (Lord Chancellor)

1 "First-ever Anglican Evensong in St. Peter's, Rome" (http://anglicancentre.churchinsight.com/Groups/286774/Anglican_Centre_in/News/Evensong_at_St/Evensong_at_St.aspx).

2 See Pope Pius XI, Encyclical *Mortalium Animos* (On Fostering True Religious Unity), n. 2, 9-10, 15 (6 Jan. 1928); Holy Office, Instruction on the Ecumenical Movement, n. 4 (20 Dec. 1949).

3 *Baltimore Catechism* 3 (1891) – Lesson 11; Q 509.

4 *Roman Catechism*, (Council of Trent), Part I (Apostles' Creed), Art. IX ("I believe in the Holy Catholic Church").

5 See Pope Leo XIII, Apostolic Letter *Apostolicae Curae* (On Anglican Ordinations), 13 Sept. 1896.

6 See Herbert Thurston, "Henry VIII," *Catholic Encyclopedia* (<http://www.newadvent.org/cathen/07222a.htm>).

and St. John Fisher (Bishop of Rochester) were brutally put to death by order of Henry VIII and won the crown of martyrdom.

Errors of Anglicanism

During the reign of Queen Elizabeth I (r. 1558-1603), daughter of King Henry VIII and Anne Boleyn, a summary of faith known as the Thirty-Nine Articles of Religion was drafted by the schismatic English clergy and promulgated by the “Supreme Governor” of their sect. This document, which continues to be the Church of England’s official statement of beliefs,⁷ contains numerous Protestant heresies, including:

- Luther’s “Bible alone” (Art. 6) and “faith alone” (Art. 9)
- The claim that “the Church of Rome hath erred” (Art. 19)
- Denial of Purgatory as being “repugnant to the Word of God” (Art. 22)
- Acceptance of only “Baptism and the Supper of the Lord” as Sacraments (Art. 25)
- Denial of transubstantiation, claiming it is “repugnant to the plain words of Scripture” (Art. 28)
- Denial of the Divine origin and authority of Tradition (Art. 34)
- Rejection of papal authority in favor of the English monarch (Art. 37)

The Thirty-Nine Articles of Religion are found in the Book of Common Prayer, the same book to be used for the Anglican “Evensong” prayer service in St. Peter’s Basilica. How can a liturgy rooted in such blatant heresy be allowed to take place in *any* Catholic church, let alone in the church built over the tomb of the Blessed Apostle Peter himself?

Catholics Must Resist

In the face of this ecumenical debacle, Catholics have a right and a duty to resist, just as St. Paul was

⁷ See <https://www.churchofengland.org/prayer-worship/worship/book-of-common-prayer/articles-of-religion.aspx>.

forced to withstand St. Peter “to the face, because he was to be blamed” for giving a bad example (see Gal. 2:11-14). The Angelic Doctor, St. Thomas Aquinas (1225-1274), commented on this episode in his *Summa Theologiae*:

“It must be observed, however, that if the faith were endangered, a subject ought to rebuke his prelate even publicly. Hence Paul, who was Peter’s subject, rebuked him in public, on account of the imminent danger of scandal concerning faith, and, as the gloss of Augustine says on Galatians 2:11, ‘Peter gave an example to superiors, that if at any time they should happen to stray from the straight path, they should not disdain to be reproved by their subjects.’”⁸

All faithful sons and daughters of Holy Mother Church should recall the Spiritual Works of Mercy, make an effort to *convert sinners and instruct the ignorant*, and hopefully convince many souls “to withdraw from that state in which they cannot be sure of their salvation.”⁹ This is what “the charity of Christ presseth us” to do (2 Cor. 5:14), *true* charity that “rejoiceth not in iniquity, but rejoiceth with the truth” (1 Cor. 13:6).

Our Lady of Fatima, Queen of the Most Holy Rosary, pray for us!

⁸ *Summa Theologiae*, II-II, 4 ad 2 (<http://www.newadvent.org/summa/3033.htm#article4>).

⁹ Pope Pius XII, Encyclical *Mystici Corporis Christi* (On the Mystical Body of Christ), n. 103 (29 June 1943).

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