

## **THE CORE BELIEFS AND ESSENTIAL TEACHINGS OF THE ANGLICAN CHURCH**

The Christian Faith was from the beginning not just instruction but also a Way of Life. This way of life was crafted around the life of Christ in the Gospels.

The Anglican Church claims that it began with the ministry of Christ and his Apostles. All of Christ's followers were disciples. The word means "learners".

Some of the disciples, and in particular Twelve of them, became apostles, people sent out by Christ in Galilee and then by the Jesus Movement with specific missionary tasks. These apostles had a significant role in the shaping of the Church and the ministry practiced in the Church. This will be evident when we describe the fourfold ministry of the Anglican Church.

The Anglican Church has its roots in the first Jesus movements in Galilee after Jesus' death and in the emerging structures of being Church in the early centuries. We are still a Jesus movement, for if Christ was abandoned or driven out of the Church by false theology and teaching or false practices, then we would cease to be Church.

The New Testament Era gives us various ways of being Church and the historic Churches have taken up most of the options. Ministry was more fluid in the New Testament times than it is today in the mainline Churches. According to the letter to the Hebrews Christ was the only "priest" of the apostolic movement. That is, of those 'sent out' by him to "call together" those who would form the first faith communities and become cells of the ekklesia, the Church, "those called into community."

A capital C is used with Church, not to claim an exclusive right for the Anglican Church, but to describe the Anglican Communion. We are heirs of those first movements, though that has been contested. Through the centuries the Roman Catholic Church became the authoritative center of Christianity. Its use of the Latin language gave precision to its definitions of doctrine, and Rome avoided most of the major heresies. The Greek Church in the East went its own way after 1054AD. The division was caused by an insertion in the Nicene Creed, which had the Holy Spirit "proceeding from the Father and the Son". The words "and the Son" are one word in Latin, filioque, but one word plus other skirmishes caused the first major schism in the Church. Peter and Paul opposed one another and fell out at Antioch in the early days of the Church, and other quarrels followed. But this was a major split between East and West.

There were also churches that were somewhat independent of mainstream Christianity. The British Church had been represented at the council of Arles in France in 314 A.D., so the faith came early to Britain, probably through traders who were Christians.

When Augustine landed at the Island of Thanet in 597 A.D. a new era in the Church in Britain began. Augustine eventually set up his cathedra (chair) at Canterbury in Kent.

The present massive Christ Church Cathedral in Canterbury is visited by millions of tourists every year. But it is more than a tourist venue: it is the Mother Church of the Anglican Communion.

The Celtic Church in Britain, with its focus on pastoral ministry, spirituality and deep roots in creation gave way in the end with great reluctance to Roman authority, military power, and order. But such great English saints, as Cuthbert was strongly Celtic in outlook.

Augustine came to stay, and the Augustine Cross on the island of Thanet, once separated from the mainland, is a great memorial. The presentation to the Bishop of Natal with the St Augustine's Cross-at the Lambeth Conference in 1998 was a revisiting of our history. Since then others have received this notable award.

The Reformation in the 16th century reshaped the Church in England, with decisive consequences for the rest of the Church in Britain. The Reformation on the continent was both theological and political, but in England it was at first political, both in the nation and in the Church.

The separation from the power and influence of the Roman Catholic Church was only possible through the direct intervention of the monarch. The brilliant Tudor prince and later King, Henry VIII, had it all in making such a move. He was linguistically able, articulate, and he had a fine theological mind. Henry's gifts and abilities were undermined later by his own decadence.

But with Cardinal Wolsey at his side, he made a move. Henry wanted to divorce the childless Catherine of Aragon to marry Ann Boleyn. Such a request was possible, but despite Wolsey's intervention, the Pope, lobbied by the Emperor Henry V, refused. The Reformation in England had begun. Henry had an ally in the Archbishop of Canterbury, Thomas Cranmer. The divorce was approved in England. Cranmer was a superb collector and writer of texts for worship, and he was the primary literary artist in compiling the first Prayer book of the Anglican Church in 1549. The process that Cranmer began would find its outcome in the 1662 Elizabethan Prayer Book and in the later Prayer Books of the Anglican Communion.

The Reformation brought Cranmer, Latimer and Ridley to prominence in England. They achieved more prominence than they would have had under Roman Church domination. They paid for this prominence with their lives during Mary's reign.

The reformers gave great emphasis to the Scriptures, tightened up or discarded practices that were not in accord with Scripture, and permitted married clergy. The English language in all of its glory took pride of place in worship rather than Latin.

The ministry of Bishop, Priest and Deacon was retained, but the Pope no longer had jurisdiction in England. The advantages were clear, but there were also deficits. The emphasis on rational thinking about the Scriptures in the Reformers, despite their warm

and fervent spirituality, tended to leave behind the Celtic grounding in creation and imagination and more than a thousand years of highly developed practices of meditation and contemplation, and extensive monastic communal life and worship.

We have been conservative about the faith, at times unbending about changes in ways of worship, but surprisingly radical in the application of the faith to meet pastoral needs. The tension between holding to “the faith once delivered to the saints”, and meeting the profound pastoral needs in the flatland of our post – modern world is a tension that remains.

## **CORE BELIEFS OF THE CHURCH**

### **GOD AS CREATOR:**

God is the ultimate source of life. This does not necessarily preclude the evolutionary spiral, but it says that the spiral begins in God. The emergence of Adam and Eve as first parents in Genesis signals an exciting outcome of the “Big Bang”, if you like, in Genesis 1:1 – “At the very point of beginning, God created the heavens and the earth”. The Christian emphasis is on the Father as Creator, the Son as the co-agent of Creation, and the Holy Spirit “brooding” over the waters of creation to bring life into being. Jesus called God “Abba”, “Father”, and made that concept the foundation of his approach to God as the ultimate Source of all life.

### **GOD AS TRINITY:**

The faith concept of Father, Son and Spirit as a Trinity of Being in God is at the center of all-Christian belief and worship. When we describe the functions of the Trinity we use the terms Creator, Redeemer and Sanctifier to describe them. “Functions” do not displace the naming of the persons of the Trinity as Father, Son and Spirit, but they do indicate the work or operation of the Trinity. We are a “Trinitarian religion” because of our focus on the Father as Creator, the Son as the Redeemer, the one who saves us, and the Holy Spirit who sanctifies our life as individuals and as community.

It was a massive step for the first Christians to move from “monotheism”, One Solitary God, to One God revealed in Three Persons. They began this process and it soon became the core teaching of Christianity about the nature of God.

Christians affirm the Unity of God, but they also claim that Father, Son and Holy Spirit expresses the unified way in which the person and the work of God is revealed in the New Testament.

## **JESUS CHRIST IS LORD:**

This was the first creed of the Church. “Creed” comes from “Credo”, “I believe”. We believe that Jesus Christ is the Son of God.

This is a huge claim when we consider the very human prophet and teacher who walked through Palestine in the first century. He was a brilliant and independent thinker, an enormously gifted person and indeed a significant prophet. He broke out of the mould of a prophet and became recognized as the Messiah, “the anointed one”, expected by the Jews.

But it was the love that poured out of him without consideration of people’s standing that created a sensation in Palestine; and opposition.

Jesus’ huge compassion touched people on the sidelines of life, mere spectators who could not feast at the rich man’s table. They saw a caring God in his face and in his deeds. They saw through him to God and God through him. It was not such a huge step after that to see him as the revelation of God’s heart. His ministry was one of sacrifice and love. When he died on the Cross In Fulfillment, Of fulfillment of his own prophecies, what he said and did there was interpreted by the first Christians as a sacrifice offered to God for the sins of humanity.

Jesus’ resurrection vindicated all that they could recall of his ministry and teaching. They were the first disciples, or “learners” of the “Way”. Some of the disciples were called apostles (“people who are sent”) because Jesus singled them out to be with him and to be sent on specific missionary tasks. The core of their preaching was that the Messiah, the Christ, had been “born of a woman”, preached the Reign of God, healed the sick and performed miracles. They claimed that Jesus had drawn from a well of supernatural love in his ministry. They also claimed that he had come from God and had gone to God. The last week of his life had brought two further miracles. That is, the miracle of forgiveness at the Cross, and the miracle of a dead human transformed into a new being in the Resurrection.

The Spirit who had ruffled the waves at Creation had now pierced a rock-tomb and raised the dead body of Jesus of Nazareth. The first preachers of the Gospel also proclaimed that the new life that had streamed into Christ in the tomb was available for all that died “in Christ”. His body had been supernaturally transformed, whereas our bodies lie in the dust. But St. Paul brilliantly applied the compelling evidence of the appearance of Jesus after his Resurrection to the “raising” of every believer into the presence of God.

The human body, mind and spirit shape the “spiritual body” that enters the eternal space of God. But everything is reshaped and re-consolidated in Resurrection. The physical body falls away, the Spirit renews the mind, and the eternal spirit transfigures the human spirit. The “soul”, the foundation of “self”, the home of the image of God in humanity, preserves our presented through all this process. God wants us to be truly ourselves, and Resurrection preserves who we are forever.

## **THE HOLY SPIRIT:**

The Jews often spoke of the “Spirit of God”, and their later Rabbis also referred to the “Spirit of Holiness”.

The first Christians saw the Holy Spirit as the “go-between God”, to use Bishop Taylor’s term.

The Jews understood and accepted the work of the Holy Spirit, but when Christ came, the connection of the Holy Spirit to his person and ministry made it more apparent.

It is clear that he recognized this connection himself.

Luke describes the supernatural conception in Mary of Jesus as a work of the Holy Spirit. Signs of the Spirit marked Jesus’ birth and early days. That is, by the presence of God.

When Jesus walked in Galilee, there was the Spirit of God in his entire ministry. Otherwise, much of Christian teaching would fall to the ground. Jesus was as much convinced of the Spirit of God in his life as he was of God as Abba, Father.

## **ESSENTIAL TEACHINGS OF THE ANGLICAN CHURCH**

As its name indicates, this summary of the Anglican Faith has four main sections. Apart from the Thirty-Nine Articles of Faith, it is one of the rare definitive statements of the Anglican/Episcopal Church. We have relied more on our Prayer Books to express the teaching of the Church, especially about the liturgy, the Scriptures and ministry. We use it here as a reference and guide.

The Holy Scriptures of the Old and New Testaments, as “containing all things necessary to salvation,” and as being the rule and ultimate standard of faith.

The Apostles’ Creed, as the Baptismal Symbol; and the Nicene Creed, as the sufficient statement of the Christian faith.

The two Sacraments ordained by Christ Himself – Baptism and the Supper of the Lord – ministered with unfailing use of Christ’s words of Institution, and of the elements ordained by Him.

The Historic Episcopate locally adapted in the methods of its administration to the varying needs of the nations and peoples called of God into the Unity of His Church.

The four points were accepted by the Episcopal Church of the United States and ratified by the Lambeth Conference of the Anglican Church in 1888. “Lambeth” is the name of the Archbishop of Canterbury’s residence in London. It also gives its name to the Lambeth Conference, a gathering of Anglican Bishops from the Anglican Communion that meets at

ten-year intervals. The Archbishop of Canterbury has a role of leadership in the Anglican Communion worldwide, but it is as “First Among Equals”, not with extra-territorial jurisdiction in the Church.

#### **Four Essentials:**

The Scriptures as containing all things necessary to salvation is a primary statement. This wording is taken from the 39 Articles of Faith of the Anglican Church. The Bible, including the 39 books of the Hebrew Scriptures and 27 books of the New Testament, is held to be ‘inspired’ in a manner different from other books, which may be ‘inspirational’. The word ‘inspiration’ means the guiding, remembering inspiration of the Spirit of God in the collecting, writing and authorizing of the documents that make up the Scriptures of Christianity, called simply “The Bible”. The Apocrypha is read in Church Services but not considered to be Scripture in the same sense as the received texts.

The Apostle’s Creed, as the Baptismal Symbol; and the Nicene Creed as the sufficient statement of the Christian faith.

The Apostle’s Creed is the old Baptismal Creed of the Church in Rome. It is integral to the Baptism Services of the Church. It is Trinitarian in its statements about “God the Father Almighty, Jesus our Lord and the Holy Spirit.

The Nicene Creed bears the works of 4th century controversies. It was written to counter what were perceived as incorrect beliefs about Christ and his relationship with the Trinity of God. It is also a wonderful affirmation of the Fatherhood of God, the holding together of divinity and humanity in Jesus and the life-giving operation of the Holy Spirit. We refer to these matters here in a cryptic way. They are deserving of wider study.

The two sacraments of Baptism and the Supper of the Lord with the words of institution and the elements of bread and wine as ordained by Christ.

Baptism includes the use of water, the Lord’s Prayer, the Apostle’s Creed and the signing of the person being baptized with either water or the oil of Chrism, or both. Children have been baptized in the Anglican Church from the beginning. Baptism is usually followed by Confirmation at a later stage. This was theologically necessary in a church that baptized infants and young children. The Bishop is the minister of Confirmation in the Anglican Church. This has given Confirmation a sacramental standing alongside Baptism. The first Anglican Prayer Book was published in the 16th century and most countries in the Anglican Communion have their own Prayer Books to reflect local traditions and yet retain the core of the liturgical inheritance of the Church.

The Holy Communion is the predominant worship service in most parts of the Anglican Church. The term “Eucharist” or “Thanksgiving” is often used of the Lord’s Supper as described in the Article and the Quadriateral. The Anglican Church has been reluctant to define precisely what happens in the ‘consecration’ of the bread and the wine in the Eucharist. The term ‘real presence’ has been used to define what happens when we are

obedient to Christ's words to "do this in remembrance of me." It is the 'remembering' work of the 'Spirit of Jesus' (Acts 16:7) that brings the Lord's presence to us via the elements of bread and wine and the total focus of the worship. The Eucharist is a 'field of encounter' with the Spirit. "It is not so much that we welcome Jesus, but that he welcomes us".

The Historic Episcopate locally adapted in the methods of its administration and to the varying needs of the nations and peoples called of God into the Unity of the Church.

The Anglican Church is an Episcopal Church. That is, it has Bishops. The word "episkopos" means "overseer".

### **The Church has in effect four orders of ministry:**

Lay Ministry

Deacon

Priest

Bishop

Archbishop

### **Deacon**

This is the first order of ordained ministry and the basis of ordained ministry. It has a model in the seven deacons in Acts of the Apostles and it means a "servant/minister".

The ministry of a Deacon is to read the Gospel, preach, baptize when a priest is not available, and minister to the people and the community. It is a wide-ranging ministry without specific sacramental functions, but it has within it a constant reminder that we are all servants of the Lord.

### **Priest**

This is the central role in the ordained ministry. It developed when the episkopos or bishop who was the leader of the community could no longer cope with the growing needs of a community of faith. The priest is the celebrant of the Eucharist and the spiritual leader of the community. Unlike the diakonos and the episkopos, "priest" has no specific model in the New Testament. The word "elder", presbuteros, sometimes translated as "presbyter", does not adequately describe it. The only model for a priest in the New Testament is Jesus of Nazareth.

## **Bishop**

The Bishop retains the order of Deacon and Priest. Lay Ministry, the ministry of all the Baptized is the foundation of all ministry in the Church. A candidate for the Episcopate has to provide evidence of Baptism, Confirmation, and Ordination to the Diaconate and Ordination to the Priesthood. The entire ministry of a Bishop is undergirded by the servant-name of being a Deacon. The Bishop celebrates the Eucharist as a priest and blesses as a priest. The singular functions of a Bishop in the Anglican Church are to ordain Deacons, to ordain Priests, and to ordain Bishops with at least two other Bishops. All priests present at the ordination of a priest may be invited to assist the Bishop in the laying-on-of-hands. Only Bishops ordain a Bishop. Three bishops, including the celebrant, are required. The Bishop is ordained to be the Bishop of a Diocese or to assist in the episcopate administration and functions in larger dioceses. A Diocese is a collection of parishes, which are clustered in a particular area. An Archbishop is the spiritual leader of a Province, a collection of Dioceses. The Archbishop is Patriarch, which has jurisdiction in the dioceses of the Province.

## **The Entry Sacraments of Baptism and Confirmation**

All Christian baptism is grounded in the baptism of Jesus whether it is for children or adults. An old mosaic in Nazareth shows Jesus being led by John the Baptist across the Jordan and then back into the Promised Land. This may signify that a new Exodus began with his baptism.

The Jews baptized proselytes in a trough of water so that they could participate in the race and in the nation. The baptism of John was in part for the repentance of the race and the nation. The baptism of Jesus is not for himself but for others. It is a sign of the New Covenant, which will be ratified in the Cross-and Resurrection of Christ. It sets the seal on the in breaking of the Reign of God, the central theme of Jesus' preaching and teaching. Every adult who is baptized walks in the water with Jesus. Every child who is baptized with a splash of water is sealed with the sign of the new covenant: water and the sign of the cross of Christ.

The catechism says that a sacrament is an outward and visible sign of an inward and spiritual grace. "The outward sign" is water and the signing of the cross on the person's forehead, and the use of the Church's prayer, Our Father. The Church does not 'own' Our Father, but the obedience to pray it does draw us closer to the heart of Christ who taught it to us. "The "inward and spiritual grace" can only be expressed in the fruits of a life lived in the Spirit of Christ. Words of commitment are also required, whether from an adult or from parents and godparents of a child.

Luther used to say, "the word is in the water" at baptism. By this he meant the word of Scripture, but Jesus was never far from Luther's thinking, and the figurative thought of Jesus being in the water of baptism with us is a wonderful one. As a young woman once said after her child was baptized, "She went into the water a natural child. She came out of the water as a child of Christ."



Whether you come as an adult to be baptized in this Church, or you came in the arms of your parents, please be aware of its significance for us. We make no apologies for baptizing children into the new covenant. Certainly, Jesus at the Jordan is the model, and he was an adult, but the word covenant is about a family, and a large family. Being a Christian does not go with the race, but with faith in Christ within the family of Faith, sitting at the feet of Christ. As Paul reminds us, “We were all baptized into one body”. That “Body” is a family gathered around Jesus, and children of believers are welcome. Perhaps too much emphasis has been placed on intellectual assent in baptism and not enough on bringing the whole family to baptism so that children are welcomed as Christ welcomed them.

### **Confirmation in the Episcopal/ Anglican Church**

Confirmation is a Sacrament of the Church. It has been given this status because it is included in the “Lesser Sacraments” in the Articles of our faith. This is affirmed in that only Bishop administers it. It is like Holy Orders in that the Bishop is the key participant. That is, as the administrator of Confirmation.

Confirmation was originally thought to be the way in which the Spirit is imparted after Baptism. But today the Church clearly recognizes that baptism is the primary entry sacrament and that the work and operation of the Holy Spirit in that sacrament is clear. This recognition is also immensely supportive of the person who enters that journey. We are very committed to recognizing the primary importance of Baptism in Christian initiation. But we also give a sure place to Confirmation. It is the recognition in sacramental form of the personal acceptance by a person of the promises made on their behalf at their baptism.

This is necessary because this Church practices the baptism of children. We also have provision for adults to be confirmed who have been baptized as adults. But Confirmation itself is primarily a signal to the worshipping community that the person accepts their place within the faith community and makes a public commitment to Jesus Christ as Lord and Saviour.

The sacramental sign of Confirmation is found in the laying-on-of-hands of the Bishop. It is also made tangible in the commitment that is made on behalf of the Church to nurture this Confirmed person in the sacramental life of the Church. This applies to every other endeavor of the Church, particularly its mission. Those who come to be confirmed should come with the clear intention to follow Christ and to live their faith. That is, in regular worship and in practicing their faith in outcomes that takes them into every avenue of their life and their interaction with the world.

A Sacrament is “an outward and visible sign of an inward and spiritual grace” as we have observed in relation to Baptism. The outward sign is the intention of the person to be Confirmed and also the laying on of hands of the Bishop on behalf of the Church. The inward sign is demonstrated in living the Christian life. The Bishop is the Church’

instrument as the intended focus of the presence of the Holy Spirit in this interaction within the body of Christ. We welcome with love those who come to be confirmed. They should not come without a clear intention to live out the precepts that are spelled out in the act of Confirmation. It is not meant to be a graduation to anything. It is meant to signify an acceptance of the promises of Christ, and to welcome him into our lives in public and inspirational way. We assure them of our care and concern and our loving support on the journey.

### **Reflections at a Confirmation**

The Sacramental signs are everywhere today, and so is the intention of your family and the Church and all who love you to bring you closer to God and to make you a member of the body of Christ in a more personal way than at your Baptism as a child. You are affirming your Baptismal vows in your own right today. That is, to acknowledge the truth about God, to live your life in a more formal expression of the Christian faith that is heartfelt, and also to take up the mission for Christ in the world to bring more people to his heart; and to pour loving care into more human hearts on the Way.

Reason, our trust in tradition, and most of all, a trust in the Scriptures that speak of the Christ in such powerful and loving terms, accentuate this. The evidence is there for his deep love of all of us and his unique expression of humanity and his unique expression of the human face of God.

### **The Holy Eucharist and Making Holy Communion**

A chalice was found at a sacred site on the island of Iona. The inscription on the chalice read: 'Do this, in order to call me back.'

Recalling the past into the present as an actual experience was part of the Passover celebrations of the Jews. It is not only one of the oldest religious celebrations in the world, it is also their key model for a way of remembering supernatural tracings in their history.

The Passover was the remembrance of the Exodus from Egypt. The long journey was nothing without the intervention of God that made it possible.

The Holy Communion is the predominant worship service in many parts of the Anglican Church. The term "Eucharist" or "Thanksgiving" is often used of the Lord's Supper as described in Article 25 of the Thirty-Nine Articles. The Anglican Church has been reluctant to define precisely what happens in the 'consecration' of the bread and the wine in the Eucharist. The term 'real presence' has been used to define what happens when we are obedient to Christ's words to "do this in remembrance of me."

He wanted us to never forget what he did for us in sacrificing himself for the sins of the world and His love for humanity and wanting the world to repent of their sin and be closer to the Heavenly Father.

It is the 'remembering' works of the 'Spirit of Jesus' (Acts 16:7) that brings the Lord's presence to us via the elements of bread and wine and the total focus of the worship. The

Eucharist is a ‘field of encounter’ with the Spirit. “It is not so much that we welcome Jesus, but that he welcomes us”.

### **Bishops:**

There are, perhaps, few subjects in the life of the Christian Church and of Anglicanism, which are as troublesome of definition and as productive of controversy as bishops! There is also scarcely anything more central to the life of the Church.

The word “bishop” has come through the centuries to denote the highest office in the Church, the highest of the three apostolic clerical orders. The English word “bishop” comes from the Greek word “episkopos” which signifies an overseer, and it is used only four times in the Bible – thrice by Saint Paul and once by Saint Peter. How then did it become so important to the Church? The story is compounded of Scriptural passages pieced together and of steady development from the very earliest days of the Church.

The earliest top leaders of the Church – whatever they may have been called as to title – were the Apostles, called by Christ during His lifetime or elected by the eleven after His death to fill the place left by the traitor, Judas, (Saint Mathias) or selected by Christ after His ascension (Saint Paul). There can be no doubt from any reading of the Bible or from any common-sense point of view that these thirteen men held a special place with regard to Jesus’ ministry and with regard to the Church He left behind Him on earth. They were specially chosen as overseers, as legatees, as propagators, as protectors of Christ’s earthly body, the Church. His intentions for them are clearly described in one form or another in the four Gospel books. He empowered and commissioned them to preach and teach the Gospel, to baptize, to proclaim repentance and remission of sins, and indeed specifically to remit sins. In short they were to feed His sheep, as He told St. Peter in so many words. These commands were sealed with the descent of the Holy Ghost upon the Apostles at the Pentecost.

The apostles were succeeded as years went on by other men who took over the supervision of the Church in various areas. These men were in turn succeeded by others who came to be called bishops and upon whom the apostolic hands had been laid in ordination. The status of these bishops has often been in dispute and it is so even today. The word “overseer” in itself tells us little; an overseer may be a despotic ruler or protective guardian. Hence we must turn to Christ’s commission to the Apostles for guidance. What is clear from the commission is that they were to be spiritual guardians, protectors of the faith, baptizes, ordains, and confessors. What is not at all clear is the degree of non-spiritual rule they were to exercise in the Church.

Anglicanism has tended to play up the spiritual role and, especially in its later centuries, to downplay the temporal role. History seems to bear out the theme that when bishops play well their role as shepherds, teachers, guardians, they have almost no trouble with their flocks. It is inordinate claims of monarchical power, which lead to trouble.

That bishops are central to the Church whom Christ left for us cannot be disputed. We must look to them to maintain the purity of the faith, the continuity of the Church, the

knowledge of the Gospel. They are the fountainhead of preaching, teaching, worship, ordination, absolution, and pastoral care. When a lay reader, a deacon, or a priest stands at the altar or otherwise functions in a congregation, he does so by the bishop's commission or ordination. He represents the bishop, whether the latter is absent or present. The bishop is the electron, the neutron, the proton, the very atomic nucleus, as it were, of the diocese and thus of the Church. He is the essential and visible representative of Christ to the diocesan Church. Without the bishop, there is no Church, no Anglicanism. That is not to say that the bishop is the church. The Church is the whole people of God, laity and clergy alike, but the Bishop is their symbol, their shepherd, their "Father in God". Thus the office of bishop deserves our love and our respect. In spiritual matters the bishop is supreme. In all else, he deserves our respectful consideration and his counsel should be heard. Without him there cannot be worship, or preaching, or forgiveness.

### **Ordained Ministry:**

A good deal of confusion exists in the minds of Anglicans and among Protestant Christians over the terms "minister" and "priest". Are they just two terms for the same thing? The answer is definitely "no".

The Book of Common Prayer uses both words, but not indiscriminately. For example, throughout the Office of Morning Prayer, the word Minister is used, with a single exception, that the absolution is to be pronounced by a Priest. In the Order for Holy Communion, on the other hand, the term Priest is used almost uniformly, except for the rubrics relating to the reading of the Epistle and the Gospel. And so it is with other sacraments and services of the Church. The word Minister is most commonly used, except in the services of Confirmation and of Ordinations and Institution, where it is mostly specified that a Bishop shall be the officiate.

What, then, is the difference? First, as to Minister, there are two kinds of Ministers – unordained and ordained. All Christians are Ministers in the sense that they are to proclaim the Gospel, to participate in the offering of worship to God, to comfort and help the needy, the poor and the sick, as well as their entire fellow Christians. The parties to the nuptial contract in the Solemnization of Matrimony are the Ministers, the role of the Priest being to represent the Church as witness to the contract and to pronounce a blessing on the union. A lay baptized person may also be the minister to baptize in cases of necessity when an ordained minister is not available.

There are two special types of unordained Ministers. Deaconesses are "set apart" but not ordained, and they can read Morning and Evening Prayer (except for the absolution) and the Litany. Lay Readers are specially licensed and they may read the same portion of the Morning and Evening Prayer, the Litany, the Burial Office, the Epistle in the Order for Holy Communion, and certain other offices (always omitting priestly blessings or absolutions).

The Ordained Ministry, in Anglicanism and Catholicism generally, is limited to the three apostolic Orders of: Bishops, Priests and Deacons. Their ordination is accomplished by the Bishop or Bishops, and by the laying on of hands. A Deacon is a Minister, ordained

and authorized to assist in the celebration of Holy Communion, to read the Gospel there at and administer the chalice, and to act as Minister at numerous other services, more widely than Deaconesses or Lay Readers. Still he is not a Priest, but a Minister.

To the Priest, through the laying on of hands by the Bishop, is given the sacred responsibility and authority to administer the Holy Communion and Baptism (normally), to represent Christ at the altar, to pronounce God's absolution and God's blessing. These are the things that no Minister, ordained or unordained, can do.

The Bishop is, of course, the focal point of the ordained ministry. He is the Church's Chief Priest, pastor, teacher, liturgist, and defender of the faith in a diocese. He is the successor in his diocese of the Apostles, the first Bishops. He gives legitimacy to the Church as the continuation of the earliest Christian body.

Anglicans believe that only through Bishops, and their assistants, representatives and vicars in the ordained ministry, Priests and Deacons, can the catholic faith be carried on. The catholic faith is simply the full Christian faith spread by the Apostles and marked by Sacramental worship. The unordained ministry of laity, Deaconesses and Lay Readers, in Anglicanism (and their counterparts in other sectors of the Church catholic) and of ordained ministers in Protestant sects carry on an invaluable, worthy and essential function of worship, teaching, prayer and praise. Only in the Anglican (or other catholic) ordained Ministry, however, can be found the means to carry on the full, complete, sacramental worship spread by the Apostles. Anglicanism thus possesses something very special and very precious in the ordained apostolic ministry.

### **Lay Readers:**

Perhaps the simplest definition of a lay reader would be that he is an unordained lay minister licensed by the bishop to perform an important though limited ministry within the Church. Every part of the definition is important.

Custom and tradition have dictated that a lay reader shall be male. There is, however, no obvious rational analogy to the theology and tradition which restrict the threefold ordained apostolic ministry to males. As a matter of fact, the Canons of the Episcopal Church do permit the licensing of "a competent woman" in cases of necessity (even though a bit grudgingly!). The normal practice, however, limits this lay ministry to men.

Lay readers are licensed for two reasons. First, they are useful in assisting a priest whose duties are heavy, or who may be called away from time to time. Second, they are useful in situations such as those, which exist in the continuing Anglican movement, where there is a shortage – sometimes a serious shortage – of ordained priests and deacons. In these situations, lay readers perform a valuable service in conducting services where otherwise there might not be services for lack of clergy.

**What ministry can a lay reader perform? In Anglican (Episcopal) tradition, he is limited to certain functions within the range of worship services of the Church. He can:**

Read Morning and Evening Prayer although he cannot, of course, give the absolution or blessing;

Read the Litany and the Penitential Office;

Read the Offices of Instruction (rather more honored by neglect than by use in the present day);

Read the Epistle in the Order for Holy Communion.

Read the Burial Office, omitting any priestly blessing.

In addition, a lay reader may, if so licensed by the bishop, preach sermons of his own composition. It is important that this limitation of special license be observed and understood. Sermons constitute one of the Church's important teaching instruments. Through sermons, the Christian faith is taught and clarified. If the faith is to be kept unchanged and pure, those who preach and teach and expound it must know it, must have qualified knowledge. This is why lay readers must prove to the bishop by examination or other evidence that they are conversant (and soundly conversant) with the Holy Scripture, the Prayer Book, Church history, Church Doctrine, the conduct of public worship (and, incidentally, know how to use their voices for that purpose!) and other pertinent areas of knowledge.

This is a special ministry no less than that of the ordained clergy. It is a special service to the Church in its worship of God. Clergy and laity all share in the priesthood of Christ. All are ministers of the Lord, with an obligation to show forth the faith in their lives and to be disciples and evangelists of the Word. All share equally in the Office of the priesthood. Most are called to function as laymen. Some are called to be Lay Readers and to function in particular ways in that service. Some are called to be Ordained Ministers, fulfilling thus a very special function in the Church.

All are equal in the Lord. Lay Readers are simply special servants of the Church, without whom the Church would often be seriously crippled in its worship and its outreach.

### **The Male Priesthood**

Anglicans believe that the sacred, threefold ministry of Deacons, Priests and Bishops is limited to males. To explain this, we must delve somewhat into the differences between the Catholic and Protestant traditions of Christianity.

A Protestant minister is a minister. A Catholic priest is both a minister and a priest. The difference is both subtle and great. A "minister" is a preacher, pastor, teacher, counselor (and, of course, administrator). But he does not serve at the altar, he does not administer the Sacraments, and he does not stand in the unbroken line of descent from Christ's Apostles.

This last point, the Apostolic Succession, is important. The threefold Apostolic Ministry has been a hallmark of the Church Catholic since the earliest days. However, the Protestant part of Christendom chose to discard this hallmark at the Reformation. It thereby discarded Catholicism and the Sacraments, and kept for itself only ministers, not priests.

It is unarguable that the Deity is not sexual, as that term is understood by human beings. Nevertheless, Christ was, in His human nature, a male. He consistently taught us to think of God as a Father. One cannot ignore this consistent imagery, plus the fact that Christ did not choose to include women among His Apostles, and thereby established the principle of a male priesthood. For two thousand years the Church Catholic has followed His lead in this matter.

There is certainly no bar to women in the ministry. Christ had many women in His following and they undoubtedly ministered in various ways to His disciples. There would seem to be nothing in Christ's teachings or practices to prohibit women from serving as ministers in many aspects of Church life – as teachers, counselors, administrators, etc. They do serve in many of these areas in Catholic bodies. But in Catholicism, of which Anglicanism is a part, that ordained ministry carries with it priesthood, and thus women cannot be accepted into ordination. The Priest serves at the altar, and the altar is not just another piece of furniture, nor just a repository for cross, flowers and a Bible. It is the place where the great Sacramental Mysteries of God are celebrated. When the Priest stands at the altar to celebrate the Last Supper, the Eucharist, the Mass, he does so as Christ's icon, as Christ's "other self"; he stands in the place of God who came to us in human form as a man. When he pronounces the absolution, he is the delegated successor of the Apostles, mento whom Christ gave the power to "remit" and to "retain".

The inability of women to serve in this way has nothing to do with their physical, mental or moral ability to serve. Many could do all the things that priests do. In individual cases, they might do them better than given individual men. But Christ set the form of the priesthood, not by men, and we must be loyal to Him.

This categorical principle of priesthood in no way stigmatizes women as inferior. It is a mystical, dominical and theological differentiation between women and men, just as real as the physical differentiation's between women and men. God has highly honored women. He chose Mary to be the Mother of Christ, making her that mysterious and paradoxical figure, "the Mother of God". Christ highly honored women. He loved Mary and Martha. He forgave and loved Mary Magdalene. To women was entrusted the honor of discovering the empty tomb and thus being the first witnesses to the Resurrection. But, as God in his wisdom chose to send His Son to the world as a man, so Christ, in His divine wisdom, chose to use men as His Apostles and the prototypes of the priesthood. The pattern has been set for us. Can we change all this? The Catholic has always believed, we cannot.

## **Vestments**

In its broadest meaning, the word “vestments” simply means clothing. In a narrower sense, it means clothing worn by a special group for a special purpose.

The ordained ministers of God are men set apart for a special calling. Every religion in every age and culture thought it fitting that the clothing of priests and ministers should denote at all times their special calling. Thus it is that Anglican and other priests of the Western Catholic Church have long worn a distinguishing garb even in everyday life.

This garb is a black suit and a gray suit, or some combination of the two, with a plain white, round collar or tab insert. This dress marks them as men apart, and makes their calling and status readily identifiable. Their calling is not that of a nine-to-five worker, and as identifiable priests they are available in all sorts of physical, moral and psychological emergencies as they move about in our society.

In a still narrower sense, vestments are the special garments worn in the conduct of Divine Service. The basic and simplest form of this garb is the long black gown known as a cassock, over which is worn a white surplice. A priest wears a stole around his shoulders, hanging free in front. A Deacon, whose garb is otherwise the same, wears his stole over his left shoulder with the ends fastened together under the right arm. (It may be noted that choir members and servers or acolytes may (and often do) wear similar garb, except the stole and that their surplice is called a cotta, being considerably shorter than that of the clergy).

It is widely customary in Anglicanism for the garments described above to be worn at all Services, whether of the Offices, the Eucharist or other celebrations. However, many Anglican clergy wear a more complicated and elaborate set of vestments when celebrating the Holy Communion. These consist of a white alb (with a rope girdle holding down the stole), a neck cloth called an amice, and the chasuble, a large oval sleeveless garment usually decorated with embroidery, representing the royal robe which the Roman soldiers mockingly put on Christ after they had scourged Him.

Bishops, of course, have certain distinctive garments such as the rochet, a long white linen garment, which in Anglicanism is traditionally styled with full sleeves having ruffles at the wrists. This is worn over the cassock, and over it in turn is worn the chimere, a black or scarlet sleeveless gown. On certain occasions, and at certain points in a service, the bishop wears a distinctive headpiece called a mitre, symbolic of the helmet of salvation spoken of in Isaiah, and by Saint Paul in his Epistle to the Ephesians. Anglican bishops wear a mitre, which is shorter and more angular than those worn by Roman Catholic bishops.

In procession and on occasion of high ceremony, the clergy may wear copes, long capes of rich and colorful materials,



Lay readers, however, are garbed in cassock and surplice (wearing no stole, which is reserved for the ordained clergy), and may also wear an academic hood of the college and degree appropriate to the individual lay reader.

These are the basic and traditional vestments. Whether the norm is to use only the simpler ones, or to use the more elaborate ones for celebrations of the Holy Eucharist, will depend largely on the wishes and custom of the priest and parish. No overriding importance attaches to this choice. The services and Sacraments of the Church are entirely valid and efficacious in any case; indeed they would be so even if no vestments at all were worn. Yet tradition plays a meaningful role, and adherence to it makes for decently and orderly conducted services. Vestments add to the solemnity and dignity; and, where the more elaborate Eucharistic vestments are used, there is undoubtedly a richness and pageantry altogether appropriate to the worship of Almighty God.