

## CONFERENCE REPORT

---

# Colloquium of Anglican and Roman Catholic Canon Lawyers

Venerable English College, Rome, 10–12 April 2019

JANE STEEN

Archdeacon of Southwark

and

HELEN COSTIGANE SHCJ

Programme Director for Theology, St Mary's University, London

The 20th Anglican–Roman Catholic Canon Law Colloquium met in Rome from 10 to 12 April 2019. New and long-standing members participated: Luke Beckett OSB, Helen Costigane SHCJ, the Revd Stephen Coleman, James Campbell SJ, the Revd Russell Dewhurst, Professor Norman Doe, Mark Hill QC, Mr Sion Hughes-Carew, Ben Earl OP, Robert Ombres OP, the Venerable Jane Steen and Ms Charlotte Wright. The colloquium was hosted by the Venerable English College and we were particularly grateful to Monsignor Philip Whitmore, the rector, for his hospitality, his addressing us on the question of liturgical formation for seminarians and his taking us to the stunning College church. We were also glad to be joined by Fr Tony Curren, the staff member of the Pontifical Council for the Promotion of Christian Unity with responsibility for relations with the Anglican Communion, who spoke to participants about the recent ARCIC report, *Walking Together on the Way*. All parties agreed that the colloquium might contribute a response to the report, and members will meet in autumn 2019 with a view to presenting work to ARCIC's meeting in May 2020.

The theme of this year's colloquium was law and liturgy, and papers considered different aspects of this, including the purposes of liturgical law, the creation and adaptation of liturgical texts, and the administration and oversight of liturgy. The papers on the purposes of liturgical law noted that, while there remains a basic idea of compliance, flexibility is an important principle in Anglican worship, where many norms are recommendations for freedom in

worship, yet there remain the basic ideas of compliance. This might be said to be less the case in the Roman Catholic tradition because, as the sacred liturgy is inherently public and communal, its celebration is moderated and governed by the competent ecclesiastical authority, because the worship of God lies at the very heart of the Church's mission as Church. A number of issues emerged in the discussion, including the role of Church and state in securing the right to worship and the right to manifest that worship, and the politicisation of liturgy.

In terms of the creation and adaptation of liturgical texts, an important issue that emerged was the role of custom and whether a liturgical abuse could become a custom were it practised for the required number of years. A key difference was how change is approved in terms of a more participative approach in Anglicanism, and a top-down one in Roman Catholicism. The idea of participation further emerged in the papers on the administration of liturgy in discussing the provision of sacraments. This is a particularly important issue with declining number of clergy available, the closure and merger of parishes, and what seems to be a reluctance (in the Roman Catholic tradition) to more fully involve the lay faithful.

Differences in terms of the oversight and discipline in liturgy were observed in papers on this theme. Various canons in the 1983 Code of Canon Law specify what is needed for the administration of each sacrament, as well as the responsibilities of bishops and parish priests. Over all this is the Apostolic See, aided by the Congregation for Divine Worship and the Discipline of the Sacraments and the Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith. In Anglicanism, the incumbent exercises an oversight of liturgy and any dispute tends to be handled in a pastoral (rather than penal) way.

Papers on music and worship noted that there are very few legal texts in Anglican tradition on how music is to be incorporated into the liturgy. Though there is a lack of clarity on this, it is assumed that the final responsibility for music rests with the officiating minister, though there should be collaboration with the congregation. *Sacrosanctum Concilium* (the Second Vatican Council's document on liturgy) called for the 'full, conscious and active participation' of lay people in the liturgy, though there has been much (often heated) discussion on what 'participation' actually means. Discussion points included the need for good liturgical and musical training, and who has the final word on music selection for the liturgy. Overall, the papers provided a great deal of insight into the adaptation and development of liturgy in both traditions, and scope for further discussion and research.

This year's colloquium was honoured to be the guest of the Congregation for Divine Worship and the Discipline of the Sacraments, its work being appropriate to our subject in hand. Its secretary, Archbishop Arthur Roche, spoke of the work of the congregation and took questions, not least concerning the matter of

custom and abuse in liturgy: at what point does a liturgical abuse move to being a liturgical custom and, from there, at what point may a liturgical custom be sanctioned by the Holy See? Archbishop Roche was joined by Monsignor Brian Ferme, an eminent canonist and now prelate secretary of the Council for the Economy. Monsignor Ferme identified a common concern when he described the major calls on the finances he now oversees: buildings, stipends and pensions. He explained his plans to ensure full publication of Holy See and Vatican finances.

On the whole, the colloquium avoided the politically charged question of Brexit. Nevertheless, it would be fair to say that Brexit in the background gave proceedings an unspoken but deepened significance. It was impossible to be unaware of the Reformation severance of the English from the Roman Catholic Church, of the major ecumenical efforts of the Churches to ensure cross-European relationships during the turmoil of two world wars, and of the grace of God in bringing the members of Churches and countries often ill at ease with each other together in open discussion. We were as surprised by the similarity of our legal framework as saddened by our continued division, and pleased to be contributing to this ecumenical endeavour of applied ecclesiology in such testing times.

It would be untrue to say that the colloquium was all work. Participants enjoyed good meals, good ice cream and excellent conversation, as well as the fruits of one another's labours.

doi:10.1017/S0956618X19001662