

A Paper on the Fourth Note of the Church, "Apostolic" for the meeting of the Fellowship of Concerned Churchmen meeting in Bellevue, Illinois on 22-23 August 2006 by the Rev. Fr. David C. Kennedy, SSC

When I took my canonical examination before my ordination as a deacon in the Diocese of South Florida some 43 years ago I was told by a senior priest that I would not have anything to worry about if I knew the content of the Offices of Instruction in the Book of Common Prayer, which of course was the 1928. As it turned out I did know what the Offices of Instruction contained, and so passed. I thought at the time that there must be more than that to justify three years in seminary, plus the four years of college. As it turns out in retrospect, if the Episcopal Church continued to practice what the Offices of Instruction teach, we wouldn't be here, and this venerable organization, the Fellowship of Concerned Churchmen, would never have existed.

Let us see what the Offices of Instruction have to say about the topic of today's consideration. In the Second Office, on page 291. We find the question, "How is the Church described in the Apostles' and Nicene Creeds?" The Answer given is "The Church is described in the Creeds as One, Holy, Catholic, and Apostolic." The next Question is "What do we mean by these words?" And the Answer, "We mean the Church is One; because it is one Body under one Head; Holy; because the Holy Spirit dwells in it, and sanctifies its members; Catholic; because it is universal, holding earnestly the Faith for all time, in all countries, and for all people; and is sent to preach the Gospel to the whole world; Apostolic; because it continues steadfastly in the Apostles teaching and fellowship.

We should note that in the definition of the word "Catholic" we find the Vincentian Canon of the 5th century that states that the Catholic Faith is "*quod ubique, quod semper, quod ab omnibus creditum est*. In other words, "what has been believed everywhere, always, and by everyone." The sounds very much like "for all time, in all countries, and for all people."

This is the last of the four presentations on the four notes of the Church..One, Holy, Catholic, and Apostolic. I trust we are all singing off the same sheet of music, but I have no way of knowing in advance, as we have not shared with each other what we have written. No doubt, some of the same things will have been said by others, and my advantage is to be last. Perhaps some sense can be made of all this at the question time which should follow.

We need to distinguish between the Church as a divine institution, the Body of Christ, and the human institution, made up of sinful, fallen, but redeemed human beings such as you and me, who by virtue of Holy Baptism belong to that one Body. As a divine institution the Church is truly One, Holy, Catholic, and Apostolic, but as a human institution it is always less than the perfection of the meaning of the four notes. A priest friend has said that I am in love with the Anglican Church, the Anglican Way, at its best. Unfortunately it doesn't exist anywhere. Perhaps in certain times and places it has come close to the ideal, but never really made it. That can be said of every variety of Christian

Church. There is no perfect Church in this world from the human point of view, but behind that reality is the mighty Army of God with drums beating and trumpets blaring, against which the gates of hell will not prevail.

Now let's look at what we mean by Apostolic in the best sense, and perhaps remind ourselves as well of the ways the Church in our day has fallen short. Apostolic has to do with apostles, which we understand as bishops. The Twelve Apostles were the first bishops, and the bishops of today are the apostles of today. Scarey notion that!!!!

An apostle is one sent out with the authority of the person who send them. The Hebrew work "shaliach" means just that. "As my Father hath sent me, even so, send I you." The apostle/bishop has the authority of the Son, who has the authority of the Father. "Apostolic" we have defined as continuing in the apostles teaching and fellowship.

First, let's look at the apostolic teaching, and then second at apostolic fellowship. Apostolic teaching must mean what the apostles says in preaching and writing. It also must mean what the apostle teaches in terms of his life style. Both teaching and living have to be consistent with the Church's deposit of faith and morals as found in Holy Scripture, and in the Tradition of the Church in which context Holy Scripture is interpreted. Bishops teaching novelties and living in relationships condemned by Holy Scripture cannot be tolerated by the faithful. Bishops need to be willing to discipline each other when necessary. One flaw in Anglicanism is evident here. Who decides when bishops disagree about what is taught or permitted by Holy Scripture? Yes, one can appeal to the Tradition, but also we should look at what the rest of the Church Catholic is saying. I mean of course that what the Roman Church and the Eastern Orthodox say should be taken very seriously by Anglicans. We have never claimed to be the whole Church, but only a part of it, and humility here on our part is most helpful.

Second, let us look at apostolic fellowship. It seems clear that this means "koinonia" and "communion." The Church is one Body, and all parts of the Body should be in communion with all other parts. That is not the reality of the entire Church these days, but one would think it would be at least true for all Anglicans. Heretical teaching is part of the problem, and the ordination of women is the other. This innovation was thrust upon the Episcopal Church by radical feminists with a political agenda and by too many clergy and laity unwilling to say no. It has been a disaster. Many dioceses have fallen to this innovation in election after election because of "political correctness" and unwillingness to stand up for the faith once delivered. It has brought disaster wherever it comes. The Church has declined in numbers. Parishes have been taken over by women, and men have left in increasing numbers. There are still many parts of the Anglican Communion where this innovation is not accepted. If we look to Rome and the Orthodox, there is no chance that the innovation will be adopted there. Pope John Paul II even said that the Church had no right to make this change. It is like saying that we can use Coke and Oreos for Holy Communion. Obviously the so called process of reception has been found wanting and if we look at the entire Church, the innovation has been rejected. We should be thinking of providing pensions for the deluded souls who practice this ministry. No doubt many of them are called to some form of ministry, but not that of the apostles.

There can be no fellowship in the sense of Communion when there is no recognized common ministry among us. We must remain in communion with those who share the same apostolic teaching and fellowship. The same problem arises in our relationship with the Lutherans. "Chicken, you are now a fish." Lutheran ministers have been make catholic priests by fiat. Next it will be the turn of the Methodists. We have justified what we have done with the Lutherans, by saying they have apostolic teaching. But how can that be if there is no apostolic teacher? I don't mean to spend so much time with the Episcopal Church, except to demonstrate where the slippery slope takes us, and it is down, not up!

When apostles fail to be apostles, the catholic faith is not taught or practiced, and holiness departs, and we are no longer one!

I apologize for my strong feelings, but I hope I have conveyed the importance of apostolic teaching and fellowship to our efforts to restore to full communion the various parts of the orthodox Anglican diaspora! Thank you!