

For immediate release:

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The Convention (synod) of the Convocation of Episcopal Churches in Europe took place at St. Paul's-Within-the-Walls, Rome, Italy, October 17-20, 2013. Chairing the convention was the Rt. Rev. Pierre Whalon, Bishop in charge and Suffragan to the Presiding Bishop of The Episcopal Church, in whose jurisdiction the Convocation lies. The Rev. Austin Rios – rector of the host parish -- preached at the Eucharist that marked the opening of Convention.

Several major guest speakers enlivened the conversations. The Rt Revd Dr Tim Ellis, Assistant Bishop in the Diocese of Lincoln, Church of England, led the delegates to consider the four points of Vision 2012, the guiding document voted by last year's convention. They are: deepening identity as followers of Jesus, formation to go further, mission outside the walls, and managing God's assets. Small groups of clergy and lay delegates discussed Bishop Ellis' talks, and resolutions for concrete application of ideas developed were passed. [Watch interview with Bishop Ellis](#)

The Rev. Gay Clark Jennings, President of the House of Deputies, is the first such president to visit a convention of the Churches in Europe. In her energetic presentation, she exhorted delegates to invest in the governing philosophy and structures of the Episcopal Church. (The Church meets in a triennial "General Convention" composed of two "houses", the Bishops, and the Deputies. These latter are four laypeople and four clergy elected by each of the 110 dioceses. Approval of both Houses is necessary for any decision to become official.) Further, President Clark Jennings invited delegates to take part in the current conversation "Re-imagining The Episcopal Church." The initiative offers a framework for imaging how the life and work of the church will be transformed during the 21st century. [Watch interview with President Jennings](#)

The Most Rev. Joris Vercammen, Archbishop of Utrecht and head of the Old Catholic Churches of the Union of Utrecht, challenged delegates to go beyond full communion. Since 1931, he reminded listeners, the Old Catholic Churches have been in full communion with the Anglican Communion, of which the Episcopal Church is a part. It is time in the present situation in Europe to go beyond mere interchangeability of ministers, said the archbishop. He proposed a step-by-step growth in fuller collaboration, beginning with programs of sensitization of Episcopal and Old Catholic parishes to each other's mission and ministry, in order to foster closer worship, ministries, and fellowship; then leading to "structures of greater unity", including sending observers to each other's annual synods; and the appointment of the Episcopal bishop in Europe as a permanent voting member of the International Bishops Conference of the Old Catholic Churches. These could lead to new diocesan structures built by both churches in the future, Archbishop Vercammen proposed. [ENS interview with Bishop Whalon and Archbishop Vercammen](#)

The delegates responded with an enthusiastic standing ovation, a tribute they also accorded to President Jennings and Bishop Ellis. Resolutions following up on Archbishop Vercammen's proposals were passed unanimously.

A clergy-spouse dinner was held on the 17th, and the traditional Bishop's Dinner on the 18th. Bishop Whalon gave three Bishop's Awards for outstanding service in the Convocation, one to St. Paul's Junior Warden, Yvette Manigold, one to Dr. Rainer Ullmann, outgoing chair of the Commission on Ministry of the Baptized, and to Mme Vicky Millet, Bishop's Secretary, who is retiring at year's end.

The Convention was notable for its music. At the Bishop's dinner, The Coro da Camera Italiano provided the evening's musical program, singing Verdi opera choruses in honor of the bicentenary of Verdi's birth. At the close of the program, everyone joined in singing the *Va pensiero*.

The Oratory of the Caravita hosted an ecumenical Evensong, presided by Fr. Keith Pecklers, S.J. The new director of the Anglican Centre, Archbishop David Moxon, preached, and other ecumenical dignitaries assisted with readings and prayers. The service was capped by a performance of a 40-voice motet by the English composer Thomas Tallis, sung by a choir composed of St. Paul's choir members, The Coro da Camera Italiano, and convention delegates. The evening was under the direction of Stefano Vasselli, organist-choirmaster of the parish.

The convention closed on Sunday morning with a festive Eucharist presided by Bishop Whalon. In his sermon the Bishop returned to the Vision 2012 theme of identity as Christians, an identity created by trust in God's love for humankind in Jesus Christ, not subscription to a set of propositional belief statements. Mr. Vasselli's arrangement of the hymn "Europe", written by the immediate past Bishop in charge, Jeffrey Rowthorn, and composed by Bishop Whalon, visibly moved the bishop. The Ecuadorian group 'Matices' also participated in the worship program. A luncheon followed the service'; delegates were the guests of the Latin American Community, led by The Rev. Deacon Mercedes Tutasig.

The convention officially adjourned as delegates from Christ-the-King, Frankfurt, Germany, bore the Canterbury Cross out of St. Paul's, where it has rested for the year. Symbol of the Convocation of Episcopal Churches in Europe's pilgrim people since a 1997 pilgrimage to Canterbury Cathedral, the cross will now grace Christ-the-King Church in anticipation of the next convention to be hosted by that parish.

The Convocation has 21 congregations with over 4,000 members in six countries in Europe, with congregations forming in other European nations as well. Five languages are regularly used: besides English, congregations make full or partial use of Italian, Spanish, German and French in liturgy and in ordinary life.

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