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### **Episcopal Parish Community in Bladensburg, Maryland to Join Catholic Church**

After a period of deep discernment, the rector and parishioners of St. Luke's Episcopal parish in Bladensburg, Maryland have decided to seek entry into the Roman Catholic Church through a new structure approved by Pope Benedict XVI called an ordinariate. Saint Luke's is the first church in the Washington metropolitan area to take this step.

The transition is being made with the prayerful support of Bishop John Bryson Chane of the Episcopal Diocese of Washington and Cardinal Donald Wuerl, Catholic Archbishop of Washington.

"We welcome the St. Luke community warmly into our family of faith. The proposed ordinariate provides a path to unity, one that recognizes our shared beliefs on matters of faith while also recognizing and respecting the liturgical heritage of the Anglican Church," Cardinal Wuerl said. "We also recognize the openness of the community to the guidance of the Holy Spirit in their faith journey."

In fall 2009, Pope Benedict XVI authorized the formation of "ordinariates" for former Anglican parishes seeking to enter the Catholic Church as a congregation. An ordinariate is a geographic region similar to a diocese, though typically is national in scope. Until one is established for the United States, St. Luke's congregation, which has approximately 100 members, will come under the care of the Archdiocese of Washington.

"This was a transition achieved in a spirit of pastoral sensitivity and mutual respect," said Bishop Chane. "Christians move from one church to another with far greater frequency than in the past, sometimes as individuals, sometimes as groups. I was glad to be able to meet the spiritual needs of the people and priest of St. Luke's in a way that respects the tradition and polity of both of our Churches."

Under the terms of a letter of agreement signed last week with the Episcopal Diocese of Washington, the St. Luke congregation will continue to worship in their current church, at 4006 53<sup>rd</sup> Street, Bladensburg. The agreement is a lease with a purchase option. The community will begin preparations for reception into the Catholic Church later this year while Rev. Mark Lewis, rector of St. Luke's, hopes to begin the process to be ordained a Catholic priest.

"I am deeply grateful to Cardinal Wuerl and to Bishop Chane for their support throughout this discernment. We look forward to continuing to worship in the Anglican tradition, while at the same time being in full communion with the Holy See of Peter," Rev. Lewis said.

The first ordinariate was established in England in January 2011. Ordinariate parishes are fully Catholic, while retaining aspects of their Anglican heritage and liturgical tradition. Cardinal Wuerl is the Vatican's representative for the implementation of *Anglicanorum coetibus* (pronounced Anglicanorum chay-tee-boose) in the United States, the papal document authorizing the establishment of ordinariates. This document and other material are online at [www.adw.org](http://www.adw.org)