

Anglicans, Roman Catholics Study the Role of Mary

By Michael Jackson

Is the place of the Blessed Virgin Mary in our Church traditions a matter of disagreement or convergence between Anglicans and Roman Catholics? A Lenten study evening on March 24, 2017, at the Anglican Church of St. Mary the Virgin in Regina delved into this historic question and surprised many of the participants by its outcome.

Organized by Canon Claude Schroeder, incumbent of St. Mary's, and Carol Marz, ecumenical representative for the parish, the evening was intended for Anglicans from the Diocese of Qu'Appelle and Roman Catholics from the Archdiocese of Regina, in the context of the 2011 covenant between the two dioceses. The Anglican-Roman Catholic Covenant Implementation Committee (ARCCIC) endorsed and publicized the event, which was attended by some forty people.

The program began with Evensong from the Book of Common Prayer, led by Canon Schroeder, with a crash course in music given by Valerie Hall, organist at St. Mary's. One of the scripture lessons was read by Jan Toogood, ecumenical representative at St. Mary's partner RC parish of the Holy Family. The service was followed by a Lenten supper.

Dr. Brett Salkeld, archdiocesan theologian for the Archdiocese of Regina, then gave a keynote address on "Mary, Grace and Hope in Christ" – title of the 2005 agreed Statement of the Anglican-Roman Catholic International Commission (ARCIC). The publication was co-edited by Donald Bolen, then on the staff of the Pontifical Council for Promoting Christian Unity and now Archbishop of Regina.

Dr. Salkeld explained the place of Mary in the Church since New Testament times in five areas: according to Scripture; in the Christian tradition; within the Pattern of Hope and Grace; in papal definitions of Immaculate Conception and the Assumption; and in the life of the contemporary Church. The ARCIC statement concluded that there is substantial agreement between Anglicans and Roman Catholics on the role of Mary as Mother of God incarnate, as a model of holiness and obedience for all Christians, and as a prophetic figure for the Church.

Brett Salkeld noted that even the doctrines of the Immaculate Conception and Assumption were not as divisive as might be expected. It is their form and method as papal dogmas rather than their content which are questioned by Anglicans. He commended the dialogue with Anglicans for obliging Roman Catholics to clarify their own understanding of the place of Mary in Christianity.

In the discussion groups which followed, both Anglicans and Roman Catholics said how gratified they were at the convergence between their two Churches on the place of Mary. Canon Schroeder concluded by urging Anglicans to pay more attention to Mary in their theology and worship.

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