

# VATICAN DIDN'T LURE ANYONE TO CATHOLICISM

In late October, the Vatican announced a new process for disaffected conservative Anglicans to join the Roman Catholic Church. Some of the newspaper coverage was okay, but there were others that completely misrepresented the outreach of the Church.

The opening sentence in the Vatican's October 20 statement said, "With the preparation of an Apostolic Constitution, the Catholic Church is responding to the many requests that have been submitted to the Holy See from groups of Anglican clergy and faithful in different parts of the world who wish to enter into full visible communion." Indeed, at least two dozen Anglican bishops, as well as many of the rank-and-file, *petitioned* the Vatican for assistance.

Despite this fact, several news stories maintained that the Vatican *lured* and *bid* for Episcopalians to join the Roman Catholic Church. This is complete nonsense.

An October 20 story on the *New York Times* website started the mantra with a headline, "Vatican Bidding to Get Anglicans to Join Its Fold." The first sentence of this story, repeated in the following day's newspaper version, said, "In an extraordinary bid to lure traditionalist Anglicans en masse...." Not surprisingly, the *Boston Globe*, which is owned by the *Times*, followed suit and carried the same story. The *Washington Post* started its story by saying, "In a remarkable bid to attract disillusioned members of the Anglican Communion...."

On October 20, the Associated Press ran its first story on the subject and did not use such language. But after reading the *Times'* gospel, on the following day it ran the headline,

## “Vatican Seeks to Lure Disaffected Anglicans.”

The October 21 *Christian Science Monitor* asked if the Vatican would now try to “lure” Africa’s Anglican bishops, saying that the day before Rome “launched its bold bid” for Anglicans to join.

The online newsletter Dissident Voice said that the “Roman Church is catering to the homophobes in the Anglican formation” and that it was a “masterstroke of corporate raiding.” Another online publication, Religion Dispatches, said that the Vatican was moving to “shore up its market share” and called it a “theological scandal.”

A week after the Vatican’s announcement, the British newspaper *The Guardian* ran a commentary entitled, “The Vatican thirst for power divides Christianity and damages Catholicism: The astonishing efforts to lure away Anglican priests show that Pope Benedict is set on restoring the Roman imperium.”

Happily, there were a few exceptions to the media Groupthink, e.g., the *Pittsburgh Post Gazette* and the *Washington Times*. Both of these newspapers did not partake in the Catholic baiting and reported the story accurately.

Why the Catholic baiting charge? Because reporting like this feeds the stereotype that the conniving Vatican has embarked on another one of its legendary power grabs. This is pure bunk, as any independent-minded source would acknowledge.

But stories like these beg the question: Who was the Vatican in a bidding war with?