

## Letter From Archbishop Williams to Bishop of Central Florida

In early October, Bishop John W. Howe of Central Florida wrote to Archbishop of Canterbury Rowan Williams. seeking a statement from him which would "clearly differentiate between those Bishops and Dioceses that are Windsor-compliant." He has decided to make the letter available.

14 October 2007

Dear John

I've just received your message, which weighs very heavily on my heart, as it must - though far more so - on yours. At this stage, I can say only two things. The first is that I have committed myself very clearly to awaiting the views of the Primates before making any statement purporting to settle the question of The Episcopal Church's status, and I can't easily short-circuit that procedure. The second is that your Rectors need to recognize that this process is currently in train and that a separatist decision from them at this point would be irresponsible and potentially confusing. However, without forestalling what the Primates might say, I would repeat what I've said several times before - that any Diocese compliant with Windsor remains clearly in communion with Canterbury and the mainstream of the Communion, whatever may be the longer-term result for others in The Episcopal Church. The organ of union with the wider Church is the Bishop and the Diocese rather than the Provincial structure as such. Those who are rushing into separatist solutions are, I think, weakening that basic conviction of Catholic theology and in a sense treating the provincial structure of The Episcopal Church as if it were the most important thing - which is why I continue to hope and pray for the strengthening of the bonds of mutual support among those Episcopal Church Bishops who want to be clearly loyal to Windsor. Action that fragments their Dioceses will not help the consolidation of that all-important critical mass of ordinary faithful Anglicans in The Episcopal Church for whose nurture I am so much concerned. Breaking this up in favour of taking refuge in foreign jurisdictions complicates and embitters the future for this vision.

Do feel free to pass on these observations to your priests. I should feel a great deal happier, I must say, if those who are most eloquent for a traditionalist view in the United States showed a fuller understanding of the need to regard the Bishop and the Diocese as the primary locus of ecclesial identity rather than the abstract reality of the 'national church'. I think that if more thought in these terms there might be more understanding of why priests in a diocese such as yours ought to maintain their loyalty to their sacramental communion with you as Bishop. But at the emotional level I can understand something of the frustration they doubtless experience, just as you must.

With continuing prayers and love,

+Rowan

