Photo: Anglican "Archbishop" Justin Welby offering an "Anglican Eucharist" in the Basilica of St. Bartholomew in Rome. (Michael Haynes/LifeSiteNews)

Today in Rome, Justin Welby, the Anglican "Archbishop" of Canterbury (more accurately, arch-*layman*, since Anglican Orders are null and void) was allowed to celebrate what Vatican News called "a sung Anglican Eucharist" in the Basilica of St. Bartholomew (the titular church of none other than Cardinal Blase Cupich). Michael Haynes, senior Rome correspondent for *LifeSiteNews*, reported that Welby thanked "Pope Francis especially for having granted permission for the service."

This "Anglican Eucharist," reminiscent of the one which took place last April in the Basilica of St. John Lateran (the Pope's cathedral church), was anticipated by a celebration of Evensong (Anglican Vespers) in St. Peter's Basilica on Tuesday evening with full Vatican approval (the same as in 2017). These Protestant services were than capped off by an "ecumenical Vespers" held this evening (Rome time) in the Basilica of St. Paul Outside the Walls, during which both Pope Francis and Justin Welby preached.

All of these services are part of "a week-long summit of ecumenical discussion and pilgrimage to be held in Rome and Canterbury from 22-29 January 2024," Vatican News explained earlier this week. "As they visit sacred sites in Rome and Canterbury, the [Anglican and Catholic] Bishops will pray, reflect, and learn from each other. The goal is to discuss ways to grow together in witness and mission in the world." The summit coincides with the international Week of Prayer for Christian Unity, which is held annually from January 18 (traditional Feast of St. Peter's Chair in Rome) to January 25 (Feast of the Conversion of St. Paul).

Whereas the modern Week of Prayer for Christian Unity is rooted in the false ecumenism condemned by Pope Pius XI in *Mortalium Animos* (1928), its predecessor — known as the Church Unity Octave or Chair of Unity Octave — was initiated by two American Episcopalians with the express purpose of praying "for the return of non-Catholic Christians to the Holy See." Paul James Wattson and Lurana White, co-founders of the Society of the Atonement, held the first octave of prayer in 1908 and then converted in 1909, bringing their Episcopal religious order and many others with them.

In 1910, Pope St. Pius X personally wrote to Wattson, who was preparing for priestly ordination at the time, and gave his blessing to the prayer initiative. Six years later, Pope Benedict XV extended its observance to the entire Church, after which it became customary to pray for the conversion of a different group of non-Catholics on each day of the octave (see here for the daily intentions).

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As we conclude this year's Church Unity Octave, and in light of the false worship that was allowed to take place in a Catholic basilica, let us recall the following words of Pius XI:

> "… it is clear why this Apostolic See has never allowed its subjects to take part in the assemblies of non-Catholics: for the union of Christians can only be promoted by promoting the return to the one true Church of Christ of those who are separated from it, for in the past they have unhappily left it. To the one true Church of Christ, We say, which is visible to all, and which is to remain, according to the will of its Author, exactly the same as He instituted it. …
>
> Let, therefore, the separated children draw nigh to the Apostolic See, set up in the City which Peter and Paul, the Princes of the Apostles, consecrated by their blood; to that See, We repeat, which is 'the root and womb whence the Church of God springs,' [St. Cyprian, Ep. 48 *ad Cornelium*, 3] not with the intention and the hope that 'the Church of the living God, the pillar and ground of the truth,' [1 Tim. 3:15] will cast aside the integrity of the faith and tolerate their errors, but, on the contrary, that they themselves submit to its teaching and government." (*Mortalium Animos*, nn. 10, 12)

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