

**L'Eglise Catholique Eucharistique-The Eucharistic Catholic Church:  
A historical overview**



**Edited by Most Reverend J. Roger LaRade, O.F.A.**

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L'Eglise Catholique Eucharistique - The Eucharistic Catholic Church

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# L’Eglise Catholique Eucharistique – The Eucharistic Catholic Church

## ABOUT US

- + An autocephalous Catholic Church
- + Progressive and inclusive, rooted in Tradition to engage the contemporary world
- + In Apostolic Succession, with valid Sacraments
- + Holding to Roman Catholic tradition, yet not under the jurisdiction of the Vatican
- + A place of healing for those hurt by their church of origin
- + A place for those seeking Catholic spirituality and liturgy
- + Welcoming women in the priesthood, the marriage of priests, the wedding of gay and lesbian couples, and remarriage of divorced persons
- + Valuing human life from conception to natural death

## FOUNDATION

In 1977 Archbishop Robert Clement received Fr. Hervé Lionel Quessy of Montréal and several other clerics, all ordained in Old Catholic orders, into the Eucharistic Catholic Church. Two mission parishes were established - one in Montréal and one in Québec City. Fr. Quessy was appointed Vicar General for the Canadian Church.

On 2 November 1977 L’Eglise Catholique Eucharistique -The Eucharistic Catholic Church (ECE-ECC) was incorporated by Canadian Royal Letters Patent. However, by April of 1981 all the members of the ECE-ECC had left and joined the North American Old Roman Catholic Church (Archdiocese of New York). Fr. Quessy himself became the bishop for Montréal and French Canada and eventually the Primate of this jurisdiction of the Old Roman Catholic Church. Abp. Quessy died in February 2008.

## SECOND FOUNDATION

On 28 March 2004 Archbishop Clement gave permission to Bishop Darrel D. Hockley of Regina to restart the work of the ECE-ECC. Bp. Hockley was originally a member of various Old Catholic and independent Anglican groups. He had been ordained by Bp. Ian H. Phillips as deacon, presbyter, and bishop on 8 August 1998 as an *economia* due to his being so physically isolated from other independent bishops in Apostolic Succession. Bp. Hockley moved to Vancouver in July 2004 as a better location to restart the work of the Church.

## NEW DIRECTION

Wishing to retire from his responsibilities for the ECE-ECC, Bp. Hockley called on Fr. Roger LaRade to accept the leadership of the ECE-ECC in order that the mission and work of the Church might continue. Fr. LaRade had been ordained a Roman Catholic priest in 1986. Committed to witnessing the inclusive love of God and having an active gay-friendly ministry in Toronto, Fr. LaRade accepted to assume the leadership of the ECE-ECC. Bp. Hockley resigned his office of Presiding Bishop effective 1 June 2005 and turned over the legal charter of the ECE-ECC to Fr. LaRade as Bishop-elect.

Fr. LaRade was consecrated a bishop for L’Eglise Catholique Eucharistique-The Eucharistic Catholic Church on 10 December 2005 in Washington, D.C. at the hands of Bishop Francis-Maria Salvato, SFI, his Ordinary at the time, Bishop Steven Delaney, CTMOSB, and Bishop Charles Braun. In the following year, for reasons of doctrinal orthodoxy, Bp. LaRade petitioned with regret and was granted release from Bp. Salvato’s jurisdiction. This did not affect Bp. LaRade’s jurisdiction over the ECE-ECC.

Currently, the ECE-ECC is organized into the Archdiocese of the Americas and the Diocese of Cameroon. Church ministries include parishes, spiritual direction, community relief, ecumenical collaboration, and consultation to other independent jurisdictions.

## JURISDICTION

At the time Bp. Hockley contacted then-Fr. LaRade, Bp. Hockley informed him that the relationship between the Eucharistic Catholic Church (under Archbishop Robert Clement) and L'Église Catholique Eucharistique – The Eucharistic Catholic Church was for all practical purposes non-existent. Further conversation with Abp. Clement confirmed this. Upon learning in conversation with Archbishop Clement that the Eucharistic Catholic Church in the U.S.A. operated as an LGBT outreach of the American Catholic Church, of which Abp. Clement was the Primate Archbishop, rather than as a separate jurisdiction, Bp. LaRade discerned that the ECE-ECC was truly an independent jurisdiction with a distinct leadership and ministry.

While valuing and celebrating its foundation from the Eucharistic Catholic Church in the U.S.A., the ECE-ECC had developed quite independently in Canada without spiritual and jurisdictional guidance from the Eucharistic Catholic Church.

The ECE-ECC functions primarily according to Latin (Roman) Tradition. The ECE-ECC, as an independent Catholic jurisdiction, adopted and adapted for its model of leadership that of autonomous Eastern jurisdictions. The head hierarch is termed 'major Archbishop', simplified in address to 'Archbishop'. Ranking above metropolitan archbishops and just below patriarchs in the order of ecclesiastical precedence, major archbishops are heads of certain autonomous Eastern churches in communion with the Holy See who enjoy in practice the rights and dignity granted to patriarchs, but without the formal concession of the title by the Vatican. The major archbishop fulfills essentially the same role as a patriarch, as the head of a self-governing Eastern Church. The dignity was initially devised as a compromise to recognize the head of the Ukrainian Greek-Catholic Church as that community endured persecution at home and many of its leaders were scattered in exile abroad. The major archbishop of the ECE-ECC is properly the Primate-Archbishop.

## INCLUSIVE CATHOLICISM

Most Reverend Roger LaRade, O.F.A., Primate Archbishop of L'Église Catholique Eucharistique – The Eucharistic Catholic Church (ECE-ECC), is founding pastor of Beloved Disciple Eucharistic Catholic Church in Toronto, Canada, and Founding Father of the Order of Franciscans of the Annunciation of the Infinite Love of God (Franciscans of the Annunciation). He holds degrees in Philosophy, Education, Theatre and Theology.

He entered the Society of Jesus (Jesuits) in 1977 and was ordained a Roman Catholic (Jesuit) priest in 1986. He left the Jesuits in 1990. His decision to leave was based on two factors: taking a public position against the Church's teaching on gay and lesbian lives and a desire to be in a committed relationship. He and his husband Mark met in 1991. After 12 years as a couple, they were married in the summer of 2003 following the Province of Ontario's recognition in law of same-sex marriages.

Archbishop LaRade was called back to ministry by the gay and lesbian couples who asked him to officiate at their commitment ceremonies and Holy Unions.

Abp. LaRade and his inclusive Catholic ministry have been featured on CITY-TV and VISION TV. His views on gays and the priesthood have been carried in the Toronto Star, and The Globe and Mail – Canada's national newspaper – has published his comments on Catholicism and LGBTQ issues.

Abp. Roger has participated in Toronto Pride as a member of Interfaith Pride, an ecumenical/interfaith group of LGBTQ-welcoming denominations. On the occasion of WorldPride 2014, held in Toronto, Abp. Roger was the only Catholic cleric invited to be one of 12 religious officiants at a mass same-sex wedding at the historic Casa Loma. In 2015, at the invitation of Mariela Castro Espin, Director of Cuba's National Sexual Education Centre, leader in sexual orientation rights, and daughter of President Raul Castro, he participated in Cuba's *Jornada Contra la Homofobia y Transfobia*, walking prominently at the head of the parade, and blessing over one hundred same-sex couples. This was the first Catholic presence in the history of Cuba's *Jornada* celebrations.

Reflecting on his ministry, Abp. LaRade says, "My life as a Jesuit for thirteen years, and my priestly ministry since<sup>4</sup>

then, has given me experience and training which is helpful to others as they search to make sense of faith and spirituality. This search can be difficult because it is often based in the context of a negative experience within the church of their youth. My ministry is open to all. As an openly gay man prohibited as such from ministry within the Roman Catholic Church, I feel a special calling to assist others excluded by their church of origin who are searching for spiritual meaning. We desire to claim our rightful place in Christian life. Our Church, given its origins in seeking justice and inclusive Catholic practice for lesbians and gays, and its affirming and respectful inclusion of all believers, provides a Catholic community which can nurture our spiritual yearning.”

## **BISHOPS & PRIMATES OF THE ECE-ECC**

Most Reverend Robert Mary Clement, Primate: 2 November 1977 – 31 May 2005

Right Reverend Darrel D. Hockley, Presiding Bishop: 28 March 2004 - 31 May 2005

Most Reverend Joseph Roger LaRade, O.F.A., Primate-Archbishop: 10 December 2005 – current

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## **The Eucharistic Catholic Church**

### **ROOTED IN JUSTICE FOR SAME-GENDER ORIENTATION**

The history of the Eucharistic Catholic Church begins with Bishop John Kazantks of the Orthodox Church in Greece.

His "troubles" started c. 1944 when he protested the defrocking of several priests in other dioceses on the charge of being "sodomites". In the course of this affair he announced to a regional Synod of Bishops that while he had not violated his vow of celibacy, he, like the several priests, was a person of "a same gender affectional and sexual orientation". That pretty much "did him in". He arrived in the USA in early 1946 and settled in Atlanta, GA. George Hyde was at that time living in Atlanta, having just recently left a Roman Catholic seminary. As fate would have it, Bp. John was employed as a Greek teacher in the Public Schools of Atlanta, and Hyde had just been assigned to the teaching staff at the same school.

About that time, at Sacred Heart Roman Catholic Church in Atlanta, a confrontation was going on where the priests denied Communion to a half dozen or so men and women who were denied absolution at Confession because they would not agree with the priest that their "lifestyle was an abomination to God". For four or five consecutive Sundays they would go forward to receive Communion but were by-passed by the priest.

Nevertheless, they continued standing at the altar rail until the end of Mass. The priests considered this an act of disorder. A modest number of non-gay parishioners began standing in support of the gays. The actions and activities of these protesters eventually were reported in the local paper. Bp. John and George Hyde discussed the matter and found that they were thinking alike about the situation, and arranged to meet with some of the protesters, offering them succor. Subsequently they organized a small group which met weekly to discuss the plight of gays in living a same gender lifestyle while trying to be faithful to God's moral standards. Out of this grew the Eucharistic Catholic Church.

### **1946: THE EUCHARISTIC CATHOLIC CHURCH - THE FIRST "GAY CHURCH"**

Eugene V. Gallagher and W. Michael Ashcraft in their *Introduction to New and Alternative Religions in America* (2006) note that by the mid-20th century, with the expansion and solidification of gay and lesbian communities "came not only a solidification of the gay and lesbian bar cultures, not only the liberal advocacy groups known collectively as the homophile movement, but also the first new religion founded by and for homosexuals: the Eucharistic Catholic Church." In *Male Homosexualities and World Religions* (2013), Pierre Hurteau remarks that "it is really in the Catholic Church that the first gay schismatic church appeared, as early as 1946 in Atlanta, Georgia, under the name of the Eucharistic Catholic Church." Hurteau states that "the church now seems more involved in Toronto."

It was in July 1946 that both Bp. John and George Hyde were in agreement that they had no other choice than to lay the foundation for a new ecclesiastical entity. They selected the name 'The Catholic and Apostolic Church in America' as an umbrella name, and Blessed Sacrament as the name of the first congregation. Shortly thereafter they discovered that both the Episcopalians and the Roman Catholics had parishes in Atlanta named "Blessed Sacrament". Not wanting to be confused with them, they changed the name to Holy Eucharistic Parish. In time, in common usage this developed into "Eucharistic Catholic Church".

George Hyde was ordained a priest on 1 July 1946 and accepted Bp. John as his hierarchical superior. In January 1947 he settled in Savannah, GA and from there served the sacramental and pastoral needs of a scattered constituency throughout South Georgia. In 1956 Bp. John expressed a desire to return to Greece. At this time he was in his late seventies and in declining health. He did return to Greece and died there in 1957. Prior to his departure for Greece, he put Fr. Hyde in touch with Abp. Clement Sherwood of the Orthodox Catholic Church of America ... the direct continuation of the ministry of Abp. Joseph Rene Vilatte(1854-1929), one of the earliest independent Catholic bishops in North America. Plans for Fr. Hyde's later consecration by Abp. Sherwood and the merger of the ECC and the OCCA were initially coordinated by Bp. John.

## **FIRST WORSHIP SERVICE**

Although it has been said that the first service - on Christmas Eve 1946 - was held in the "Cotton Blossom Room", a gay bar in Atlanta, with 85 people - both gay and heterosexual - in attendance, Abp. Hyde reports that this is not true. The management of a gay bar did, indeed, frequently underwrite the cost of renting meeting rooms in the hotel in which the Church was first located. The Church acquired in early December 1946 its own residential building which housed both a chapel and living quarters for the clergy. The first service was held in that chapel.

It must be remembered that in those days being gay and lesbian in both the USA and Canada was illegal and anyone being found to be gay in a public place ran the risk of ending up in prison or in a mental institution. Those first worshippers were brave souls.

Fr. Hyde was consecrated a bishop in the Orthodox Catholic Church of America (OCCA) by its head, Abp. John Cyril Clement Sherwood (1895-1969), assisted by Bishops Maurice Francis Parkin and William Ernest James Robertson, on 7 May 1957. Bp. Hyde continued his Eucharistic Catholic Church work in parallel with that of the OCCA. In 1959 Bp. Hyde moved from Atlanta to Washington, D.C. and became more involved in his OCCA work. Over the following years the Eucharistic Catholic Church work of Bp. Hyde did indeed wane. In January 1970 he succeeded Abp. Sherwood as archbishop of the Orthodox Catholic Church of America. In 1983 Abp. Hyde retired as head of the OCCA. He came out of retirement in 1996 to serve as bishop of the Autocephalous Orthodox Catholic Church of America, Inc. with headquarters in Belleair, FL. He died 4 May 2010.

## **MINISTRY TO NEW YORK'S GAY COMMUNITY**

In 1969, Fr. Robert Clement wished to have a special ministry to the gay community and with the approval of Abp. Hyde, in March of that year, revived the work of the Eucharistic Catholic Church in parallel with the American Orthodox Church of the United States (Western Orthodox) and later with the American Catholic Church. The following year the Church of the Beloved Disciple opened in Greenwich Village and soon developed a large congregation.

In essence, Fr. Clement had inherited the work of the Eucharistic Catholic Church. So much so that, in 1972, Abp. Hyde legally transferred to Clement the official incorporation papers of the original American Catholic Church (founded by Archbishop Vilatte in 1915) so that Beloved Disciple now functioned under it as the incorporated American Catholic Church. Two years later, Abp. Hyde also authorized Bp. Clement to continue the mission of the Eucharistic Catholic Church at Beloved Disciple.

Its liturgy was derived from a sixth-century Gallican rite first codified by Bishop St. Germain of Paris. The church held its first services in the sanctuary of the Episcopal Church of the Holy Apostles (at 9th Avenue and 28th Street). It subsequently relocated to the Moravian Church (at Lexington Avenue and 30th Street) and then to its own building at 348 West 14th Street. By its ancient liturgy and its high-church tone the Church of the Beloved Disciple set itself apart from other gay congregations of a more evangelical nature such as the affiliates of the Metropolitan Community Church of Los Angeles founded by Rev. Troy Perry.

Robert Mary Clement (born 12 March 1925) was originally ordained to minor orders and to the diaconate on 4 July 1948 by Abp. William Henry Francis Brothers of the Old Catholic Church in America; on 8 August of that same year Abp. Brothers ordained him to the priesthood. In December of 1958 Fr. Robert was received as a priest into the Polish National Catholic Church(PNCC). In early 1968 Fr. Robert left the ministry of the PNCC to found the American Orthodox Church of the United States (Western Orthodox) which was incorporated in New York State on 31 August of that year. As he was not yet a bishop, Fr. Robert carried on as head of this church body with the title of "curial administrator". In 1972 Fr. Robert obtained control of the perpetual charter of the American Catholic Church which was incorporated in the State of Illinois by Abp. Joseph Rene Vilatte on 13 July 1915.

By 1974 it was recognised that more clergy was needed for the Church. Abp. Hyde was still the head of the Eucharistic Catholic Church but because of ill health could not go to New York City to ordain priests. Abp. Thomas Csernohorsky Fehervary (1917 - 1984) of the Traditional Christian Catholic Church offered to ordain clergy for Fr. Robert.

Soon after the ordinations of clergy by Abp. Fehervary, plans were made to have Fr. Robert consecrated to the episcopate. On 4 October 1974 in the Metropolitan-Duane United Methodist Church, New York City, Fr. Robert was consecrated by Abp. Richard A. Marchenna of the North American Old Roman Catholic Church assisted by Bp. Martin L. Williams, Abp. Hyde being still unable to come to New York City. He had given his approval for the consecration. This event was televised in New York City and received national attention as the first openly gay bishop's consecration.

Bp. Clement and Fr. Noble also coined the term "Holy Union" and Bp. Clement was the first to publicly perform Holy Unions in July 1970. Bp. Clement was a lightning-rod for the news media whenever they wanted a quote concerning the naturalness of gay and lesbian people.

On 5 October 1980 Fr. John Noble was consecrated a bishop. This consecration occurred in the Church of the Beloved Disciple with Bp. Clement acting as chief consecrator being assisted by Abp. Hyde.

## **CALIFORNIA MINISTRY**

In 1986 Bishops Clement and Noble moved to California. Soon after the move, the Church of the Blessed Disciple ceased operations and the Eucharistic Catholic Church once more went dormant. Primate Clement continued as Archbishop of the American Catholic Church until the mid-1990s when headship of the American Catholic Church was passed on to Robert J. Allmen.

On 21 September 2003 Bp. John Darcy Joseph Noble died at 80 years of age at Vista, California. He and Abp. Clement had been life partners for 44 years.

After Bishop John's death, Abp. Clement carried the work of the American Catholic Church to Los Angeles. He has been active in intercommunion with numerous independent Catholic parishes; active as a member of the Interfaith LGBT Clergy Association; and established the Archbishop John Darcy Noble Center--a center for spiritual studies where individual spiritual growth is a goal. Abp. Clement's interest shifted to the Celtic Church, as well as to study of the Aramaic Jesus, the Historical Jesus, the Dead Sea Scrolls, the Nag Hammadi, and Buddhist and Sufi writings.

Archbishop Clement is currently based in Hollywood, CA where he "serves as local bishop and archbishop of the original American Catholic Church and the original Eucharistic Catholic Church" and "as leader and inspiration of an

open and loving community...leads a Celtic Eucharist every Sunday (and) is active with the Gay and Lesbian Center of Los Angeles and provides spiritual direction and support” to clergy of the American Catholic Church.

**PRIMATES OF THE EUCHARISTIC CATHOLIC CHURCH (U.S.A.) [Starting with Clement, ss a ministry within the American Catholic Church]**

Most Reverend John Augustine Kazantks (†1957): 1 July 1946 - 6 May 1957

Most Reverend George Augustine Hyde († 4 May 2010): 7 May 1957 - 3 October 1974

Most Reverend Robert Mary Clement: 4 October 1974 – current

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