

The Bishop's Charge

To the 142nd Session of the Synod of the Diocese of Ontario

November 1st, 2018

“For this reason I kneel before the Father, from whom the whole family in heaven and earth derives its name. I pray that out of his glorious riches he may strengthen you with power through his Spirit in your inner being, so that Christ may dwell in your hearts through faith. And I pray that you, being rooted and established in love, may have power, together with all the saints, to grasp how wide and long and high and deep is the love of Christ, and to know this love that surpasses knowledge--- that you may be filled to the measure of all the fullness of God.” Ephesians 4 (14-19)

Quite a few years ago, our daughter Sarah burst through the front door of our house after school with a story to tell. She found her mother and proclaimed: “I have good news and.....” Jeanie finished her sentence, as any parent might: “And the bad news is?” Sarah was a bit indignant at the interjection and declared: “There is no bad news, just good news.” We gather tonight on the Feast of All Saints, to open our synod, renew friendships and make new ones, but most of all we gather in the name of the victorious Christ, to whom the saints pledged and often gave their lives for the glorious possibilities afforded by the true Good News of the Gospel. We gather tonight with our sights fixed high because there is only Good News in this place. Tonight, we stand in the legacy of the saints for

whom Christ was their rock, their fortress and their might as the great hymn to the saints proclaims.

My friends, as I prepare to offer you my fourth Charge as your bishop to open this 142nd Synod of our diocese, I am filled with joy for we are called and gathered as people of Good News. We gather as the Body of Christ, in the legacy of the saints, with a faith, rooted and grounded in the love of Christ. The faith that is born of this love leads us, together with the saints, to proclaim that we only have Good News to share.

The theme of our synod “Rooted in Faith, Growing in Spirit” echoes the powerful words of St. Paul as he wrote to the people of the Church in Ephesus. Paul’s joy flows through the whole of this epistle for this beloved people upon whom God has lavished the riches of grace. Those who were once dead in their sins, conformed to the ways of a world shackled under the yoke of Roman rule and the tyranny of power wielded in a spirit of dominance and subjugation, now feel the lightness of the yoke of Christ with cords that bind them in a unity of heart, mind and spirit as the Body of Christ in the world.

Three times in the letter, Paul declares: “For this reason”. For this reason, he has not stopped giving thanks for them, remembering them in his prayers. For

this reason, he became a prisoner of Christ Jesus for their sake. For this reason, he knelt before God praying that they may be strengthened by the glorious riches of the Spirit of God in their inner being so that Christ might dwell within them.

Let's not fly by these reasons too quickly and, for that matter, what the "light yoke" of Christ and those "ties that bind" meant for the people of Ephesus. We see that Paul's embrace of Christ and diligence in proclaiming the Good News meant liberation in Spirit but not liberation in body. Paul was clear and unequivocal in his willingness to sacrifice even his very life for the joy of knowing Christ and making Christ known. He tells the Ephesians not to be discouraged because of his sufferings because those sufferings "are your glory".

In Acts 19 we read that conversions to Christianity were affecting the economy of Ephesus. The silversmiths were losing business as people turned from the worship of Artemis to follow Christ. The first century equivalent of the twentieth century political catchphrase, "It's about the economy stupid", led to rioting and the real possibility that those who proclaimed Christ would suffer bodily harm. The rioting only ends when the threat of Roman intervention to restore their version of peace sent people scurrying for their homes.

The Book of Revelation lists the Church of Ephesus first in the messages to the seven Churches noting they have endured hardships, persevered and not grown weary. We have a sanitized view of patience in our day and age applying it to frustrations around long line ups and most days having to navigate the 401 highway. When the scriptures note the patience and perseverance of a people, the circumstances in which they find themselves are always threatening, uncertain and violent. In spite of this, the people are called to remain patient and persevere, rejoicing in the spirit that will never fail nor forsake them.

Two weeks ago the late Archbishop Oscar Romero of El Salvador was canonized by Pope Francis in a ceremony at the Vatican. Many of you know the story of the martyrdom of Archbishop Romero in 1980, shot while saying mass in the chapel of the Divine Providence Hospital which specialized in serving the terminally ill. He had just concluded his Homily and was moving to the Altar when the fatal shots were fired.

Romero's homily was offered at a mass for the repose of the soul of a local woman on the anniversary of her death. Her son, the publisher and editor of a small weekly newspaper, had memorialized her in an editorial earlier that day. Romero reflected that through the words of the son, he "caught a glimpse of her

noble spirit, how she placed all of her refined education, her graciousness, at the service of the important cause of their people's true liberation."

Romero took the words of Jesus in St. John's Gospel chapter 12 as his text: "Unless a grain of wheat falls into the ground and dies, it remains a single grain, but if it dies, it produces a great yield." The words of his homily haunt my soul as I reflect that they were delivered in the unknown last moments of his life. Hear Romero's words from that homily now: "Many do not understand, and they think Christianity should not get involved in such things. But to the contrary, you have just heard Christ's Gospel, that one must not love oneself so much as to avoid getting involved in the risks of life which history demands of us.... If the grain did not die, it would remain alone. The harvest comes about because it dies, allows itself to be sacrificed in the earth and destroyed. Only by destroying itself does it produce the harvest."

Romero continued his homily declaring that: "This is the hope that inspires us Christians. We know that every effort to better a society, especially one that is so enmeshed in injustice and in sin, is an effort that God blesses, that God desires, that God demands of us." A few moments later, Romero lay dying before the altar, a single grain falling to the ground and yielding a bountiful harvest to this

day. I hear the echoing words of St. Paul from past millennia.... “For this reason I kneel, for this reason I give thanks, for this reason I sacrifice and pray that you may be rooted and grounded in love, having power together with the saints to grasp how wide and long and high and deep is the love of Christ, filling you to the brim with the fullness of God.”

For what reason do we gather in this cathedral tonight and prepare to walk together as the Body of Christ? I say “walk together” for that is the literal translation of the Greek word “synod”. I can think of no better description for the Body of Christ moving in the world. Jesus calls, we respond and the first thing we do is move. “Follow me” declares Christ and we are instantly set in motion, leaving the past behind and following the path laid by Christ toward the future that God has prepared.

Recently, our Provincial Synod gathered in Ottawa for their triannual meeting. I attended together with our delegates from the Diocese of Ontario where, for a few days, we walked together with our brothers and sisters in the other six dioceses of the Province. The theme of the synod “A Hopeful Church in Changing Times” surrounded and infused our worship, Bible studies and theme presentations as well as our business sessions. This all culminated in giving thanks

for the ministry of Archbishop Colin Johnson, a good friend to our diocese, as he prepares for retirement and in the election of our new Metropolitan Archbishop, Anne Germond. I am thrilled to have Archbishop Anne with us here tonight together with representatives from the Diocese of Algoma. Welcome friends to the Diocese of Ontario.

The glorious service where we installed Anne as Metropolitan was filled with joy and hope for the future lying before us. During her remarks to the assembled congregation, she called our attention to the words of one of the living saints of our Church, Archbishop Desmond Tutu, reminding us that we are authentically human as we are found in one another, from the perspective of our shared humanity. Ubuntu, the beautiful Zulu word from South Africa, embodies this precious concept of compassion and humanity.

Speaking during the last day of the synod, Archbishop Anne shared with us the motto she has chosen for her work as Archbishop, “salt and light”, a poignant and beautiful image to describe who we are for one another and the people we are called to serve as Disciples of Christ. Tonight, I have placed here in the cathedral, the salt candle holder which sat on our table throughout the Provincial Synod. I place it here as a reminder of our new Archbishop’s call to us and as a

constant symbol to take those words, salt and light, and make them our words while we move through these days of synod, walking together, preparing for the journey ahead in service to our communities and the world.

The Continuing Ministry of Reconciliation: From the Steps to the Street & the Canonry of St. Michael the Archangel

You will notice a second symbol placed alongside the salt and light candle, the Coventry Cross of Nails. Just over a year ago, we were pleased to welcome Canon Sarah Hills, Canon Missioner for Reconciliation at Coventry Cathedral to the diocese. During her visit, Sarah toured the Chapel Royal in the Parish of Tyendinaga and presented this “Cross of Nails” to St. George’s Cathedral as they became a full partner with Coventry in the “Community of the Cross of Nails”. We have offered the Coventry Litany of Reconciliation for the past four years every Friday at noon on the King St. steps of the cathedral. This litany prayer, so powerful in its simplicity, binds together partners in the CCN around the world. I am pleased that other parishes have used the litany on occasion and St. Lawrence Church in Brockville, under the leadership of Canon Michael Read, has also been holding the weekly prayer for a number of years.

I am excited about the possibility of expanding this ministry, putting the prayers we offer from our hearts and upon our lips into concrete and tangible actions for justice and peace through the power of reconciling love. Think for a moment about the power of reconciling love and what it can accomplish to pour salve upon a hurting, broken and painfully divided world. Think about what the extended hand of friendship, love and support can mean to the person who has only known the pain of violence and rejection in their life. Think about what the soothing voice of welcome can mean to the person who has been fleeing oppression, part of the record numbers of displaced and migrant peoples throughout the globe. Think about what the spirit of unity and fellowship can mean to those who face hatred and rejection having been labeled “other”, “not one of us”, “not of our people”. Think about the example we can be in our country and the world as we continue to live the Truth and Reconciliation Commission’s “Calls to Action” in our renewed relationship with the indigenous and First Nations people of Canada. Think about what the message of reconciliation can accomplish in the spirit of drawing people together for the sake of securing our future through the principles of economic and environmental Christian stewardship. Think about what the message of reconciliation can do to counter the petty, small minded and hate filled rhetoric that seeks to pit citizens

against one another for the sake of gaining, holding and exploiting power. God was in Christ, reconciling the world to God and we have been entrusted with that ministry.

The Cross of Nails is placed here in the cathedral, but as the Mother Church of our diocese this ministry does not end at the King St. steps of St. George's. The vision we have is that this cross is for the continuing work of reconciliation to which all of us are called by Christ. This cross is ours to carry and celebrate as a symbol of Good News. I look forward for opportunities for this cross to be placed in the midst of gatherings throughout our diocese where the work of reconciliation takes place.

The power of the Cross of Nails has grown since it was fashioned from the nails that held the massive beams of the ruined medieval cathedral of St. Michael's, even as the words "Father Forgive" were being written on the east wall of the destroyed sanctuary. Those who were victims reached out to those who victimized, not in a spirit of vengeance and retribution, not in the smugness of a "victory lap", but with the first wisps of their hope filled desire to renew a relationship that had become as ruined as the heaps of stone, charred wood and lost lives in the blitzed City of Coventry. This is what saints do.

One of the enduring images, among many, of Coventry Cathedral is the massive bronze image of St. Michael the Archangel subduing the devil. The powers of evil and the strength of sin may be vanquished but the statue depicts the fallen angel Lucifer pushing back, trying to force himself up from the elbow. This image remained with me following my visit to Coventry in 2014 as part of the Consultation of Anglican Bishops in Dialogue and I am often called back to it when the powers of evil seem to hold such sway with devastating result throughout the world and close to home.

All too often through these challenging days on the global political level, we bear witness to the calamitous results when world leaders resort to the politics of division, fear and demonization of their opposition. One retired political leader in our country noted woefully in a recent interview that, “though we looked across the aisle at our opponents, they were just that, opponents, not enemies.”

We are the bearers of the message of justice, peace and hope, born of the Gospel and manifested through the ministry of reconciliation. We must actively seek every opportunity to proclaim, live and act as reconcilers in our day and age. Tonight, I am pleased to announce the creation of a new initiative within our diocese to promote and grow the ministry of reconciliation entitled “From the

Steps to the Street”. I want to continue this work through the creation of a new Canonry dedicated to St. Michael the Archangel. Canon Michael Read, currently of the Canonry of St. Aiden, has accepted my invitation to be named to this canonry. Canon Michael will begin to reach out across our diocese to build a team that will develop and promote this initiative, growing and strengthening our call to the ministry of reconciliation as well as deepening our partnership with the Community of the Cross of Nails in Coventry and our global partners in the CCN throughout the world.

Ecumenical Relationships

The Letter to the Ephesians trumpets unity in the Spirit of Christ. The Gentiles of Ephesus and the people of the Covenant were joined together, their hostility banished through the peace of Christ manifested in the power of the cross. The Mission of Jesus Christ calls us to make every effort to maintain the unity of the Spirit through this bond of peace.

The Church of Jesus Christ flourishes throughout the world in many expressions, styles and methods of worship. I rejoice in the beautiful mosaic that is the Church of Jesus Christ. We must continue to walk together wherever possible with our brothers and sisters in the Church Universal. The Church that is

rooted in faith will always manifest a spirit of unity and mutual cooperation for the love of the world that Christ wishes to be reconciled to our loving God.

I am pleased to welcome to synod, as our official synod observer, Sister Pauline Lally of the Sisters of Providence of St. Vincent de Paul here in Kingston. The sisters have a long history of caring for the vulnerable and marginalized in our area and we have long valued the partnership and friendship we have enjoyed between our diocese, The Archdiocese of Kingston and the Sisters of Providence. Some of you may recall that Bishop George Bruce gave expression to that ongoing friendship by naming Monsignor Don Clement of the Cathedral of St. Mary as an Honourary Canon of our cathedral. The late Monsignor was a good friend to many in our church and I am pleased to announce that Sister Pauline has accepted my invitation to assume the Honourary Canonry of St. Vincent de Paul with the concurrence of Archbishop Brendan O'Brien, who is another good friend and supporter of greater ecumenical cooperation.

Consideration of Amendments to the Marriage Canon

It is now just over two years since the passage at General Synod, on first reading, of an amendment to the Marriage Canon of the Anglican Church of Canada to allow for equal marriage. We have followed a process that I laid out

following General Synod 2016 to fulfill our constitutional obligation to “consider” the proposed amendment and offer the benefit of that consideration to General Synod 2019 as they prepare for second reading of the amendment to the Canon.

I want to extend my deep thanks and appreciation to the members of the Canon 21 Steering Committee, our General Synod 2016 delegates, Haroldine Neil-Burchert, Anne Patterson, Rev Lisa Chisholm-Smith and Rev John Van Stone who were joined by Rev Dr William Morrow, Canon Dr. Barbara Robinson, Dean Don Davidson and Mr. Andrew Innis with Archdeacon Wayne Varley providing staff support. They designed and implemented the process which organized regional consultations, developed a tool box resource for local use, solicited and collected input from individuals, parishes and organizations across the diocese. They designed the format to aid us in our consideration at this synod as well as composing the Memorial Resolution that will come before you to transmit the considered views of our diocese to our friends meeting in General Synod next year.

I am pleased to welcome the scholars who will address the synod tomorrow, Dr. Sylvia Keesmatt, Dr. Glen Taylor and Dr. Christopher Brittain. Each presenter will delve into the various aspects of the issues that inform a fulsome

consideration of this proposal. I am appreciative of those who have agreed to moderate the discussion groups that will take place tomorrow afternoon. I have been most thankful that, throughout the diocese over the past two years of consultation and discussion, these meetings have adhered to the respectful communication guidelines we developed. This has allowed us to speak and hear one another in a spirit of respect and in the atmosphere of safe space. I trust and am confident that this spirit will be part of our synod conversations as well.

Recently, the Canon 21 steering committee was asked to find a way for the voice of our diocesan synod to be heard as a body and to offer the considered view of our synod as it meets. They have included in our consideration tomorrow two ways that will address this request. Following the discussion groups and the session where our speakers will respond to the written questions you have submitted, the moderators of the discussion groups will meet and distill a few of the main themes they heard as you discussed the questions that will guide your discussions. You will have the opportunity to hear those main themes after which a non-binding poll of synod members will be taken, by secret ballot, asking whether you agree, disagree or are undecided regarding the amended resolution coming before General Synod for second reading. The results of that non-binding poll will be included with the material comprising the memorial resolution.

Covenant Celebration Team and Community Partnerships

When I addressed you in 2016, I drew inspiration from the work of our Ministries Task Force and its call to outward focus in all of the ministries of the diocese under the broad mandate of moving from “Maintenance to Mission”. Community partnerships that have potential to engage both faith communities and secular agencies were to be encouraged. The work I referenced in 2016 such as the partnership with Habitat for Humanity continues to move to fruition with the final stages of the creation of three duplex residences and the new Ministry Center on Cowdy St. in Kingston. My prayer is that more of these opportunities will be seized in the future as parishes continue to strengthen existing ministries and develop new ones through the creation of parish covenants.

The Covenant Celebration Team has witnessed the creation of over sixty parish covenants in its two and a half years of work. I am pleased that we have been able to support this effort through grants from the diocesan budget. You will have the opportunity to see video presentations of a few of these efforts during our time together in synod.

I am deeply thankful for the remarkable work that is taking place in many of our parishes as these covenants continue to flourish. Our emphasis on becoming more connected and engaged within our diocese has seen parishes draw inspiration from the efforts of their neighbours and those ministries have been reseeded in other communities. I want to encourage and commend the continued emphasis on the covenant program and the people who are part of the Covenant Celebration team.

Vote of Thanks, Diocesan Medal and Canonries

I come to the conclusion of this Charge to Synod filled with thanks for the many, many people who give so much of their time, talent, energy and resource for the mission and ministry of Jesus Christ in this part of the vineyard known as the Diocese of Ontario. There wouldn't be enough time to express the thanks due to so many, but please indulge me in a few notes of appreciation and some announcements.

One of the challenges in planning for our move from the Diocesan Center at 90 Johnson St. was devising a plan and securing a location for the Diocesan Archives. The new location at 754 Baker Crescent has been lovingly set up and organized by a tireless team of volunteers in the persons of Art and Marjorie

Keates and Jane Miller. Together with Archivist Paul Banfield, they will comprise the reconstituted Archives Committee. I want to extend my thanks along with our diocese and all who access our Archives for the work they have undertaken. I am pleased that Art, Marjorie and Jane will be with us at Evensong tomorrow night where they will receive Diocesan Certificates of Appreciation for their efforts.

Our Diocesan Chancellor, Roy Conacher has been a faithful legal advisor and friend to the diocese for many years. His recent work, together with the hard working members of the Constitution and Canons Committee, has resulted in hundreds of hours of effort to refine, hone and redevelop the Canons and Constitution you will be asked to give final approval at this synod.

Roy has indicated his desire to step down from his position as chancellor following synod and I have accepted his resignation with deep thanks and appreciation for his service. I am pleased to announce that I will confer the title of Honourary Canon of St. Thomas a Beckett on Roy who I know will continue to be a faithful supporter and trusted advisor and as a member of the congregation of St. Georges Cathedral.

Bishop George Bruce inaugurated the Diocese of Ontario medal during his episcopacy as a means of acknowledging the outstanding contribution of lay

members to the life of our diocese. I received a nomination for a person who has lived and breathed the ministry of our Church from childhood to this day at both the Parish and Diocesan level. The many forms of service he has undertaken has always been marked with good humour and generosity of spirit that leaves its mark on all who come to know him. Not only is he full of generosity of spirit, time and talent for the church, but also for the life of the community and the most vulnerable, particularly through the work of Habitat for Humanity. I am pleased to award the Diocese of Ontario medal to Mr. Carl Redmond of St. George's Cathedral congregation.

The clergy of the diocese serve faithfully in their various callings and appointments with mandates that charge them to care alike for young and old, strong and weak, rich and poor, to love and serve Christ's people and take their place in the Councils of the Church. I am deeply appreciative of all the duties and responsibilities that our clergy undertake and the love they display for Christ and the Church.

Tonight I wish to note the contributions of one of your number who has given decades of service to the Church, in the parishes he has served, the councils of the diocese and particularly his work with youth at the parish and diocesan

level. I am pleased to announce that I have appointed Rev Don Bailey of St. Alban's Church, Amherst Island to the Canonry of St. Mary the Virgin. Blessings Don to you, Elaine and your family, the people you serve and the ongoing ministry you provide.

Last week we gathered at Camp Hyanto to give thanks for over seventy years of camping ministry, the countless numbers of campers, counsellors, volunteers, staff and folk who have been touched over the years by the beauty and serenity of the place, friendships made and faith deepened. The people who have worked with such passion over seven decades, to maintain camping ministry as a vital part of our diocesan outreach are to be commended for their faith and devotion to the young people who journeyed to Lyndhurst to play, learn and yes "sleep well beneath the pines".

There is sadness at any ending, but we know that, in the Christian tradition, every ending is followed by a new beginning and I pray that the lasting legacy of Camp Hyanto will carry into the future through opportunities, plans and initiatives to support and nurture young Christians in their life in Christ. Thank you to those past and current members of the camp Board for all you have given to this ministry.

Finally, I wish to pay tribute to those who have labored mightily as part of the Synod Planning Team, chaired by Canon Michael Read and Mrs. Audrey Delizney to design and bring together in both large and small detail, these two and a half days we will spend together. I am also blessed with the staff I have the joy and delight of working with at 165 Ontario St. and the volunteers who maintain our new archive facility. Since we last met in synod, we have bid farewell to Canon John Secker as he moved into retirement and welcomed Candace Hartley to the team as Financial Analyst working with Accounting Assistant Joyce Williams and Accounting Intern Michael Betts. Diocesan Executive Officer, Alex Pierson has assumed a dual role taking on the former duties of the Financial Officer since we last gathered. Please continue to hold my Executive Secretary, Wendy Pierson in your prayers as she moves toward a full recovery from her cancer surgery. Together with the Bookroom staff led by Phil Maloney, Communications Officer Mark Hauser, Refugee Coordinator Mimi Merrill and Archdeacon of Ministry and Program, Wayne Varley, I feel truly blessed, serving which such a dedicated and passionate team who work for the people of the Diocese of Ontario.

Conclusion

We will come before the table of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ in a few short moments as Archbishop Anne offers the bread and wine that will be the Body and Blood of Christ who nurtures the lives of the saints in our time and place. We gather around the table which is the powerful symbol of our unity in Christ, our ongoing journey step by step as Christ calls and beckons.

We gather around this table in the communion of saints who have gone before and now surround us on every side. We have called to mind tonight the great giants of our faith who have gone before us: St. Paul, the Saints of Ephesus, St. Oscar Romero, St. Michael the Archangel, St. Vincent de Paul, St. Thomas a Beckett and St. Mary the Virgin. They, together with the myriad of hosts, known and unknown, whose hope was in Christ the Word made flesh and whose path was sure, now encourage us in our time and place to bear the Good News to every place and corner where we live move, move and have our being. I pray that this Charge will reflect Christ's call and the Spirit strengthen you for the work of these days that you may be salt and light for the world. The future is in the hands of our loving God who beckons us to take the next step in faith. May the Divine blessing attend you. Amen