(He compares and contrasts The Blessed Virgin Mary and Judas)

Mary, on the other hand models for us what can happen when we are conformed to God’s Will. She had heard at the Temple years before the Crucifixion of her Son that she would suffer much. At the Wedding in Cana of Galilee she uncharacteristically told people, “Do whatever He says.” Likewise, Mary sought the comfort of the beloved Apostle, John, and waited with the Apostles until Pentecost. In each step of her life, as portrayed in the New Testament, we see a human being who recognized that saying “yes” means not only being conformed to God’s will personally and corporately, but also waiting upon the Lord’s pleasure. She did not try to force the Hand of God, unlike Judas, and she did not take matters into her own hands, even when the Apostles scattered on Good Friday. One can only imagine what her words were to the Apostles when they reconvened in the Upper Room. When they wallowed in self-doubt, vocational fears, guilt, and even skepticism, undoubtedly, she reminded them that true freedom is to be able to say, “Be it unto me according to Your word.”

Truly, in every conceivable way, Mary stands as the calm voice that calls us to be conformed to God’s Will and Judas stands as the shrill voice that calls us to be conformed to popular opinion and majority rule. We may recall that on Good Friday on a voice vote Jesus was voted down: so much for democratic justice. True justice can only come after we have conformed ourselves to God’s objective will, committed ourselves, as sinners, to His mercy, and then hold fast to what He has revealed universally by submitting ourselves to His guidance and judgment. Cultural and sub-cultural differences have always been with us throughout history, and that is precisely why God sent His only begotten Son into the world: to proclaim His truth to a fallen world, and then through this truth to be saved. In other words, God operates mightily in the realm of His Redemptive Will, and does not depend upon opinion polls to see how He is to function. Discernment of God’s will for us will always begin in His divinely inspired Word, and each generation is given the opportunity not to revise the Word, but rather to revise our lives to conform to our Creator’s plan for His creation. Unfortunately, all too often we can see what others need to change in their lives without seeing what must be revised and changed in our own lives. Jesus’ teachings clearly return to that principle, and he calls us to righteousness, not self-righteousness. One of the dilemmas that we see today is that we hear many proclaiming the truth without love, and others proclaiming love without the truth. Jesus’ call to preach the truth in love is to a large extent what contributed to apostolic confusion, as the twelve had different levels of understanding as to how the truth was to be proclaimed. At Pentecost the confusion caused at the Tower of Babel where people tried to force their way into Heaven, was reversed as the truth of Jesus was revealed in many languages. Language and translations are often barriers to effective communication in human terms, but it was after the Holy Spirit fell upon the Apostles that the truth became clear. To claim that our Lord’s message was not fully revealed and that subsequent revelations would be given could well result in establishing our own religion – an ever-changing one dependent upon experience and feelings that can change in a moment’s notice with new information. Whenever one relies upon someone or something other than God, they will be disappointed and disillusioned. In truth, as much as I enjoy Charlie Brown, the “Gospel according to Peanuts” only results in peanut butter theology which is neither smooth nor crunchy.

To minimize the crisis in the American Branch of the Anglican Communion would mean to put on blinders. The American Province has all too often taken matters into its own hands, and to do so is not only to be in a serious relationship with the rest of the Anglican family called the Anglican Communion, but it is also to witness the departure of many friends contributing to growth in other expressions of the Anglican Tradition and also in churches that have felt that the safest way to run a church is not to be connected with any other congregations, nationally or internationally. When our Lord prayed in the Garden of Gethsemane for the oneness of the Church, He was not referring to a congregational system which results in being an island in and of itself, nor attempting to find the lowest common denominator of belief that results in a dated and transitory Mission Statement. In truth he prayed as the Great High Priest, interceding for His children and praying that we may be drawn into the truth. Many times, the truth is painful, and what makes a parent’s job difficult is realizing that each of their children have different tastes, likes, dislikes, and interests. Being a parent is difficult, because in a parent’s love for a child, it means making family decisions which please some and displease others. The world thinks that the more we meet together, talk and recognize differences the more successful we will be in our attempt to resolve conflict. I sometimes wonder what would have happened if each Apostle were responsible for writing resolutions that they would present, refine, and vote on. I also wonder how these resolutions would have looked on the day before Palm Sunday and the day after Pentecost. Perhaps one of the most difficult things about living in a democratic system as a Christian is to acknowledge that we serve a King and that His word is the final word. That is truly the difficulty today: we are called to live in a Theocracy (under God). It is no wonder that there are attempts regularly to remove those two words from the Pledge of Allegiance. They are contrary to the human desire to be our own gods, our own judges, and our own saviors. But to remove God legally will **not** remove Him in reality.

Written in 2005