

***Come Labor On***

***Who Dares Stands Idle***

***On the***

***Harvest Plain***

The Synod Addresses of

the Eighth Bishop of Quincy

The Right Reverend Keith L. Ackerman, SSC, DD

1994 — 2008

**INTRODUCTION**

***Come Labor on.***

***Who dare stands idle on the Harvest Plain***

In 1994 I was overwhelmed to hear my name being called at a Conference, summoning me to a telephone call from Peoria, Illinois, informing me that I had just been elected the VIIIth Bishop of Quincy. Apart from the reality that I was being called to be a successor to the Apostles, I suddenly saw flashing before my eyes the Vth, VIth and VIIth Bishops of Quincy. I knew Bp. Lickfield, the Vth Bishop of Quincy from my teenage years when he was a leader in the American Church Union, an Anglo-Catholic organization which produced a magazine that I read cover to cover. Bishop Donald J. Parsons was, continued and remains a hero to me. He had been the Dean of Nashotah House who approved my entry into the Seminary in 1971, and I was present when he was informed of his election as Bishop of Quincy and present at his Consecration in 1973 at the Cathedral Church of St. Paul in Peoria, Illinois. Little did I know that the next time I would be in Peoria would be twenty years later. Bp. Edward MacBurney was a well-known champion of the faith, and our friendship continues to this day. Now I needed to see where their feet had trod, “On the Harvest Plain.”

I discovered a principle that continues to repeat itself: there is a difference between knowing about someone and knowing someone. Certainly, my relationships with my predecessors would prove to be a rare treat, but what had they said when they had sat in the Cathedra? What were the messages they wished to convey as they encouraged the Diocese to “Come Labor on?”

However, for me it became more intentional. What did all of the Bishops of the Diocese of Illinois from Bp. Philander Chase on say about Faith in Jesus Christ as they lived through numerous wars including two World Wars? What did they say when the demographics changed and the City of Quincy perched at the confluence of the Illinois River and the Mississippi was no longer a major influence in life in Illinois? These and many questions caused me to discover and research their various Diocesan Synod Addresses, and to immerse myself into their worlds when they served as Bishops. Through this research I discovered new friends - bishops who faced numerous challenges, some of which I shared and others that were particular to the time. How did they handle these challenges, and what did they say to the people entrusted to their care?

Of course, history is most important to those who care to look back and learn from those who went before them, but I knew that my Synod Addresses would need to blend insights of the godly bishops of the past with vision for the future. The result was overwhelming to me, spiritually and intellectually, and I pray that these offerings may a blessing to you, as we look at our lives and Labor on. As we look at our lives and not be idle. As we look at our lives on the Harvest Plain where God has placed us.

The Right Reverend Keith L. Ackerman, SSC

VIIIth Bishop of Quincy

The First Address of the Eighth Bishop of Quincy

***The Right Reverend Keith L. Ackerman, SSC***

to the 117th Synod of the Diocese of Quincy

at Church

October 14, 1994

In the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit. Amen

***("Who do you say that I am?")***

*From the sixteenth chapter of the Gospel according to Matthew.*

*Now when Jesus came into the district of Caesarea Philippi, He asked His disciples, "Who do people say that I am?" and they said "Some say John the Baptist, others say Elijah, and others Jeremiah or one of the prophets." He said to them, "But who do you say that I am?" Simon replied, "You are the Christ, the Son of the Living God!" And Jesus answered him, "Blessed are you, Simon Bar-Jona! For flesh and blood has not revealed this to you, but my Father who is in Heaven. And I tell you, you are Peter, and on this rock, I will build my church, and the powers of death shall not prevail against it. I will give you the keys of Heaven, and whatever you bind on Earth shall be bound in Heaven, and whatever you loose on Earth shall be loosed in Heaven."*

On June the 29th, the Feast of Saints Peter and Paul, I was consecrated in your midst as a Successor to the Apostles. This place, St. Paul's Cathedral, and also, due to the designation of Bishop Lickfield, this Diocese is under the patronage of St. Paul the Apostle. St. Peter, the one who proclaimed Jesus as the Christ, and St. Paul, the one who carried the Gospel to many nations, stand before us as Apostolic models of ministry.

They presided over a family of believers, and today, as your bishop, I preside over the Synod of the Diocese of Quincy -- the Family of God in this place. The Lesson I have just read to you is an interesting one, to say the least, for most believe that this event took place in early October, just about the time that we are meeting now, near the Day of Atonement, near the Feast of Tabernacles, or Booths.

Caesarea Philippi: what a place to begin a church! Some of you have heard me say to you that I think I understand sometimes how churches are selected in the dioceses in the Church, that is, the locations. I think what oftentimes happened in the early days is a bandana was placed around the bishop’s eyes. He was handed a dart, and spun around three times, and wherever he threw the dart on a map, that's where a church was put. Oftentimes as you and I ride around communities, we'll see a sign that says, "The Episcopal Church Welcomes You," and I think that they should come out with a little tag that fits underneath which says, "If you can find us."

By and large, we have not always been good about putting churches where they need to be, nor have we been necessarily very good at selecting or having reasons for putting a church in a particular site. And so, it brings us to the issue of the Lesson which I read to you this evening: why in the world Caesarea Philippi?

A little bit about it. Of course, anything that was named after Caesar would get a just little extra recognition and, I might add, a little extra money. Herod did it on numerous occasions, and Philip the Tetrarch enjoyed the place. He loved Caesarea Philippi because it was an absolute playground for him. It was a wild weekend. It was far enough away from Jerusalem to be a place where the people could "let it all hang out." It was a place of debauchery. It was a place of absurdity. It was a place of sin. Caesarea Philippi is called by the people there today after its old name, *Panias*, named after the god *Pan*, whereby, by the way, we get the name "panic." We discover to this very day in that place, caves where people would cavort. Caves where people would carry on the debauchery that was certainly accepted in that day by some, and yet, certainly not accepted by those who held true to faith. And yet above every one of those caves were little booths (as I mentioned the Feast of Booths, or Tabernacles), little niches above the caves, which were oftentimes called booths, and it was there that the household gods would be placed. It was there that *Pan* would be worshipped. And as one walks around this place, to this very day in Caesarea Philippi, with nothing but stone, and caves everywhere -- it was there that Jesus said that He would build His church.

This will be somewhat akin to you and me being on a Commission of Ministry or a ministry board that decided to build a church in a red-light district! This is a place which would raise eyebrows. But it was here where Jesus said He would build His church. And I believe that the conversation must have been fascinating, as Jesus walked with his Apostles around that place. I think the conversation might have even gone something like this: "Now, which god do you think is in that niche, or booth, and who do you think the people would say is the god who goes in that niche, that booth, that tabernacle, and who do people say that that god is?" I think it was a very natural conversation and I think there was a great deal of conjecture. I think people were saying, "Well, you know, it's probably that god. The way the people live here, it's probably this god." And all of a sudden, Jesus looks at them and he says, "Well who do they say that I am?" It was a natural conclusion, I think, to what was going on.

Of course, their response was a rather quick one. "Well," as it says in the Gospel, "you know...’er... that some say that you are John the Baptist come back to life, and others say Elijah, others say Jeremiah." It came out quickly, you see, because it was convenient. Any time you say to someone, "What are they saying out there about me," you can get every opinion you want: it's a very safe game. What are they saying? You don't have to think what people would do. You don't have to say, "I don't know what they're saying, but I'd like to tell you what I think," but "I'll tell you what they're saying so that you don't know what I think." But suddenly, at that moment, Jesus looked at His followers and said, "But who do \_you\_ say that I am?"

I want you to notice that the response doesn't come as rapidly as the other ones. Now we are talking about commitment. Commitment. Now, whatever they said others were saying is one thing, but the moment they stated what they believed meant that they were committed to that position. Impetuous Peter proclaimed what he believed, "You are the Christ, the Son of the Living God." Jesus immediately responded to Peter by saying, "Simon, this has not been revealed to you in a natural, flesh and blood way." This has been revealed -- emphasis on "revealed" -- this has been revealed to you supernaturally, that is, from outside of nature. You have been inspired: this has been revealed to you by the Father, who is allowing you to see who I am." And He looks at this man of weak faith, and yet a man of great enthusiasm, and He says to him, "Simon Bar-Jona, Simon - son of John, you are *(Petros)-* you are Peter, and on this rock, I will build my church, and the gates of death or hell shall not prevail against it. Whatever sins are forgiven shall be forgiven in Heaven, and what is not forgiven shall not be forgiven in Heaven."

Now, they were stunned. Actually stunned, because here was Jesus, saying something with authority. And God knows that people don't want to hear people speak with authority. They would much rather have had a vote. Wouldn't it be nice if Jesus said, "Just for a moment now, we will enter into dialogue here...? I'd like you to break up into three small groups of Apostles, and I'd like you to come back in 15 minutes, and after you've had a chance to talk about this, we're going to vote on the matter and see who I am."

It was revealed supernaturally. And that which is revealed — that which is divine revelation — is for us to understand, perhaps, but more importantly to live and obey, most certainly. And on this day, beloved in Christ, Jesus looks at you and me, on this rock, on this stone, in this place, and says "Who do -you**-** say that I am?"

Who do the people say that the Diocese of Quincy is? Maybe that's an easier place to start. Well, some say it's one of the smallest, and others say that it is one of the most conservative, and some say that is where that parish has left the Episcopal Church, and others say that it is that diocese which is in financial trouble.

But who do -you- say that the Diocese of Quincy is? Not what others say... Who do you say that the Diocese of Quincy is?

Every Convention address by the eight Bishops of Quincy has challenged us to be more than we can dream of being. It takes zeal, to move on with enthusiasm. As a matter of fact, let us hear it first from Bishop Chase in 1837. Bishop Chase, writing to Lord Kenyon, says the following

*“A vast territory was to be traversed, more in extent than all England and Wales united; the soil exceedingly rich, but the inhabitants thinly scattered, in some parts the distance between the settlers being from 12 to 15 miles. Few or no bridges were erected over the streams, and the sloughs sometimes extremely difficult to pass. Add to this the state of things, the heterogeneous characters of the inhabitants, pouring in from all quarters of the world, and the consequent impossibility of uniting but a very small portion of them together to build the walls of our primitive Zion."*

In 1878, Bishop Alexander Burgess, at the organizing Convention, said

*"We have a small Diocese.*

*This is an incentive to large labor."*

In 1882, with 32 organized and unorganized congregations in place, Bishop Burgess observed, "We still suffer seriously from the removal of young men and families to the West, farther West in their view more attractive than the farms and homes they are leaving. There is probably no part of Illinois in which this disease is more epidemic than our Diocese."

And in 1883, with 34 congregations, in his address to Convention, Bishop Burgess declared, "With but very few exceptions our cities and towns increase very slowly in population. Very many of the young men go from their birth places and homes, especially in the agricultural part of the Diocese, to the larger cities of this and other states or to the West, farther West... Our duty will be done, only when we have tested every portion of the Diocese and attempted the founding of a church in even our smallest and least promising localities."

And today, I tell you with 24 or 25 organized or disorganized parishes and missions that we have people where we have no churches and churches where we have no people, but we are the family of God built on the Rock of Jesus Christ our Lord and Savior. But... who do you say that we are?

We are half way through the Decade of Evangelism: how are we doing? Where are we today, compared to where we were when the Decade began? What were our goals then? Have we met them? What did we state, when the Decade began? How many new people have we brought into the Kingdom of God through the Diocese of Quincy? Have we welcomed them, made them a part of the Family? How many Sunday Schools and Youth Groups do we have now, as compared to where we were when the Decade of Evangelism began, and are they growing? How many new churches have we planted in areas where the population is shifting? Why do we talk so much about budgets and so little about evangelism and missions? Why does the Episcopal Church busy herself so much with issues and Resolutions telling governments and social agencies how to conduct their business, while the Church continues to shrink in size? Why are clergy discouraged in the Church and lay people frustrated? Is it possible that we have forgotten the question of Jesus? Is it possible that we are so busy so often in the Church trying to save everything ourselves, that we no longer have need of a Savior? Have we attempted so hard to make Heaven on Earth that we have lost sight of the fact that it just is not always the way of the world?

The various issues are diversions — diversions taking us away from the Gospel message. The issues which so many people raise up as the essence of being "whatever it is" today cloud Jesus' command to us to baptize and preach the Gospel and proclaim salvation.

Mission and Evangelism is the theme: Mission and Evangelism. And there are some climates where mission and evangelism simply cannot work.

Mission and evangelism cannot be done in a politically charged adversarially dominated climate where there are winners and losers. It doesn't work, because mission and evangelism look out: the rest looks in.

It does not work where the family is so fragmented that no one knows about the other person and really couldn't care less.

Mission and evangelism do not operate where priests have to beg to get anything done in their parishes and/or laity believe or have been led to believe that only Father can get the job done.

Mission and evangelism cannot work where there are no Bible Studies and no Prayer Groups.

Mission and evangelism cannot work where we are stuck into a mode of ministry that God cannot bless because He is only called into the situation very politely from time to time like at the beginning and the end of a meeting.

Mission and evangelism cannot work and cannot be real where there is a lack of honesty, a lack of accountability, and poor communication.

Today we are celebrating the feast of a convert from Judaism, not too different from Simon Peter. This glorious man labored in China and Japan, and with one crippled finger, because the rest of the hand would not move, worked to translate God's Word. Samuel Isaac Joseph Schereschewsky, a man of faith, a man of vision, a man who recognized that prophetic ministry was not stirring people up so that they could have no action, but just be stirred up, but a man who stirred people up because he knew that there was something larger, and it was called the mission-field, where he knew that evangelism meant, in fact, spreading the Good News of Jesus Christ.

And yet today, so often what we encounter in the Church are three forms of ministry: survival ministry, maintenance ministry, and prophetic ministry (and when I say prophetic ministry, beloved in Christ, I am talking about ministry that is mission- and evangelism-oriented, not the way in which it has been misused in the last few decades as an excuse for defying Church Order).

Survival ministry is a kind of ministry whereby people are gathered together, saying "Oh, my God, how much longer can we continue like this? Who's going to pay the light bill? What are we going to do? What can we do?"

Maintenance ministry is, "Oh, we're pretty good. We like the way things are. In fact, we're pretty comfortable." And it's usually where we get the Seven Last Words of the Church: "We never did it that way before." ("And don't even think about changing us! We've been here longer than you've been.") That kind of ministry does not give glory to God, but it maintains systems hoping that someone else will come along and maintain systems so that the system can be maintained, and maintained, and maintained.

Prophetic ministry is where we gather at the altar as a Eucharistic community and are fed with Word and Sacraments so that we can be given -- infused with – *“strength to go out and do the work that God has given us to do, to love and serve Him with gladness and singleness of heart, rejoicing in the power of the Spirit.”*

Where does that lead us, though? Where does that leave us? Because there are very few people who say "I don't want my church to grow." There are very few people who say, "It is just great exactly the way it is. No growth, no more people, it's enough."

There is much talk about "renewal" in the Church today, much talk... and much talk... and much talk. But what is needed in the Church today is not renewal: what is needed in the Church today is a reformation in the Church so that there can be renewal. The Church needs to be reformed, not in the sense that we oftentimes have used that term in the past, and certainly not as we oftentimes use it today, but we need to spiritually reform the Church and we need to be reformed in the image of God today instead of attempting to reform God and create Him in our own image.

Many of you are aware of how important St. Francis of Assisi has been in my life. My coat of arms reflects it, I wear the scapular and cincture of the Franciscan order, I was professed before I became a Deacon. But it's because I was caught with a vision — a vision which I received years ago as I was reading the life of St. Francis while working in a place named after him. I was struck by the fact that one day this "*poverello*," this "poor man" of Assisi, was in prayer in San Damiano Church, St. Damien's Church, in Assisi, and as he was praying in the ruins of this church, he had a vision and he heard a voice, and from a cross just like this, this cross of San Damiano, he heard the words *"Francis, rebuild my Church, for the Church is falling down, as you can see."*

And Francis mistakenly thought that He was referring to that building, and so Francis, being a literalist, did exactly what he was told to do: bricks, boards, mortar, rebuilt the church. But the vision still came. And Francis realized what the vision was, especially when he met with the Bishop of Rome at a later time. Francis was called to be a reformer. Francis was called into reforming the Church. And not in some grand ecumenical scale, not in some grand scale whereby there was a meeting, a committee, and a subcommittee, and an ad hoc committee, and a standing committee. Francis was asked to reform the Church beginning with the people — the people in the pews, the people in the streets — he was to take the Gospel to them, so that they might know that they were called likewise to this total ministry of reforming the Church, so that the people of God could be renewed by the power of the Holy Spirit. That is the task that Francis set out to do.

Beloved in Christ, that is the task that is before us today. For unless Jesus Christ is first in our lives there will be no change in us, and there will be no change in the Church.

We must get back to basics instead of changing the basics of the Faith to suit our own selfish needs. We must say who Jesus is! We must reclaim the holy boldness of those who planted churches in our diocese and insured the future. But the future is not insured by an endowment of money alone. It is insured by an endowment of faith — one that I am acutely aware of every time I walk down the hall of this Cathedral, and I see the heroes of the Faith, down to a man that I admire who sits across from me now, to his successor, and to me. I stand before you as one who still daily cries as I put on a pectoral cross, as one who is so deeply humbled to be your bishop, as one who cannot comprehend, and yet walks in the steps of the Apostles. But I must likewise with you remember who Jesus is in my life, that I must walk with those who have walked across this state, who have established churches and did so with boldness, without fear of what others might say. We must rebuild our Church and we must reform our Church by returning to a basic unit of family so that the family can be rebuilt and once again become a safe place — a creative place — a place where all of our being is formed, for in most cases, as we read the lives of the saints, we discover how much of their spiritual formation did not take place in the Church, but took place in their families, which were outposts of the faith. I am therefore as your Bishop proclaiming 1995 in the Diocese of Quincy as the ***Year of the Family***. I am appointing a Family Life Commission this day, and I am asking each Bishop's Committee and Vestry to have one member on your Bishop's Committee or Vestry designated to serve in the capacity as a member of this Commission. I have asked Fr. Keith Roderick to chair that Commission so that together all of us will explore ways in which the Christian Family will once again be a life-filling unit and a component of the parish family — a component of the Diocese — a component of the Christian faith — so that we might call single people who are parts of families which are spread out into a special family relationship within the Body of the Church, so married couples, so those whose children have grown and moved away, so that we might be a family, so that when we open our doors we will have someone to greet them into the Family of Faith.

Families do not have it easy, in this world of ours today, and our Family of the Diocese of Quincy has some problems too. Healthy families, whenever they have difficulties, sit down and discuss their problems. They do not become enablers. They do not hide all the things that are going on and wink to those "in the know." A healthy family is very honest and forthright, because in any healthy family there must be accountability. We operate in a clean fashion, in an honest fashion, so that we don't have ghosts. We operate always that way, in healthy families, and I thank God for all those who participate in establishing and perpetuating this health.

And yet, at the same time, in many families, it's much easier to tell the kids, for instance, that "everything's OK, Mom and I will take care of everything," and the kids go off and assume that everything's fine. The children grow up without understanding responsibility in such cases, and without a sense of ownership, and have no opportunity to participate in helping to solve difficulties. Beloved in Christ, because of specific problems in our diocese, more particularly St. John's Parish in the city of Quincy, we have an incredibly reduced amount of income this year. The results are very difficult. It means that at the end of this year, we will no longer have funding for a Canon to the Ordinary. It means that we will have no funding for conferences. It means that we will have no funding for our external mission. Perhaps that's the end of the story, or perhaps it's not.

Perhaps one of the things that families do is they find ways that they can help to make up for the deficits which occur, by being people of God, there to help in every possible way. A group of people have stepped forward to me in the past few weeks, and they've said to me, "We will offer a challenge" and it is a challenge that I offer you today. We have been offered a matching grant of $2,000.00 for the external mission to the Dominican Republic. If we are able to raise, independently of what is in the Bishop MacBurney fund, $2,000.00, then we will receive another $2,000.00 and we will have $4,000.00 to be able to fund an external mission, so that the people of the Dominican Republic will have the medicine which they need, the health care which they need. As we look outside of our own problems and focus on the real problems of death, of illness, of disease, so I challenge you to be able to find specific ways that you might assist in this problem. You will even find envelopes in your packets which are noted as a matching challenge. I ask you to pray, and I ask you to respond.

But beloved in Christ, money is only a symptom of deeper problems, many of which I believe I have addressed regarding the Church as a whole. Families do not solve problems overnight, but they seek solutions. Our biggest problem is a lack of growth, a type of lack of faith, and unusual concern about the future, a concern which is not expressed in tangible ways but is expressed in terms of fear. This is not a new problem. We have heard it continuously in the addresses of our bishops over the years. But what I want you to know is this: evangelism and mission do not cost money. It does not cost a penny to go to someone and tell them about Jesus Christ. It does not cost a penny to knock on a door and ask someone if they would like to come to church with you. It does not cost a penny to go and look at an area and say, "I wonder if our parish might be able to start a mission here." It does not cost a penny to dream.

But what it does take is commitment. What it does take is time. Therefore, I am asking each parish and mission in our Diocese to do the following and, on the theme of accountability, not to have it lost as a resolution that is polite, but to report back to me by May 1st.

I am asking every parish and mission, first of all, to conduct a self-study, that will identify the needs, and the talents, and the spiritual gifts which exist in each parish and mission that can benefit the entire Body of Christ. I will assist in sending a sample so you don't have to start from ground zero with that.

Second, I am asking each parish and mission to establish a master plan for your church, which deals with the physical hopes and goals, the spiritual hopes and goals, the educational hopes and goals, your ideas of church growth, and how you are going to do it, in a one-year plan, a five-year plan, and a ten-year plan.

Third, I am asking every parish and mission to submit by May 1st three statements that have been prayed over, and placed on the Altar of God for His approval and direction: a mission statement which will state what we believe our mission to be, the mission of the church; second, a vision statement of what we believe that we can become with faith in Jesus Christ, and thirdly, a statement of evangelism which doesn't say, "Gee, it's a real nice idea" but states \_how\_ it's going to be done.

Fourth, and a resolution will be forthcoming, establishing a Continuing Education fund so that clergy will not stagnate and be caught in the squirrel cage of survival and maintenance ministry, which perpetuates itself.

Fifth, that all persons here today be willing to commit themselves with me to bringing one person to their church by this time next year — that's all: that every person here commit himself to bringing one person to church by this time next year.

Sixth, that we discipline ourselves to look for the deeper problems in the Church instead of picking pet issues which take our energy away from the most important aspects of our faith, the most important tasks before us, such as taking the Gospel to those who do not know Christ, such as drawing people into the Family of God, such as praying as much as we do debating, arguing, and complaining.

I ask you, beloved in Christ, as you look over this situation, how you would respond to someone who greets you on a Sunday who would say the following: [said in a flat, emotionless monotone] "We are really happy that you are here today. We are very enthusiastic about your presence. We need you very badly, especially at Every Member Canvass time, so you can help pay our bills. We don't have any vision. We don't have any mission. We don't know what in the world we're doing. It is sure nice to have you in this pretty building."

Friends in Christ, can you believe it? And yet, while perhaps this is a caricature of what occurs, it is nonetheless what we do. Beloved, the souls that are out in the streets do not know Christ, are souls to be brought to Him, not pockets to be plucked. They are people who want a relationship with Christ. They are in so much pain that they don't even know where it hurts the most.

Bishop Michael Marshall has likewise given us a vision that is consistent with what we have said: "[The bishop's] lifestyle and the demands made upon him will demand that he is much more closely associated with the local churches and that he relates very closely with the clergy in servicing the cells and communities of Christians for which he has oversight. Episcopacy will necessarily be a far less bureaucratic office in the Church of the future and a far more pastoral and prophetic office. It follows that bishops will only survive in that work if dioceses are smaller, both geographically and numerically."

Well, guess what, folks, we are already there. And now we move on to what lies ahead, for, you see, after Caesarea Philippi, depending on how—you—view the mountains, whether it be Mount Hermon or Mount Tabor, Jesus and His Apostles went to the top. They had vision, they had a view now, they were no longer down on the rock, they were no longer looking into caves, they were no longer just looking at each other, but Peter and James and John went with Jesus and on that holy mountain a magnificent thing occurred: Moses and Elijah and Jesus. And Peter, being a good Jewish businessman, had a deal for them: he said, "Oy, it's good that we're here. Let's make three booths, eh? We can enshrine the situation and charge admission." But, you see, what he wanted to do was to preserve the moment. He did not want to move ahead. He wanted a survival ministry for the Apostles, and a maintenance ministry for that band. But Jesus sent them forth to do a prophetic ministry, and if you think they were reluctant to begin their ministry, I remind you how they ultimately got out of the Upper Room: they were blown out, because they didn't even know how to do it on their own, until the Holy Spirit blew them out.

And on that Mount, they saw something that they have passed on to you and me, and I want for you and me to go to that Mount. I want for you and me to walk to the Mount of Transfiguration. Yes, I have seen some of the problems. I have also seen some of the blessings. And I have even lived through a few problems this past year. I am living through a few right now, and I want to thank you for praying Jo and me through them. I want to thank you for that, and I also want to thank my wife for being able to be here tonight -- it's a great joy.

I will tell you what's happening to me these past few weeks. I understand that we should never take anyone for granted, and if I ever take you for granted, you need to let me know, because I have come here to wash your feet. I have come here to serve you. But I am reminded that there are two functions of a crozier -- one is to pull in the sheep, and the other is prodding them along. Occasionally we hear such things as "That enthusiasm is going to wear off." Beloved in Christ, I am 48 years old. It hasn't worn off in 48 years for Jesus, so don't count on it now.

It's time for us to regain enthusiasm, in spite of the fact that we are proper Episcopalians. I want you to come forward with that same enthusiasm which you had when you made your first Holy Communion, that first time you received the Body and Blood of Christ and knew that you were filled; when you stepped forward and made your profession of faith and hands were laid on your head and you received the gift of the Holy Spirit. And beloved clergy, with the same enthusiasm you had the first time you stepped to the Altar of God, \_that's\_ the enthusiasm we must have, and \_that\_ is the enthusiasm which we owe to the Church.

So, are you ready? Will you know what to do with more gifts? I hope, because they are coming. Why should God give gifts to his people if they don't know what to do with them, if they don't have faith? What is it that the message of the Parable of the Talents teaches you and me? That the one who didn't know what to do with the talent had it taken away, and the ones who knew what to do with the talents were given more.

Therefore, we must grow. And the gifts of the Holy Spirit will stay bestowed upon us, so that we might be able to further the Kingdom of Christ in this world. He has gifted this Diocese with magnificent leaders, clergy and lay, and at the General Convention I was so proud to be a Bishop of Quincy — humbled to be a bishop, but proud to be the Bishop of Quincy — because I had men and women surrounding me to pray, to study the Word of God, to proclaim the Word of God, to sing hymns — more than we spent arguing over issues, the people you elected prayed. I'm so proud of them, both with Triennial and also with Deputies to General Convention. And what we experienced there will be our pattern here: we will pray, we will study, and we will proclaim, more than we will debate. I believe that there is a great deal of debating in Hell, but I believe that there is a great deal of praising in Heaven, and I believe I know where I want to be.

Again, are you ready?

Jesus spoke to Francis as he speaks to you and me this night: "Quincy, rebuild my Church!" The response can be nothing less than you and me standing with holy hands before a Holy God, Saying, "—You— are the Christ, the Son of the Living God. I am yours, and this is your Diocese."

Lord Jesus, rebuild your Church, reform your Church, and renew all aspects of our being... starting with us.

In the name of the Father, of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit. **Amen**.

✠1994

The Second Address of the Eighth Bishop of Quincy

***The Right Reverend Keith L. Ackerman, SSC***

to the 118th Synod

of the Diocese of Quincy

at St. George’s Church, Macomb

October 13, 1995

***The Feast of St. Edward the Confessor***

***"We have a small Diocese... This is incentive to large labor." Bp. Edward Taylor***

In the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit. Amen.

In Second Corinthians, the fourth chapter, the seventh verse:

***"But we have this treasure in earthen vessels, to show that the transcendent power belongs to God and not to us."***

*"God Speed our Diocese of Quincy."* With these six words, the Right Reverend Alexander Burgess, the first Bishop of our Diocese, opened not only his first Synod Address, but the first Synod Address of the newly-created Diocese of Quincy, December the eleventh, 1877, at the Cathedral Church of St. John in the See City of Quincy. What is remarkable about this Address are his following words:

*"I have but three days ago come to my post and duties among you. Until last Saturday I had never even seen any part of the special field over which the Holy Ghost has set me. But two or three official acts can be included in my Address to you. May our Lord's favor grant much for me to record and rehearse at our next Annual Convention."*

He goes on to say,

*"High appreciation of the importance of the Diocese now achieved was manifest in the gift by St. John's Parish, of this city, of their noble church property to the Bishop for a Cathedral. Their generosity deserves largest praise. With heartfelt gratitude I accept the gift. A trust accompanies such acceptance,"*

He went on to say:

*"The deed of gift reads 'to be forever and for all times used as a Cathedral or Bishop's Church and for the purposes -- religious or educational -- which may be connected therewith.' I accept the trust,"* he says.

He continues by saying,

*"We have a small Diocese. This is incentive to large labor. Our duties are not scattered and general, but close and almost individual. We are near the whole of the soil to be cultivated. We can take in the fullness of the wants and can sympathize, from sight and touch, with the entire lack I desire that you honor the Lord by faith in His Church; have a distinct and important meaning to your creed, 'I believe in One Holy Catholic and Apostolic Church.'...and contend earnestly for 'the faith once delivered to the saints' and ever kept within firm hold of the Church; be sure she is in the last days to gather 'all who love the Lord Jesus,' and to welcome Him at His return. Built upon the foundation of the*

*Apostles and Prophets, Jesus Christ Himself being the chief Cornerstone, neither the world beneath nor the world around, neither scorn nor patronage, neither poverties nor persecutions shall prevail against the Church. Our little one shall become a thousand... I say again, God speed our Diocese of Quincy."*

What exactly was Bishop Burgess trying to say? Certainly, he was new to this area, having never seen nor even lived in this part of the country before. His thoughts, however, are still significant to this day, and I shall share with you the words of each of my seven predecessors in each successive year to come, I believe that you will see that the Diocese of Quincy has made a significant contribution to the Episcopal Church, not by virtue of her size but by virtue of what Bishop Burgess has told us tonight -- "We have a small Diocese. This is incentive to large labor." -- and in those 118 years of Catholic and Apostolic Witness, the Diocese of Quincy has maintained a Spiritual Life and a genuine Catholic piety which places at her very center the Person of Jesus Christ, our Lord and Savior -- our Mediator and Advocate.

Many droughts have hit the Plains since Bishop Burgess's first Address, but not all of these have been due to a lack of precipitation. As Quincy One tells us, "We are near the whole of the soil to be cultivated." In the midst of new rains, new tornadoes, and new winds we have seen our Spiritual soil vacillate between floods and aridity just as surely as our plains have suffered. And yet with tenacity we have seen a new bud appear — a new blade and ear shooting through the soil with a promise that life emerges though that which seems so often through our eyes to be lifeless. This is what we mean when we speak of hope and faith.

As a child, I must tell you that I had little success as a farmer. Generally speaking, I was allergic to grass, weeds, and especially, beloved ragweed, and yet like most Depression survivors, my father planted more tomatoes than one family could possibly ever eat. We had fried green tomatoes, we had them in brown bags when the season was over, we had them diced, we had them cooked, we had tomatoes. And yet I can remember one day my father paid me a high compliment. My father decided to involve me and to include me in the process of helping him plant his beloved tomatoes, and so I decided obediently to follow his plan. He would walk in front of me and would dig a hole, and every time he was ready for a tomato plant, he would put his hand straight back. I would put a plant in his hand and he would put it in the hole. A very simple thing. And then we would move on. My job was very basic: follow my father, put the plant in the palm of his hand, and let it go. I felt very good about what was going on, I must tell you, for I could see my father trusted me. It felt very good to be involved in an endeavor with my father. With his face pointing straight ahead, I could see the strength in his hand coming back towards mine. However, after moving over a great deal of the yard, my father finally turned around and said, "Son, I didn't know we had so many tomato plants." Well, we didn't. You see, I loved my father so much, and I wanted to please him so much, that every time he put his hand back, I just gave him any tomato plant I could find, whether it had been planted already or not. He wanted the plants. I wanted to be with him. As far as I was concerned, that was good enough.

Life is just a bit like my planting experience. If we are obedient to God, we will enjoy being with Him, and somehow, He will provide what is needed, even when it seems that we have run out. The question is, however, what are the goals? What are the goals of this planting? Many want to change the garden, many want to change the plants, many even want to change the gardener, but this I know: since 1877, no matter how seriously each gardener has taken himself, God raises up another gardener to plant what He wants, where He wants, and when He wants. Planting, however, requires having certain goals. The problem so very often with the Church today is that we not only do not have goals, but we construct structures which often keep us so busy that we don't have any time left to do anything but feed the structure. It is like planting tomatoes for the sake of planting, but never bothering to eat one. We serve structures which often not only do not support our goals, but often inhibit our goals. What are our goals? Last year at my first Address, I asked all Parishes and Missions to establish goals: Mission Statements, Vision Statements, Evangelism Statements, and Long-Range plans. I delighted in receiving these goals, and yet am sorry to tell you that I have not yet received these goals from all churches in our Diocese. So much for Diocesan Resolutions! What I am saying is this: the bureaucracy of the Church perpetuates systems which must, so often, be served. And this is wrong. It is Jesus who must be served. It is a hungry world which must be fed with the food that is not of this world. Stated goals are only attempts not only to see who we are, but upon discovering who we are, to open ourselves to the changes which must take place in us under the Divine Action and Direction of God Himself. One year ago, I wanted to walk with you through the garden, and I wanted to put in more tomato plants. But in terms of the Alphabet, I fear that maybe I was at the F G H's and I's, and I now know that we must begin with A B C's. You see, the Episcopal Church must go through a gradual transformation that entails a radical replanting of values, for what we have learned is that the goals of the Gospel of Jesus Christ, while social in many ways, must transcend sociological issues which rise and fall with each new generation. The proof is to be found in the fruits of Evangelism, that precious command of Jesus which I stressed to you one year ago.

Let me tell you what I mean.

The Episcopal Church today now constitutes one-seventieth of the Anglican Communion. We are one of the smallest Provinces and yet we are in a nation that is so huge. At a recent Conference which was attended by Anglicans from all around the world, many evangelism lessons were learned, and the learning, my friends, must be done by the American Church, for as we shrink, we are witnessing African Churches that are growing at a phenomenal rate. What is amazing to me, however, as I ponder all this, is that a great deal of the Evangelism that is taking place is being done with children, and by children. Children are not being entertained with the newest gizmo in the world. Children are not being carted off to some distant corner. Children are in the center of evangelism, and are considered to be agents of Evangelism. With little in the way of physical resources, children are telling children about Jesus Christ. One Bishop told me that he has two chaplains accompany him as he goes on his visitations in Africa. Their job is to hold up his arms while he Confirms the people who are presented, because after 400 to 500 Confirmations, his arms become just a bit tired!

Beloved, I want my arms to become tired from Confirming instead of tired from pushing pens, pushing pencils, pushing minutes from meetings, and pushing the chair behind my desk. Perhaps the children will teach us that the Bible is not so complex. That the words were written by unsophisticated people for unsophisticated people so that Jesus might be in the center of peoples' lives, instead of just in the middle of their reference libraries. Why is it that our generation cannot understand the Gospel, when children do? Why is it that the words of Jesus do not mean today what they meant 2,000 years ago to many people? Has Jesus changed, or is the changing world trying to change Jesus too? The goals which we set, and the committees which we form, must exist to serve Jesus. They must exist to further His Gospel, and these committees must be dissolved and retired when they no longer further the Gospel of Jesus Christ. Evangelism, however, takes into account the fact that people really do want their churches to grow. And I must tell you that I am at a point of asking the question, “Do all people really want their churches to grow?" Many of them really want to be freeze-dried like coffee, only to be occasionally reconstituted.

I have asked for a different type of Synod this year. I have asked for a gathering of the family where people can share in each other's pains and sorrows; where people can see what other parishes and missions are doing to follow Jesus Christ and to make Him known. When Jesus and His Apostles visited the towns and villages, they did not have a Canon Law book in their possession. They did not pass Resolutions. At the Last Supper,

they did not vote on the kind of wine that they would like to have, and they didn't pass a Courtesy Resolution to thank the Cook. Their lives, their very being, praised the Author of all things. And that is what we are going to do this year with our Idea Faire -- our ideas, our failures -- all of them are going to be brought together. Because in our Idea Faire, we are in the business of sharing, encouraging, and implementing, which is what life is really about. Sharing our ideas, our failures, and our blessings, encouraging those who do not have this vision to grow, and implementing those things which we learn from each other under the Power of the Holy Spirit -- that is what we are about. And I, too, will share some things with you which I have learned in this year.

I have learned that being a Bishop means loving when you feel that the world is caving in on you. It means proclaiming what one believes to be the truth of the Gospel even when pressured to look at it another way, and it is not popular or easy. It means learning to be God-sufficient instead of self-sufficient, and it means believing literally those truths which have been handed down from Christ, His Apostles, and my predecessors in this Episcopal Office as the Eighth Bishop of this Diocese. It means believing that these timeless truths have sustained the church for two thousand years in a way which the pablum of this world cannot even feed a generation.

It means learning from nations which we used to think needed our missionaries. What I have learned from them is this: never be ashamed of the Gospel, for it is, as the lesson tonight tells us, "a treasure in earthen vessels," and where this treasure is believed and is lived, the Church is growing. And where the Word of God is seen as the changing revelation, the Church is not growing. It means, beloved in Christ, going back to the basics, to the A B C's, and presenting the Gospel to people as if they have never heard it before. It means learning from the two-thirds world that God's plan for moral living has not changed, even if the world's plan has. It means transcending the Harold Hill Method of Evangelism which, if you remember "The Music Man," teaches us a very interesting lesson. Harold Hill walked into a community of Iowans with a bag-load of musical instruments behind him. He didn't know how to play an instrument. But he brought with him a marvelous system called the "Think Method." And what he taught in "Music Man" was "if you think about the musical instruments long enough, you'll be able to play them." Following Jesus, and sharing the Gospel, means more than the "Think Method." It means more than a good thought or two. The "think method" form of Evangelism in church today is about as effective as the "think method" form of losing weight. I have never met a person who ever lost one pound just because they thought about it, and I have never met anyone who brought another person to Christ just because it was a thought.

Thus, I am asking the following of the Diocese of Quincy as I stand before you this year:

1. I am asking that each parish and mission in our Diocese take seriously God's call to good stewardship. I have discovered that the number of people who pledge to the Church is less than one-half among those who attend. I am asking each member of this Diocese to actively participate in their Church by making a significant pledge to the work of Jesus Christ. I am asking also that each church will do more than just sending out a letter and an envelope, asking for a return. The Church is more than a direct mail non-profit organization, and until we get serious about stewardship, and until we get serious about confronting people with Jesus Christ, then we can expect nothing. People need to be confronted with a Savior who calls them to an absolute commitment.

2. I am asking each parish and mission to grow by 5% this year. I do not mean counting people who have transferred from a local parish. I mean literally inviting people to a living relationship with a living Savior. I am asking each parish and mission to plan a "Guest Sunday" where each member is encouraged to bring a friend to church on that particular Sunday, and draw them into the loving fellowship of the Church.

3. I am asking each parish and mission to have at least one Bible Study per week where God's Word is read, studied, and discussed. From what I can determine we are in at least the third generation of Biblical illiteracy, and we should not be surprised if the Bible is not lived, if it is not read, studied, discussed, and preached.

4. I am asking every church to have at least one person ready to be Confirmed or Received when I make my Annual Visitation, because I want my arms to get tired, and I am asking that opportunity be made in the course of the liturgy, where it so states, for any person in the congregation that Sunday to be able to recommit their lives to Jesus Christ, no matter how many years ago they were Baptized and/or Confirmed, or how many times they've been born.

5. I am asking those churches which have not established their Mission, Vision, and Evangelism goals to do so by January 1, 1996, so that the Diocese will be able to unveil a plan which will have an impact on each member of this Diocese, for the sake of Jesus Christ.

6. I am asking the Trustees of Funds and Properties to immediately begin the task of planning and implementing a Capital Fund Drive which will result in the planting of new churches, the establishment of new ministries, and the development of new ways to encourage planned Giving, Stewardship, and the minimization of a survival mentality which has pervaded our Diocese.

7. Finally, I am asking all priests and deacons of this Diocese to take time for appropriate reading and training in the area of Evangelism and Stewardship and to have an annual physical with a plan for physical, spiritual, and mental health, for we live in a complex world, and in an ecclesiastical age with many stresses. For, as the Scripture says, "how can they hear without a preacher," and I ask, "how can they plant, unless they have the health to dig the hole for the Cross?"

From my perspective these are some of the A B C's of Christian living, and before we can plant any more tomato plants, before we can dig any more holes, we need to get back to basics. We must begin preparing the soil, we must name the weeds and root them out, and we must carefully plant. And we must trust the One who gives us the plants. We must enjoy being with Him, for we are not planting just in this world -- we are rehearsing for the day when we shall enjoy His presence forever.

Tonight, I stand with Bishop Burgess who expressed his delight in being able to be in this Diocese, and to be at the Altar, the Cathedra, and the Pulpit of St. John's in Quincy. One hundred and eighteen years later, I have the same longing as Bishop Burgess, for I have yet to stand at that Altar, sit in that Cathedra, and stand in that Pulpit. I will say more of that in the future. But, God willing, on January 1st, 1996, I will be there.

As we conclude this evening in celebrating the Feast of St. Edward the Confessor, I am reminded of the marvelous story of his ring, which is related to Westminster Abbey and all the other wonderful legends which go with it. This holy and devout King, who lived during a period of Church history when there seemed to be great darkness, nonetheless, by most accounts, became a light — a beacon of holiness and hope. He did everything he could to bring people to a closer relationship with Jesus Christ, in Communion with the One, Holy, Catholic, and Apostolic Church. St. Edward had a great devotion to St. John the Evangelist, and regularly asked for the intercession of the Gospel writer. It seems that St. John the Evangelist appeared to King Edward wearing tattered clothing, begging for alms. Since the King had already given all that he had, all of his money to the poor, the only thing he had left was the ring which was on his finger, and so he gave it to St. John. Eventually St. John sent the ring back to the King with a message, and the message was that when the King would die, he would die in peace (and for Kings, by the way, this was definitely good news), with the assurance of Heaven, even naming the particular date, which did, in fact, happen, just as was foretold. Now perhaps this seems to you to be an odd story to conclude this Synod Address, but think of it: King Edward had given away all that he had -- the coffers were nearly empty — but, think about it, he received more than anybody could ever give him, save our Lord Jesus Christ, who died upon the Cross and rose from the dead so that everyone, from you and me to King Edward, Saint Edward, the Confessor would be able to receive the gift of eternal life. That is why I ask so much of you as church leaders. That is why I ask that Evangelism, Stewardship, and the health of our Diocese, parishes, missions, and clergy be in the forefront of our prayers and our focus for this year. That is why I ask that we grow and bring people to Jesus Christ and to our Holy Mother, the Church, so that we can see Jesus, so that we can be assured of his promises, so that we can plant with Him, enjoy Him, and be with Him forever. For this I know: when the world and the Church can finally be utterly dependent upon Jesus Christ and can recognize that it cannot save itself, when it can give away its golden ring, then, and only then, will it be ready for a Savior.

And so, with my predecessor in this office, I once again say to you, "I believe in the One, Holy, Catholic and Apostolic Church and I ask you to contend earnestly for the faith once delivered to the Saints as a solemn trust and ever kept within firm hold of the Church. Be sure she is in the last days to gather 'all who love the Lord Jesus,' and to welcome Him at His return. Built upon the foundation of the Apostles and Prophets, Jesus Christ Himself being the chief Cornerstone, neither the world beneath nor the world around, neither scorn nor patronage, neither poverties nor persecutions shall prevail against the Church." And I change his words a bit: "Our little one shall be thousands." As Quincy One said Quincy Eight says, "God speed our Diocese of Quincy."

In the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit. **Amen.**

*Written on this 12th day of October in the second year of our Consecration.*

*Mary, pray. Jesus, have mercy.*

***+Keith Quinciensis***

The Third Address of the Eighth Bishop of Quincy

***The Right Reverend Keith L. Ackerman, SSC***

to the 119th Synod of the Diocese of Quincy

at St. John's Episcopal Church, Quincy, Illinois

October 11, 1996

***The Feast of St. Wilfrid***

**“Surely It Is God Who Saves Me. I Will Trust in Him and Not Be Afraid.”**

In the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit. Amen

"Our funds for mission purposes are scanty. Our faithful missionaries are doing their work for meager stipends. There are many towns where the Church ought to be at work which we are not able to enter for lack of means. Perhaps the idea of the local needs in each parish or mission obscures the diocesan idea. We do not fully realize that the continual thought of self is as narrowing to the parish as it is to the individual, and we forget the counsel of the Wise Man: there is that scattering and yet increaseth; and there is that withholdeth more than is meet, but it tendeth to poverty. The liberal soul shall be made fat; and he that watereth shall be watered also himself.

Do we not need to enlarge our ideas and to think more of the unity and solidarity of the Diocese and the Church National? When this is done, missionary obligation begins to be felt in even greater degree by every Churchman; it is not left to the rector or local vestry to gather with painful efforts a poor contribution towards the mission fund, but with each individual it becomes a matter of conscience to give for missions freely and generously, and with regularity."

With these words the Rt. Reverend Frederick William Taylor, the second Bishop of Quincy and my predecessor in this Episcopal office, addressed the Synod of 1902, standing in this pulpit and sitting in that chair. It would be his only Synod Address, for in just a few short months, he would die after having been Bishop for only twenty months — as Coadjutor for three months, and Diocesan for Seventeen months. He was to the month precisely the same age I am today when he died. Tonight, I wear his Mitre, his Pectoral Cross, and I hold his Crosier.

It was reported in the Synod Journal of 1903 that,

*"Our leader has been taken from us. The slight figure, the cheery once, the winning smile which made our Bishop so welcome in many a household are now gracious and beautiful memories. The high hopes of his wise and efficient work in our diocese which grew stronger day by day have been disappointed."*

Beloved, in twenty months he confirmed - three hundred and fifty-three people - in a diocese with 3,114 communicants and forty-four parishes and missions. His last official act was to celebrate Mass and preach in this Church -- his Cathedral -- on Easter Sunday, April 12, 1903. Against the wishes of his doctor, on that day he confirmed 19 people and fourteen days later after having been taken by his daughter to a sanitarium in Kenosha, Wisconsin, he went home to be with His Shepherd. The various memorial tributes specifically mention his missionary zeal. The Reverend Dean Moore in 1903 tells us that,

*"To this day, we in common with the other Dioceses of the Middle West present unparalleled opportunities for missionary effort with rich harvests assured to the venture, and yet we are thrown upon our own poor resources. It is strenuous work to strengthen the things which remain and church extension is crippled by scanty means, which the pitiful appropriations doled out to us scarcely reinforce. This is the burden which our Bishops must bear and the strain of making bricks without straw is heavy upon them."*

Father Moore goes on to say that,

*"From the day of his consecration (Bp. Taylor) threw all of his energies into the pressing needs of our mission work. It is indeed a work which needs hope and faith."*

What was it that Bishop Taylor was truly saying in his brief Episcopate? What was it that he sought to accomplish as he literally poured out his life for twenty months as Christ's anointed Apostle to our beloved Diocese? In his own words he tells the Synod in 1902,

*"I say purposely 'giving for missions' -- not merely missions in the Diocese of which we are members but for missions in the most general and extensive and comprehensive meaning of the term." "Let our ideas," he said, concerning the Church's missions "be as expansive and world-embracing as the Church's divinely given mission, and then our gifts and efforts to advance the Kingdom of Christ in the world will be lacking in neither quantity nor quality."*

These words of Bishop Taylor's and others which I have read make it clear that his sense of mission which he certainly demonstrated as Dean of St. Paul's pro-Cathedral in Springfield, as founder of St. Luke's in Springfield, and as Archdeacon of the Diocese of Springfield were beyond what, too often, we mean today. So often when we say "mission" we mean a Church which receives Diocesan assistance. Some dioceses have rejected this designation in favor of the term "aided parish." But what occurs when we change the name? Perhaps it is more descriptive but it takes us from the original intention of the word "mission." I would remind us that the word "mission" has the same root in Latin as the Most Holy Sacrament of the Altar -- the Mass. It is to be sent, to go out and do something. It does not mean to wait and to receive.

Since Bishop Taylor's time we have one-half the number of churches in our Diocese, and I can assure you that I did not confirm over three hundred this year. Much has happened. River traffic seems to be primarily for those who can afford the recreation. Railroad tracks are often nostalgic reminders of an earlier age. Highways and Interstates have defined our area. Our young people have found fertile pastures beyond our fields of

corn. Neighborhoods once flourishing now remind us of the parochial schools and churches that formerly existed, but now function as antique shops and tea rooms. And Bishop Taylor's dream seems to have died. The subject of money for missions highlights many meetings in our Diocese, and emotions run high. The subject of assessments in parishes is regularly discussed with fear that any increase in assessment will cripple our parishes and cause protest from our vestries and chapter. So, what of our mission?

The last recorded words of Jesus in his earthly ministry are crystal clear. We usually call his words "The Great Commission."

***“Go, therefore, and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, and teaching them to obey everything that I have commanded you. And remember, I am with you always, to the end of the age."***

Note that it is not called "The Great Suggestion," "The Great Hope," or "The Great Idea." Also note that Jesus did not ask for an election of his followers, nor did a committee report back after He gave us this commission. He-sent- us -He "com-MISSION-ed" us — to be missionaries — people sent to preach the Gospel to all people.

It has been 2,000 years since that commissioning, and 93 years since a Successor to the first ones to hear the Great Commission stood in this pulpit and called this Diocese to hear the words of mission.

During this time, we have discovered some shocking facts. We have ways of measuring our lack of missionary strategy. We have statistics which show us how people are responding, or rather, are not responding, to the Great Commission. We have seminars and programs which train us in appropriate ways to respond to the Lord's commissioning.

Bishop Taylor speaks of the strengthening of our Diocese and of the National Church. As a teacher of Canon Law at Western Theological Seminary, Bishop Taylor did not anticipate in his lifetime much of what faces the church today when he spoke of mission. Apathy — oh yes! Selfishness — absolutely! Fear — certainly! Lack of vision -- most certainly! Adherence to the Word of God -- NO!

Today those who deny the Virgin Birth, the literal Resurrection of Jesus, and His Ascension, obviously call into question not only the authenticity of the words of the Great Commission, but indicate that since He didn't really ascend into Heaven anyway, He couldn’t have uttered the words of the Great Commission on the Mount of Olives.

Beloved, we not only deal with the realities of the natural geographic and economic dilemmas of the area in which we live, but we deal with an even greater erosion -- the erosion of the Faith of the One, Holy, Catholic, and Apostolic Church! When we begin to question the authenticity of the message of Jesus we are left with an emptiness. As one has said, "the one who marries the spirit of this generation will be a widower or widow in the next." That is, in recreating, recasting, and radically reinterpreting the words of Jesus we have significantly altered the primacy of Holy Scripture. I say this cautiously, that in spite of my admiration for many methods used today in Church growth, we must note the fine line between responding to peoples' needs in a changing culture and recasting the teachings of Holy Scripture and Holy Church to meet the demands of a narcissistic society that may know what it wants, but may not know Who and what it needs. In short -- recasting the expression of our faith is significantly different from revamping the tenets of our Faith. We do not revamp the tenets as a last attempt at evangelizing and missionizing the world. Jesus ***is*** the Way, the Truth, and the Life and no one comes to the Father but by Him.

Moreover, He has come to save the world, and He is depending on you and me -- the Diocese of Quincy -- to once again be a missionary Diocese -- a Missionary Church -- with Missions that are dependent upon Him alone -- where \_all\_ churches in the Diocese, whether Cathedral, parishes, or missions, see their job as missionizing the world for Jesus Christ our Savior.

To that end I stand with my predecessor, Bishop Taylor, as I recall us to our heritage -- where God's Word is Divine -- where we proclaim "truly it is God who saves me" -- where we believe in God's promises -- His rainbow of hope.

I therefore ask of you the following:

* Nearly one-half of our churches accepted my challenge last year to grow by 5%. I do not withdraw that challenge, but I extend it this evening. In order to assist our churches in mission work, I am appointing the Rev. Canon John Blossom as Canon Missioner of this Diocese. He will assist all clergy and Churches in the implementation of Mission, Vision, and Evangelism goals and will help me determine along with our Mission Strategy Committee where our mission must be. We must take God's word to some new locations by the establishment of cell groups and house churches. We often spend more money on buildings than we do on people. People do not come to buildings: they come to Jesus Christ. This evening I will formally commission Canon Blossom to assist us in this endeavor.
* I call upon all Chapters, Bishop's Committees, and Vestries to work closely and seriously with Canon Blossom as we focus our efforts outwards towards drawing people to conversion of life through knowledge of Jesus Christ.

Statistics speak volumes: so-called "liberal" Churches are not growing. With less conviction comes less commitment. Churches which adhere to Holy Scripture as the revealed word of God are growing. Remember that the only real rearrangement that draws people to Jesus is the rearrangement of our priorities.

If all the people of our diocese would catch the vision of Bishop Taylor, we would be true liberals -- we would give liberally of all that we have, returning to Him what is His by right.

It is time for us to become committed tithers, for the only way in which we can receive is if we give. No waiter fills a glass which is full with water, but rather fills glasses which are ready to receive.

The Parable of the Talents applies to us tonight. Three men were given talents by the master. One man invested significantly, another more cautiously, and a third one not at all. The master took away from the third man what he had given, and distributed to the two who knew what to do.

You and I are recipients of great wealth -- the Apostolic Faith — Catholic Worship — Evangelical zeal — Charismatic gifts — and if we squander them, they will be taken away — they will be taken way. Beloved in Christ, "to whom much has been given much will be required."

**Go and preach the Gospel -- build the Church -- be missionaries.** If next year is business as usual, if we do not grow, if we do not have the desire to grow, if we just maintain systems, then the enemy will have his way. Then Bishop Taylor's dream will have died.

*"There is that scattereth and yet increaseth, and there is that withholdeth more than is meet, but it tendeth to poverty. The liberal soul shall be made fat; and he that watereth shall be watered also himself."*

Truly it is God who saves us. We \_will\_ trust in Him and not be afraid.

In the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit. **Amen**

***+ Keith Quinciencis VIII***

✠ *1996*

The Fourth Address of the Eighth Bishop of Quincy

***The Right Reverend Keith L. Ackerman, SSC***

to the 120th Synod of the Diocese of Quincy

at Church of St. Andrew the Apostle, Peoria, Illinois

October 17, 1997

***Eve of the Feast of St. Luke the Evangelist***

***"For Where Your Treasure Is, There Will Your Heart Be Also."***

In the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit.  Amen

"God Speed the Diocese of Quincy!" So prays the third Bishop of this jurisdiction as he begins his first Address. With these words the Right Reverend M. Edward Fawcett, Ph.D., addressed the Twenty-Seventh Annual Synod of the Diocese of Quincy held May 17 and 18, 1904 at St. Paul's Church in Peoria.

M. Edward Fawcett was born in New Hartford, Iowa on All Saints Day, 1865, the son of a Methodist Minister.  He received his A.B., M.A., and Ph.D. within a period of seven years!  In 1897 at the age of 32 he was ordained first a Deacon and then a priest by Bp. McLaren, the Bishop of Chicago, and was consecrated Third Bishop of Quincy on January 20, 1904 at the age of 38!

Bp. Fawcett was clearly a visionary who was graced with missionary zeal, in spite of many obstacles which would be placed before him.  In his first Addresses, however, he spent a bit of time mourning the death of his beloved predecessor, the Rt. Revd. William Taylor who had died so suddenly after a very brief Episcopate.  It was evident, though, that Bp. Fawcett saw the need to move ahead, and by drawing upon the wisdom of the First and Second Bishops of Quincy, he was able to reiterate and articulate many of the concerns which they shared.

You may be surprised to learn that finances were of great concern to the Bishop.  In particular what we now call "Asking to General Convention" was a problem which Bp. Fawcett addressed.  "If every Communicant of the Church would give a minimum of $1.00 per year for Missions, we would then be able to pay our apportionment to General Missions in full and have nearly $2,000.00 for Diocesan purposes."  He goes on to say in his first Address in 1904 that "we must have a larger income.  It is pitiful to know that this Church with its Apostolic birthright and heritage is often obliged to ask its faithful, cultured Priests to labor for the pittance a street laborer would reject.  It is blessed to know that uncomplainingly, loyally, grandly, our Priests accept the burden of poverty.  They have no eight-hour day, and too often not an eight-hour's pay, but they labor on, with small hope of present reward.  There may have been some romance to work in this territory in those days when Bishop Chase made Jubilee his See.  He called the place "Robin's Nest" and explained that he did so because the first dwelling 'was built of mud and sticks and filled with young ones.'  There is some romance today in going to Alaska or the Philippines. But in this neglected workaday Middle-West there is little romance now -- no sustaining romance.  It requires a heart of faith and courage and a Care of Souls, such as will be undaunted by humdrum, littleness and poverty."  This would be a consistent theme of Bishop Fawcett during his next 31 years as our Bishop.

Several other ongoing themes were introduced -- namely the necessity of individual members of the Diocese remembering both the parish and the Diocese in their Wills, the necessity of having a repository for all deeds and titles to Church Property so that we would not lose a church, and the establishment of a significant Endowment Fund.  He also mentioned that it would be nice to have a Diocesan-owned "Episcopal Residence" in the See City of Quincy.  He noted that year that in his four months as Bishop he had made Twenty-four Visitations and had Confirmed 167 people.

In 1905 Bp. Fawcett was quite excited because he had Confirmed 148 that year, Jubilee College had re-opened, and St. Mary's School for Girls and St. Alban's School for Boys, both located in Knoxville, were flourishing.  But, he says, "My final words to you, my brother men, must be an appeal for righteousness and for the cultivation of the things of the Spirit.  We do not grow as we increase legislation or multiply organizations.  We do grow as we realize within ourselves increasingly the life of the Son of God.  Busy as we must be in matters philanthropic and in the consideration of measures making for the common weal, we cannot afford to neglect the place of prayer, the hour of meditation, or the Sacraments of life.  Sad indeed will it be for any man to find that while he was busy here and there that which was committed to him had been neglected and had departed.  The Spiritual life should lead to activities, but there is danger that the activities in which we are prone to engage in these days may quench the spiritual life."

For Bp. Fawcett, looking back was essential, but only to discover truth that must not be changed.  In 1907 he said, "Never was there a time when the Apostolic Church was more needed, with its certain simple faith and unquestionable authority, than now."  Again in 1908 he says, "The great problems which confront us in this age, seemingly impossible 'owing to our unhappy divisions' and the great cause of Christian unity itself, will all be duly met in God's way and time.  This is not to argue that men Missions, should not interest themselves actively and earnestly in solutions, but that the Divine plan will prevail, and that ours will only be of use as they assist that Divine plan.  We may well avoid hasty judgments.  God is never in a hurry.  Short cuts are to be distrusted.  The longest way around may be the shortest way home.  We can await the progress of education and the evolution of spiritual ideals, confident that God works in these, and that they will eventually dispose of the unhistorical claims of some, and impracticalities of others.  The nervous fussiness which seeks to coerce immediate results with ill-matured plans, hinders rather than helps the desired results. Compromise is not the sequel of toleration."  This was said, I remind you, by a man who nearly did not receive the necessary number of Consents from Standing Committees to be Consecrated Bishop because of his Native American ancestry.  Again, in 1924 be said, "If we hold tenaciously to continuity from earliest Christian times, and refused to compromise it, we are not thereby prevented from giving thanks for the good works of all those who have rejected it.

There is not an aspiration after better things anywhere which we do not applaud.  There is no agency of any name, encouraging truth, honesty, and purity, to which our prayers do not bind us."

But he points out again in 1908 that what inhibits the Diocese as he travels broadly around the United States is "an effort to get $5,000 men to accept $500 stipends."  "It is not but difficult to find men of ability to undertake the pastoral care of congregations in cases where a living is provided," he says, "even although it be a small one involving sacrifice.  There are numbers of the clergy content to accept hard fare and do hard work, but there is a limit to human endurance. When insufficient stipends are carelessly paid is it surprising that men leave, and that it is difficult to find successors?  We face a difficult situation in our Missions and smaller Parishes, and we must work together with all our ability to bring about a better condition.  The men who are attempting to do this work should have hearty encouragement.  Cynics and by-standing cynics are not needed.  The Clergy as a rule desire to encourage each other, and will do so when not afflicted with exaggerated egotism."

By 1909 Bp. Fawcett saw the need for a real invigoration in the churches of the Diocese. In his six years he had Confirmed 1,551 people, but he had some concerns about a lack of enthusiasm which he sensed and observed.  Therefore, in 1909 he laid the ground work for Diocesan-wide "Parochial Missions" -- that is, evangelistic Missions which would deal with the necessity of a greater commitment to Christ and His Church.  He tells us, "In some parishes it may be possible to have informal conferences once a week in a parish house, a small school room, or a hall -- a large choir room has proven satisfactory -- where there is instruction, the answering of questions, and as need arises, exhortation, counsel, and if possible, personal conversation following with any who may desire it.  A Church may be used, but for some good reasons another place will be better in many instances.  (A private house is usually undesirable.)  To make this successful, a band of workers should be organized whose chief work is to bring in others.  There may be hymns; prayers with especial recognition of the objects desired; an instruction, biblical, historical, and sacramental; a question box; and through all a quiet insistence upon the dignity of Christian life, the privileges of worship, the necessity of growth in righteousness, and the means whereby such growth is certainly obtainable. Literary, sociological, or scientific information, while valuable in its place, should not be the chief reason for such a conference."  I might add that this was said by someone who obviously placed a high value on education.  I must also add that there appears to have been very little response by his people to this revolutionary plan!  Life in Jesus Christ and adherence to the Bible as the Word of God leap from the pages of his Addresses.  In that 1909 Address the Bishop tells us that it is important to involve as many people as possible in these Missions, because the more involved "the less danger of loss from lapsing Christians."  He says "Many parishes are organized for material results, the reduction of the mortgage, or the success of the building fund.  Such things may be necessary, but they will only be more successful if there be larger recognition of the spiritual needs of the community."

In 1910, however, something unusual happened!  At the last moment at the 36th Synod held on November 13 and 14 at Trinity Church, Rock Island, the Third Bishop of Quincy laid aside his Address and, as he says, "I shall with your permission present for your consideration a subject which, to my mind, is of first importance to the welfare of this Diocese."  In what followed we discover a great concern which the Bishop has regarding what he termed "Parochialism."  He shared with that Synod that he fears they are "too absorbed by local needs."  He calls it "communal selfishness," and tells us that "it is the apotheosis of unworthiness."  It was his belief that "Diocesan gatherings are an opportunity for enlarging vision, widening horizons, and preventing the atrophy of sympathy."  He says that he begs patience on the parts of his listeners, but that he must tell them of the "missionary problem of this Diocese."  By way of history, he tells us of our founding in 1877 and that the Diocese of Quincy was "the smallest and most compact" of the three Dioceses in Illinois.  But, he added, it had the most promising future in 1877, so much that Bishop McLaren of Chicago called it "the breast of the chicken" which was formed as an experiment.   As Bp. Fawcett says, "It was considered an opportunity to demonstrate the practicality of a small Diocese.  Men were saying, "Let us strengthen the Church by erecting small Dioceses where there will be profit from increased Episcopal oversight made possible by the smaller territory.  If thirty-five years is sufficient to test the experiment, men may be tempted to conclude that it has failed to demonstrate that which was fondly hoped."  The Bishop then pointed out that we suffer from a shifting population, but that we aren't shifting our ministry to accommodate the population. He shows concern as he tells us that "the communicant list for ten years remains stationary."  He concludes that "the promise made to the General Convention, and accepted by the parishes of the proposed Diocese, was never kept.  It was broken at once -- at the very outset."  He charges the Synod (having changed the name from "Convention" -- a secular term) by saying that there is a "lack of missionary enthusiasm" in the Diocese.  He goes on to say that it has been suggested to him that there are several ways in which he can deal with the problem (indicating, by the way, his disappointment over the lack of response to the Parochial Mission plan which he had previously presented).  He could bring in more dedicated priests, perhaps "Go East and raise money, . . . increase the extent of the Diocese" (taking from Chicago or Springfield), or " become a Missionary Jurisdiction," that is, become dependent upon the General Convention Board of Missions Budget.   Bp. Fawcett says that he feels that the churches in the Diocese must build up a Diocesan Endowment immediately in order to free missions from financial fears so that they can be "free to support and maintain an aggressive missionary campaign."  He then read off the names of the only fourteen churches which had responded to his appeal, and had sent a grand total of $94.29 to help in that endeavor.  The largest contributions were from St. Peter's Church, Canton ($27.90), and St. Mary's Church, Knoxville ($17.90).  It was clear that Bp. Fawcett had concern and some disappointment, but he was encouraged by the founding of an African-American Mission, St. Jude's in Quincy, and the ongoing existence of the "Swedish Missions" in the Galesburg area.

On November 12, 1913, at the Cathedral Church of St. John in Quincy, Bp. Fawcett raised additional concern.  He and his two predecessors had worked diligently to remove the word "Protestant" from the official title of the American Church, and in his Address entitled "Sectarianism" the Bishop addressed the "misnomer" and what he saw as the scandal of division.  He points out that division "discourages confidence in the Christian revelation while it increases confidence in opinionatedness.  It hinders faith.  It is so obviously selfish, so impertinently conceited and so glaringly inconsistent that it hinders the growth of Christianized thought and conduct." He goes on to say that "'Protestant Episcopal' advertises us as a sectarian organization and presupposes that our episcopacy is not that of the Church founded by Jesus Christ.  Many earnest men believe that the requisites for a proper descriptive title in our case are: (1) the idea of historic continuity as distinguished from the sectarian principle; and (2) such qualifying word or words as are necessary to indicate jurisdiction.  Certainly, until we have such a title, we must expect to be regarded merely as one of the sectarian organizations. We pray to be delivered from 'all heresy and schism,' and we advertise ourselves to be both heretical and schismatic!"  He noted that in his tenth year he had now Confirmed a total of 2,221 people.

At Grace Church in Galesburg in 1914 he was delighted to report that while "we have no startling, dramatic victories to report, we have a devoted band of clergy, and faithful laymen who, in a noble discontent with mediocrity, hold on with tenacity, and move on steadily."  He said, "We pay more and we pray more."  He noted that we have 38 churches -- what he calls "the Bishop's own Church," the Cathedral Church of St. John, nine parishes, nine dependent parishes, 17 missions and two unorganized missions.  He concluded by noting concern about the world condition and war. He said that war "comes because culture without Christ is but pagan after all.  It demonstrates anew that the vaunted greatness of civilizations glorifying intellect or force above truth and Christ are exceeding fragile."

In 1916 he continued to be concerned about the War but said that there is great need to pursue Church growth or evangelism.  "In these days we think and hear much about missionary work.  It is well so. But there is one phase of the subject about which, I feel, too little is said or thought, and that is personal missionary work."  While not all are called to the mission fields abroad, the Bishop said that "every Churchman is called to missionary work in the place where he is.  His field, his store, his bench, his desk, his street, and his town are all his missionary field."

In 1917, the Bishop had no written Address. We are told "The Bishop delivered a stirring Speech upon his work in the Army.  Owing to the fact that he had just returned from his service in the Army, the Bishop was unable to prepare a written Address, and hence spoke extemporaneously." One can only imagine what he had to say!

Deeply affected by his Army experience, the Bishop was moved in 1919 to convey his concern about some suggestions being made in what was termed a "post-war world."  He says, "There have been suggestions that the post-war Church must have a new Gospel.  This usually emanates from self-styled 'advanced' thinkers, the peculiarity of whose advance is that it resembles nothing more perfectly than the advance of a crab.  There is no new Gospel.  There is no new thought.  Ancient and shop-worn heresies may be taken down from musty shelves and polished and burnished to resemble the new.  It often happens, deceiving some. They may even have a considerable vogue for a time, and attract such brilliant pagans as an H.G. Wells or a Bernard Shaw.  But no substitute has yet been found for the old Gospel.  The chatter against creeds, or for new ones, somewhat amuses us, or would, if the results were not so indicative of remaining paganism, or at least of loose thinking and partial comprehension."  He does offer some concern about clergy not responding to requests, and people filing parochial reports inappropriately.  "Year after year in looking over parochial reports I find the value of many of them lessened because they are not presented within the canonical time.  There are always some incorrect in such small matters as the sum of 5 and 4, minus the sum of 3 and 2!  The serious thing is not the report, which may be correct, but the mental slovenliness which permits such things."

Probably one of his most splendid teachings was his Synod Address in 1921 entitled "The Priesthood of the Laity" -- an Address which is as timely today as then.  One phrase rings out: "Are not the streets and fields places for the exercise of priestly functions: places to witness for God, and possibly to plead with men for them?"

By 1922, however, the Bishop was showing signs of sadness about stagnation in terms of regional and Diocesan growth.  Parenthetically he says, "May I record the conviction that the longest one hundred miles in the world is that between Galesburg and Quincy?  The train service is excellent, and there are dear people at either end of the journey, but the location of official headquarters so far from the center of the Church population tends to reduce the value of our narrowed boundaries, and to make of a small and compact diocese, one with objections similar to those which occasion complaints against large and unwieldy jurisdictions."

In his first Address in 1904, the Bishop had said it would be nice for the Diocese to own an Episcopal Residence. In his Address 22 years later, he announced that "Mrs. Rosetta Gatchell of fragrant memory" had left the Diocese another residence — 1819 Jersey Street in Quincy.  He was delighted and asked the Synod to "guide me in the administration of the two properties now held for Episcopal residences."  He noted that everyone should remember the Diocese in their Wills.

At the Fiftieth Anniversary of the Diocese in 1927, the Bishop stated that Genesis 22:14 "*Jehovah Jireh*" -- the exclamation of Abraham -- was the perfect motto for the Seal of our Diocese.  He said, "There was aptness in the choice of '*Jehovah Jireh*' by the first Bishop of Illinois, for Bishop Chase pioneered under conditions and in atmospheres which tried the soul."  After rehearsing the history of the Diocese, he had a few thoughts.  Springfield has 31,466 square miles, Chicago has 15,320, and Quincy has 13,700 square miles; and while Quincy was originally seen as the "plum" some problems occur.  He noted the decline of river traffic as having a profound effect on the life of the diocese, but that the greater effect was the constant decline of the rural population which as he said, has continued "to this hour."

Once again Bp. Fawcett reminded his people to build the Endowment.  There is a certain urgency, though, in this appeal that was not as evident before.  It is one paragraph, however, which stands out.  "The Churchly ideals, so ably taught and so strongly defended by the first Bishop of Quincy, and no less faithfully supported by his coadjutor and Second Bishop of the Diocese, have had much to do with the survival of periods of depression and the sure growth of the Church.  These leaders build up a sturdy resistance to disintegrating movements.  They doubtless saw times when the preferences of lackadaisical Churchmen and sectarian Episcopalians might have prevailed to some temporary advantage, but they foresaw that adherence to the underlying principles of Apostolic Churchmanship were the best defense of the Church, and the more certain method for its growth . . . With the passing years we have seen no sensational growth.  Instead, there has been slow improvement against great odds.  We have increased gifts to Church extension by percentages that are wholesome indications of increasing purpose . . . The faith and devotion of loyal souls have called the help of God.  We survive a period of trial . . . We know that the triumph of the Church can only be retarded by our failures, not prevented."

In 1931, though, the reality of economic decline became more obvious, and Bp. Fawcett asked the question in Kewanee, "If you were a Bishop in a mid-western diocese what would you do? You would have a diocesan organization in a missionary territory, grave responsibility with very limited means.  Would you not use your utmost endeavor to make the needs of the situation clear to all the people? You would be faulted for being too insistent, and possibly be accused of having some selfish interest, but I believe you would continue to present the facts and point to the remedies."  He notes that one Missionary Bishop (a wise man according to Bp. Fawcett) thinks that the National Council ought to begin to fund mid-Western dioceses, and "give to each of them $9,000.00 a year on condition that the diocese raise $1,000.00 and that this be continued until the diocese thus endowed had $100,000.00 to its credit."

By 1932 Bp. Fawcett was obviously deeply saddened by Church closings, and in particular the closing of several schools. As an Anglo-Catholic his strong emphasis on the Mass is clear in the midst of great sorrow.  "To plead the Sacrifice of Calvary on behalf of all our parishes and missions, we gather before the Altar of Christ Church (Moline) tomorrow morning at 7:30 o'clock."  He suggests that the Mass intention be for the financial needs of the Diocese.  "It would be reassuring to know that in such times as these the Confirmations are increasing," he adds.

The following year he was quite excited about receiving a note from Canterbury Cathedral indicating that Mass had been offered for the Diocese of Quincy.  Bp. Fawcett notes that 100 years earlier the Oxford Movement helped "save England from a threatened apostasy and doubtless inspired that presentation of the Divine Oblation in our behalf."  He notes that the Diocese of Quincy is an heir of this Revival, and in particular he acknowledges Dr. James Lloyd Breck, Bp. Jackson Kemper, and Fr. James DeKoven.  Regarding the Great Depression he notes that the tiny Endowment has been sapped, but that "the Clergy have held their posts, enduring hardness as good soldiers.  There has been want, aching need, in some cases, but there have been no fleeing hirelings.  There have been no whimperings of incompetency.  With emptied purses but full hearts our faithful priests plead the Great Oblation for their stricken people and an afflicted land.  Priests and people with a sturdy faith march in step together for the spread of the Gospel, for the remission of sins, and for the glory of God, confidently expecting the dawn of a better day.  He commends St. Paul's Church, Peoria, and Trinity Church, Rock Island, for "voluntarily setting aside a generous sum over and above its apportionments and assessments for diocesan missionary work, particularly in the next towns."  But by May of 1935 we hear of health problems, and Bp. Fawcett tells us that on this, the 100th anniversary of the establishment of the Episcopal Church in Illinois, "I ask you for assistance -- such assistance as will strengthen the whole diocese."  He notes that six months ago “I suddenly lost control of my ability to walk, and was ordered to bed as one whose blood pressure is too high."  He called for the election of a coadjutor, noting that the Episcopate Fund was cut by 60% in giving, not by Synod action but by real giving, and that he would share his stipend with the coadjutor.  With great sadness the Third Bishop of Quincy could not attend the 100th Anniversary Celebration of the Founding of the Church in the State of Illinois.  The Rector of St. Paul's Church in Peoria, who was the President of the Standing Committee, and was also the Chairman of the Centennial Committee, presided at the event instead.  His name was the Reverend William Leopold Essex.  On September 17, 1935, while in his seventieth year, the Right Reverend M. Edward Fawcett departed this life.  He served as our Bishop for 31 years and four months. He did not live to realize his hope of having a Coadjutor. His successor was not elected until May 6, 1936.  He left behind a beloved wife, a greatly loved daughter, Suzanne, who is today an active member of Christ Church, Moline, and a Diocese, grateful for a Bishop who gave every ounce of his energy for the extension of the Kingdom.

At this juncture I have been Bishop of the Diocese of Quincy less than any other of my predecessors, and as I read the Addresses and Papers of my esteemed seven Apostolic Predecessors, I feel less worthy of this Office than you can imagine.  Yet, by God's Grace, I am your Bishop, a Successor to the Apostles, and Successor to seven Defenders of the Catholic Faith in this Diocese.

In my 39 months I have Confirmed 90 and Received 10 from other Catholic Communions — a bit under what the Third Bishop of Quincy reports!  I am certain that you have heard in his words every emotion and concern which I have expressed as the Eighth Bishop of our beloved Diocese, and yet I convey them with urgency.  Some of my sense of urgency involves what I witness as I recognize the average age of the communicants of our Diocese and I acknowledge the number which I have Confirmed or Received.  Actually, we have done better than the Episcopal Church nationally, for we have increased in size rather modestly as our American Province has decreased significantly.  Some may think that we need a new Gospel, but I think that Bp. Fawcett has addressed that; issue.  Revisionism -- revising the Bible and the Faith to meet our needs -- does not bring "success", whatever that means.

I shall not rehearse my concerns with you for Bp. Fawcett has spoken for me, both in terms of Orthodoxy in the American Church and the missionary imperative for our Diocese.  The more things change the more they stay the same.

I do not quote him to revel in the glories of the past, but rather to emphasize the oft-quoted reality that if we do not learn from our history, we shall surely be condemned by it, as it were. In other words, we must learn from our mistakes and our blessings.

The Diocese of Quincy has for 120 years enjoyed a peculiar position in the American Church.  We have been a part of what used to be called "The Biretta Belt," and as I review the situation today, I suspect that we are now the "pom pom", so to speak! With this peculiarity comes a responsibility to proclaim boldly the unbroken Faith of the One, Holy, Catholic, and Apostolic Church. That is not easy today for there are many who claim it who express it very differently from the way in which it was received -- in ways which Bp. Fawcett would not recognize were he with us today.

But do not be gloomy!  There are wonderful joys in our Diocese -- joys such as scholarship aid and growth at St. Francis in Chillicothe; a parish hall being built even as we speak at St. Andrew's in El Paso; Evangelism training at Grace Church in Galesburg; Evangelism and Outreach Training at Holy Trinity, Geneseo; a successful Heifer Project at St. James, Griggsville; an Hispanic ministry at St. John's, Kewanee; enthusiasm for a new ministry at St. John's in Henry; massive community involvement at St. George's, Macomb; beautiful new windows at Christ Church, Moline; Healing Liturgies at Trinity, Monmouth,  and St. John's, Preemption; phenomenal community outreach, stewardship and a 100th Anniversary at St. Andrew's, Peoria; an Ecumenical Celebration of Solidarity and a youth outreach program at St. Paul's Cathedral, Peoria; more children at St. Jude's, Princeton; additional devotional societies, outreach, and youth programs at St. John's, Quincy; Healing Liturgies, landscaping and massive neighborhood outreach at Trinity, Rock Island; new signs of new life at St. Clare's, Rushville; new outreach and evangelism programs at St. Mark's, Silvis; excitement and a new organ at St. Paul's, Warsaw; hearing the Bell ring at Christ Church, Limestone; seeing people once again in historic Zion Church, Brimfield; seeing steady growth and a strong Sunday School at St. Peter's, Canton; seeing necessary physical repairs being done to St. James, Lewistown; and a Diocesan Youth Director and many Youth Programs!  This is what I see as I travel around the Diocese -- this is the Diocese of Quincy.  The Diocese is not a thing -- you and I are the Diocese-- we are the family of God in this place -- and we are by the Power of the Holy Spirit ready for action!

I, therefore, have no charges for you this year -- no proposals.  I just ask you to be the Church -- to be the Diocese -- to be the Body of Christ to a broken world which is not looking for a new Gospel, but *the* Gospel.

I leave you with two anecdotes.  One is advice that was given to me 21 years ago when I first became a Rector in a shrinking community.  A very wise priest said to me, "Run your small parish as if it were a large one, and one day it will be."  He was right -- we doubled in size in three years. Several years later the Evangelism Department of the Episcopal Church Center in New York City called in response to that growth and asked me which Evangelism Program we were using.  I told her that we Preach Jesus Christ Crucified, Risen, and Ascended, in Season and out of Season; we believe that the Holy Scriptures are, in fact, God's Revealed Word, and proclaim it; and that we celebrate the Sacraments daily, taking them into the streets, into the homes, and into the mills, factories, and work places. "That's nice," she said, "but which program do you use?"

Beloved in Christ, there is no program but Jesus Christ and a radical conversion to His Way of Life.  It means that we must change our lives and that we must be ready for persecution, ridicule, and rejection.  If we live according to the ways of Christ, we have no right to expect any dispensation from what Christ Himself received.

There are very few political, stewardship, and evangelism problems in the Church -- just spiritual problems that manifest themselves in those ways.  When the heart changes, other changes will take place.  "For where your treasure is, there will your heart be also."

In the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit.  Amen.

***+Keith Quinciensis VIII***

Jesus, Mercy ✠ Mary, Pray.

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The Fifth Address of the Eighth Bishop of Quincy  
***The Right Reverend Keith L. Ackerman, SSC***  
to the l21st Synod of the Diocese of Quincy   
at Trinity Episcopal Church, Rock Island, Illinois

October 16, 1998

***St. Gall, monk & hermit***

***"For people give only when they care,******and they care only when they love."***

In the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit.  Amen.

There was an air of excitement and concern on May 5, 1936 when the Diocese of Quincy met at Christ Church, Moline, for the 59th Annual Synod. Our beloved Bishop Edward Fawcett who had been our Bishop since 1904 had died in 1935. The First Page of the Journal is dedicated to his memory. The Diocese had no Bishop-elect and the Cathedral of St. John, the eight parishes, the eight dependent parishes, the seventeen missions, and seven unorganized missions met to mourn the loss of their Bishop and to elect a Successor to the Apostles. The Reverend William L. Essex, President of the Standing Committee, Rural Dean of Peoria and Vicar of St. Stephen's Church, and St. Andrew's Church in Peoria presided over the meeting.

Fr. Essex was well known in the Diocese having been Rector of Trinity, Rock Island, from 1918 to 1925. Although born and educated in New York, he became a Midwesterner in 1913 when be accepted a call to be Rector of St. Peter's Church in St. Louis. Bishop Fawcett's death had thrust him into a significant role as President of the Standing Committee.

At this Synod Fr. Essex called for a special order of business entitled "the matter of the future of the Diocese of Quincy."  The Committee on Diocesan Boundaries presented a report that offered two options: (1) a union of part of the existing Diocese of Quincy with the Diocese of Chicago or (2) a union of all of the existing Diocese of Quincy with the Diocese of Chicago. The report was discharged with the customary thank yous offered to the committee which had worked so diligently.

As a result of this action the Synod proceeded to elect a Bishop, and only one name was presented for nomination -- The Reverend William Leopold Essex of Peoria. The vote was 9 clergy for, 0 opposed, and due to 1/3 votes given to missions, the Lay vote was 10 for, 0 opposed.  In about 15 minutes Fr. Essex had become Bishop-elect.

Fr. Essex was asked to select a See City and Cathedral.  He indicated that once he received the appropriate number of consents from Standing Committees, he would make that announcement.

May 10 and 11, 1937 produced an exciting Synod.  Bishop Essex had been consecrated on September 29, 1936, at St. Paul's Church, Peoria.  He had renamed St. John's, Quincy, as his Cathedral, and the Synod was meeting in his Cathedral.  He noted that an important decision had been made -- his election determined that the Diocese of Quincy would continue.  In order to continue, however, through an arrangement with St. Paul's Church in Peoria, he would remain as Rector of that Parish.  His new curate, Father Edson Peaslee Sheppard, would help make that possible.  While most of the Bishop's Address dealt with financial matters, he was happy to report that it had been determined at a meeting of the Diocesan Board of Missions to guarantee that each mission priest would receive a minimum stipend of $1,200 per year.  That must have produced some excitement,

Bishop Essex exhibited a sense of "cautious optimism," May 10 and 11, 1938, at the Synod held at Grace Church, Galesburg.  Just two years before in Galesburg, St. John's Church had merged with Grace Church.  Bishop Essex's "cautious optimism" was to be seen in statistics.  In the previous year communicants of the Diocese made contributions individually to the Diocese and paid off all debts.  A total of $6,171.75, to be used for unpaid assessments and bills, had been raised. As the Bishop said, *"For people give only when they care, and they care only when they love."*

Bishop Essex tells us that he "cannot imagine a bishop wanting a finer field for work than we have here between the rivers.  It is a fertile land, beautiful to see as one gets about in it, by no means flat and stale and arid." He goes on to say that as he drives through the Diocese, he remembers the psalmist's line "man goeth forth to his work and to his labor until the evening."  What he loves, he says, is that there are "no great metropolitan centers where the individual is lost in a vast loneliness, but communities in which friendship and brotherhood are a normal heritage."

He tells us, though, that he is not satisfied.  He says that "the population of our Diocese in the 1930 census was 674,091 people.  Our listed communicants’ number 3,800. This means about one half of one per cent of the total residents.  Our strength as a Church in continental America is almost two per-cent." He muses that "we are a bit stronger" (in that percentage) than a neighboring Diocese "which rejoices in a See City of 800,000 people."  He tells us that "we can never build on mass conversions.  Our growth must be by individual assessions.  And for this the laity must be inspired with more missionary zeal to bring their friends into the Church." He says, "we can grow, if we will. "His goal for 1938: 300 Confirmations! He was somewhat taken aback to report that "the largest group of Confirmands was [in] 1907 when two hundred fifty-five candidates received the Laying on of Hands.  In that year Kewanee had 39, Jubilee College 11, and St. Mary's School, Knoxville, 16."

He sadly noted a law suit filed by the heirs of a late priest against the trustees of St. Mary's School, Knoxville.  The Diocese settled out of court, and especially thanked "our expert attorney" for his skill.  The Bishop was sad, however, that St. Mary's School and Calvary Church, Farmington, had closed.  He also noted that if enough money could be raised, he would like to have the Diocese "purchase a residence for the Bishop in Peoria."

The Synod of 1939 held in Rock Island once again dealt with the subject of growth but also noted the importance of reading Diocesan communications -- in particular the Diocesan paper entitled "Light".  His theme was that "when we place ourselves in God's hands, and depend upon the guidance and renewal of the Holy Spirit" something "great and lasting does happen."  He asks that there be "more of our Lord and less of ourselves."  He notes that last year's goal of 300 Confirmands was 70 short, and thus a record was almost set.  He was delighted to note that communicants had remembered the diocese in their wills.  The Bishop told us that the Episcopal residence at 1661 Jersey Street in Quincy, occupied by Bishop Fawcett for 30 years, had been sold, but that the money, by deed, had to be given to the two Quincy parishes, and couldn't be used for the residence in Peoria -- but that a residence in Peoria had been purchased due to the generosity of communicants.  He also mourned the death of the Rector of St. Paul's Church, Warsaw.

St. John's Church, Kewanee, hosted the Synod of a new decade -- 1940 -- a decade which would be a rather significant one in our history.  The Bishop's prayer that we would grow was being realized -- nearly 4,000 communicants.  The Bishop noted that "in fifteen years we have added 700 communicants -- a net increase of about 50 a year."  Bishop Essex articulated a problem though. "One of my problems as Bishop is to get good clergy for vacant missions in our Diocese, clergy with education, good manners, consecration, common sense, and missionary enthusiasm."

Bishop Essex noted the importance of electing good deputies for General Convention, especially that year because of a proposal to enter into a unity plan with the Presbyterians.  While he indicated that he didn't want to tell people how to vote he said, "We can trust their good sense and their loyalty to the historic faith and the Apostolic ministry."  He goes on to say that he opposes the plan.  "To me it seems absurd to say a Church which definitely rejects Episcopacy acts through its presbytery in an Episcopal capacity.  Our ministerial priesthood must be safeguarded and retained if we are to remain Anglican and Catholic."  He concluded his line of reasoning by saying "In the popular mind, our entertainment of such an experiment increases the false idea that we are just one more Protestant denomination in 'think as you please' America."

St. Paul's Church, Peoria, was the site of the 1941 Synod and Bishop Essex was disappointed. The number of Confirmations was down.  He said, "So the need for better discipleship is evident.  We cannot grow if missionary endeavor is confined to the clergy.  Every one of us must be interested in bringing someone else into the Church.  The clergy must work harder; lay men and women must show their love for the Church by thought and effort for the conversion of others."  He asked for 400 Confirmations in a year.  He likened the task of the Christian to being a soldier, and with sober words says "I see no romance in bombing planes and armored tanks and stealthy submarines. I see nothing but waste and woe in ruined cities, and burdened refugees, and a few bits of flotsam on the ocean wave.  Surely this is not God's purpose for the world."  Hymns from the new Hymnal were sung at the Banquet.

In 1942 at Christ Church, Moline, a great deal of the Bishop's thoughts focused on the war.  He lamented, "too little faith in God and in one another, too late in realization that Christ must be King or the devil takes the throne."  Again, Bishop Essex in discussing the number of Confirmations says "I cannot believe that you are satisfied with the number."

In anticipation of the Presbyterian union matter, he says "We cannot give up Catholic Orders and still remain a part of the Catholic and Apostolic Church."  He complains that the Episcopal Church is beginning to act as if it isn't responsible to the rest of the Anglican Communion.

Galesburg was host in 1943 and a footnote says that "In spite of war conditions and the difficulty of travel, the Synod Banquet was well attended." Again, the Bishop was concerned about the low number of Confirmands and the War, and he thanks the Diocesan Commission on Approaches to Unity.  He tells us, “Their report agrees with my own convictions, holding fast to our Catholic heritage, and refusing to jeopardize our own unity by an appeal to emergency."  "All of us want unity", he says, "but it must be real and not a federation based on ambiguities."

In 1944 in an attempt to deal with the realities of war-necessitated rationing, the Synod again met in the central location — Galesburg. Bishop Essex commends the people for their perseverance in the midst of War.  He was especially delighted that, in an appeal that every communicant gives $1 to the Endowment Fund, $1,197.60 had been donated.

In 1945 the Synod met in Rock Island and the Bishop was excited about the prospect of World Peace.  In particular he asked the Diocese to find ways in which returning servicemen could be incorporated into churches and communities and receive training in order to receive better jobs.  The Bishop concluded that one dream was realized -- over 4,000 communicants in the Diocese.

The Cathedral Church of St. John hosted the 1946 postwar Synod and the Bishop indicated that it was time to move on in our mission.  "Now let us pray and work particularly for spiritual growth, and the fulfillment of vocation."  Bishop Essex was thrilled to have a new Church building for St. Peter's in Canton, and to see that St. Thomas' Church, Bushnell, had, as he said, "risen from the dead".  He was also happy to announce that through the efforts of Mr. Godfrey Luthy and Mr. Murray Baker, both of Peoria, that Zion Church, Brimfield, would be rededicated.  As an example of his enthusiasm. to incorporate returning servicemen, Bishop Essex announced that Fr. Francis Campbell Gray, son the late Bishop of Northern Indiana, had returned from the Philippines after having been a captive, to be curate at St. Paul's Parish in Peoria.

At St. John's Church, Kewanee, in 1947 the tone of the Bishop's Addresses changed.  He noted that in "1878 one year after we became the Diocese of Quincy, we had 1122 communicants.  But there were 129 teachers and 858 scholars in our Sunday Schools, three hundred more than we have today."  He went on to discuss the realities of demographic shifts.  He quoted Bishop Fawcett, and noted his frustration in the decline.  He also noted that he was concerned about whether he could continue as both Rector of St. Paul's Parish, Peoria and Bishop of the Diocese.

The Diocese was now seventy years old, and Bishop Essex said, "our Diocese of Quincy has reached an age beyond which few of us live upon the Earth, three score and ten."  Bishop Essex was showing some signs of discouragement.

In 1948, at St. Paul's Parish in Peoria, the Bishop told us that he fears that some churches will be closed, and that he is having difficulty finding young priests to fill vacancies.  In his brief Address he once again lamented the fact that he could not be a full-time Diocesan Bishop.

At Christ Church, Moline, in 1949 Bishop Essex reminded everyone that it was thirteen years ago in Moline that he had been chosen to be Bishop.  After thanking everyone for the economic advances realized by their generosity, he said "If we have gone forward, and I think we have, it is due to our release from parochialism."  "This is only another word for narrowness or localism," he says. "Man cannot live in seclusion; neither can a parish or mission.  God pity us if we have lost all interest in what lies on the other side of the wall.  For beyond it is found adventure and widening service, a new heart, a quickened spirit."  He then tells us that the Diocese is the most basic unit of the Church, and that we are all connected through our Bishop.

He has a concern though.  "Sometimes I wonder why we think that our times are unique. We speak of modern sins, when they are only very old sins in other clothing.  We look at the Church and conclude that never before was there so much indifference.  Yet, one hundred years ago, I find Bishop Philander Chase complaining against speculation and worldliness, intemperance, coarseness, and profanity.  Our country seems to be forgetting God, he says.  "But here is his main point and one of the strongest yet made in his address: "Everywhere and always, in your parish and in others, the hardest task of the Church, is not to get people started on the way, but to persevere.  No one should begin the journey unless he knows the conditions of the soul's welfare and where to find the armor and the food.  If we can raise up a people, bound by a fine oath to the crucified, grounded in the Faith, linked to the Church by ties of intelligent affection, never esteeming lightly the words "unto my life's end," there will be no more backsliding, and very few lapsed communicants. He also proclaimed that Whitsunday, 1949, which was the 400th Anniversary of the Book of Common Prayer, would be a day when the 1549 Liturgy would be used in all Churches in the Diocese for the Main Mass.  He also said "I must not say much about Canton.  My name is so associated with it (the new building) that people call Canton my 'pet project' and me a confirmed beggar."

Then, the big announcement came -- he had resigned as Rector of St. Paul's parish, and was able to do so by virtue of generous gifts from certain of the laity.  He was excited to be able to devote his full attention to the Diocese, and now also the Church outside the Diocese, for he indicated a need to be involved in wider Church endeavors.  He would, however, continue to live in Peoria.

Galesburg helped the Diocese celebrate the new decade, and the 50's were upon us.  A new vigor seems to be evident in the Bishop's address and less space is given to financial concerns, while more is given to spiritual concerns -- His ongoing concern about parochialism, however, is expressed and he likens parochialism to the dangers of individualism and the concept of individual salvation apart from the Church -- the Body of Christ.  He tells us that the Diocese must be seen as God's Family.  He says, "I find it difficult to appraise Churchmen who will give almost anything to their own parish, but turn a deaf ear to the needs beyond. And this is true of many people in our Diocese whom I like, who seem also to care for me."  He then cites several churches which he feels could benefit from the generosity of people from other parishes.

In Rock Island in 1951, the Bishop tells us that in fifteen years he realizes he has sounded like a fund raiser, and that some people wish that he would stop talking about finances.  This is the first time, however, that he uses in an address the word "tithe."  He offers it as more than a commendation.  He says "It was a practice having God's sanction and command.  And wherever tithing is adopted, no Church or Mission is in want."  Evangelism as a term is first used by the Bishop in his 1951 address.  He quotes John Hulton, "It is always easy to do a fine thing after we have broken the wretched bond of our own inertia."  Bishop Essex tells us that no church will grow where there is "irregular attendance, listless singing, lack of spiritual expectation, and gloomy respectability."  He noted that "somewhere along the line we have lost one thousand two hundred and fifty-seven communicants in fifteen years and that Is over 25% of our present strength.  Do you wonder at my appeal for greater devotion to our simple duties as Churchmen and for greater zeal in bringing in the "other sheep which are of this fold?"  He again bragged about Canton -- 85 communicants and 153 Baptized members.  He said, "I still plead for more Crusaders."

The Cathedral Church of St. John hosted the 1952 Synod, which was the 75th Annual Synod of the Diocese.  There were 15 resident priests, 5 non-parochial priests, and licensed.  There were also 14 parishes, 17 missions, and 5 unorganized missions.  The Presiding Bishop, the Rt. Revd. Henry Knox Sherrill, was present and spoke.

In an attempt to characterize the Diocese of Quincy for the benefit of the Presiding Bishop, Bishop Essex again raises the issue of evangelism and the issue of demographic shifts.  He says, "there is a constant loss of our young men and women from town and country to the larger cities.  Thousands live in our Diocese who have come from many lands and with religious backgrounds different from ours.  The stability and restraint and dignity of the Episcopal Church have to wait, in a region which is not yet in love with established tradition and gentle authority.  I say these things not to soften our consciences, but to summon us to greater effort."  He goes on to tell us of the advantages of being traditional Catholic Christians by being linked to the Apostles, and shows great concern for what he sees as a beginning of moral decline.  He says "The great verities will be lost unless we have the mind and heart and will of the Lord Christ."  And yes -- he was excited about Canton.  In fact, over 400 people attended a Mass in honor of his 15th anniversary as Bishop, and he was given a purse of $5,161.29.  From that, he paid the debt remaining on St. Peter's Church -- $3,147.48.  A month later he consecrated the new building.  He concluded by quoting Dwight Moody, "Let God have your life: He can do more with it than you can."

Kewanee hosted the Synod in 1953, and the Bishop noted the necessity of placing a "constant emphasis upon genuine spirituality."  He tells us that "when the God of our Fathers is real to us, when worship, kissing the hand to a leader and master, is as natural as the breath we breathe, when the altar is our secret source of spiritual refreshment, when the Church is not patronized as a restraining asset to the community but is humbly loved as the shrine of God's promised presence, then we have a rock on which to build." We must also be intentional in evangelism, and "have greater faith in human possibilities."  The Bishop says that faith in Christians is important, for after His resurrection Jesus "waited a whole week for one man."  It was evident that some economic space and being a full-time Diocesan were agreeing with the Bishop.

In 1954 in Peoria, the Bishop continued in his theme of evangelism, but this time addresses the issue of conversion.  He tells us, "Perhaps it is trite to say that no man can be a Christian by himself alone.  It is true that our faith must be personal before it is corporate.  Conversion precedes our common salvation.  But "spaciousness and power" come to us in the fellowship of the Gospel.  In communion with others, we learn the virtues of sympathy, cooperation, self-effacement, shared joys, shared sorrows, mutual hopes.  There is a majesty, arresting and unmistakable in Jesus Christ.  The very gates of death shall not imprison the Church.  The field is the world; go into all of it and make disciples."

The Bishop concludes by saying that he is finally seeing signs indicating that "we have left behind the blight of parochialism." He noted that, in a daring venture, St. Paul's Parish in Peoria has purchased "a fine piece of land and expects, in the future" to build.

In Moline in 1955 Bishop Essex made it clear that some tensions were evident in the Church.  "To accomplish anything for the Church," he said, "We must walk together and be agreed.  Certainly, we are doomed to small and transient enterprises, having everything, perhaps, but God and spiritual power, unless we give ourselves to the deep, abiding things that permanently matter.  My conviction is that we talk too much about the so-styled "tensions" in the Church.  A "tension" can mean intensity of feeling or a condition of strained relation.  No matter how much we claim to be of a Catholic spirit, which means to be broadly sympathetic, liberal, and tolerant, we are guilty of hypocrisy if we fail to be so in attitude and action.  The offensive thing about prejudiced partisanship in the Church is its disruptive and exclusive influence.  For God's sake, let us not unchurch those whose tastes and preferences differ from our own.  Cocksureness has never been a trait of the Anglican Communion.  This does not mean infidelity to the Creeds of Catholic Christendom, but that only God knows all things, and He is a God who hides himself from our full vision."

"Your witness and mine, to the good news of God in Christ, can be effective only if it is our personal possession.  It cannot be ours by hearsay."  It is noted that in 1954 he confirmed in 2 other Dioceses on 4 occasions, confirming 957 and receiving 48.

Grace Church, Galesburg, hosted the 1956 Synod, and the Bishop was excited to report that "during my term as Bishop, we have grown from 3677 to 4944 communicants, an increase of 33%.  This is no reason for self-satisfaction, for it means that we have less than 1% of the population.  If every Church in the Diocese had added five members a year to every one hundred communicants, we should now have 7,300 enrolled.  Just what the remedy is I am not sure.  But certainly, we need more soul-winners, clerical and lay."

He concluded by saying, "with a faith forever new, let us follow the King, believing that “the finest thing a man can do with his life is to give it away."

In May of 1957 at Trinity, Rock Island, Bishop Essex announced that "in February 1958 I shall reach, God willing, the age when all of our Bishops must retire, and resign their jurisdictions.  Such resignation becomes effective three months later.  Therefore, within the coming twelve months, our Diocese will elect a new Bishop of Quincy.  He should be consecrated in time to attend the Lambeth Conference in the Summer of next year, and also represent us at the General Convention in the early fall."

His charge for the future was clear, and he summarizes it by saying, "I thank God that this Church teaches us that we are not to maintain anything as necessary to eternal salvation unless it can be concluded and proved by the Holy Scripture."

May 1958 at his Cathedral in Quincy was an emotional and tearful event for Bishop Essex and his beloved Diocese. It was also his briefest Address.

He tells us “Tomorrow will be my last day as your Bishop. There is little of great moment to say except to give you my loving gratitude for all your kindnesses, your affection, your sacrifice."

He goes on to say, "I trust that my Episcopate will not be viewed, in the future, as the passing of an era. For I believe the principles we have acted upon are basic and right.  Among these I place a deep devotion to God, unwavering loyalty to the ancient faith as this Church has received it; the sacramental life which recognizes our finiteness and our involvement in a material world and hence God's condescension in living our life and speaking to us through his Son, so truly human, so fully divine, and using common place, touchable things, such as water and bread and wine to bless us."

"Our emphasis has been, not upon Sacraments alone, but upon the equally important ministry of the Word.  A weak and listless pulpit means a deserted altar, without meaning and without power.  We must not be so ecclesiastical as to fail to be evangelical.  Nor should we be so evangelical as to make our Christianity only the narrow lifeless belief in private judgment.  To serve is to reign.  Everything is possible in the power of His grace."

At a special Synod convened earlier that year -- February 12, 1958, in Galesburg nine names were put forward for election as the Fifth Bishop of Quincy.  On the second ballot, the Reverend Daniel Corrigan was elected.  It was then announced that Fr. Corrigan had also been elected some hours earlier as Suffragan Bishop of Colorado.  Fr. Corrigan declined his call to Quincy, and Bishop Essex, with the advice and consent of the Standing Committee, not wishing to have a Lenten election, waited until the regularly scheduled Synod to be held in May.

On Wednesday, May 7, 1958, the Reverend Francis William Lickfield, Rector of the Church of the Redeemer, Chicago, Illinois, was elected to be the Fifth Bishop of the Diocese of Quincy.  There were 8 parishes, 7 aided parishes, 18 missions, and 5 unorganized missions with 5,132 communicants.  Bishop Essex confirmed 180 that year, and, on February 26,1959, the Lord called home His faithful servant and apostle, William Leopold Essex.  His remains are interred at Christ Church, Limestone. May he rest in peace.

As we ponder the thought provoking and insightful words of Bishop Essex, I suspect that, we discover several obvious facts: \*He loved the Lord and His Church \*He made many sacrifices as Bishop of Quincy \*He had a desire for growth through conversion and evangelism \*He saw great danger in parochialism \*He saw complacency and apathy as part of the death process \*He was convinced that more emphasis needed to be placed on preparation for Confirmation \*He believed that clergy and laity must be partners in evangelism \*He saw spirituality as the means towards being united with Christ -- to have the mind of Christ -- in order to implement God's vision for the Diocese.

It would be impossible to fault or disagree with any of Bishop Essex's points.  And yet, as is popularly said, "the more things change, the more they remain the same."  In many ways the words of Bishop Essex are as true today as they were before.  Looking at the words of our previous bishops is not an historical exercise, nor a walk down memory lane.  Looking at these words is to see what God has been calling us to do and to be for all of our history.  The only loss we realize is when we fail to heed prophetic words.  We believe that God speaks through his servants, and as Catholic Christians we believe that God speaks through His Bishops.

I am absolutely convinced, as I have stated in the past, that we must deal with the basics of the Faith.  Not to grow is to die -- perhaps slowly -- but it is to die.

Our Patron St. Paul was a missionary, a missionary who took risks and who presented unpopular demands for the sake of the Gospel.  In all matters, though, St. Paul was rooted in Prayer.

I, therefore, call this Diocese and this Synod to a solid year of prayer to ask God's direction for the Diocese of Quincy as we seek to take seriously the words of Bishop Essex to grow.

In the past I have set goals, and we have passed Synod Resolutions based on the Address, related to stewardship, growth, and Evangelism

I must make clear what you already know: absolute reliance on the Lord Jesus Christ is essential, and this is done through serious prayer.  Any plan, program, or seminar that is not grounded in prayer is destined to fail.

I, therefore, designate this coming year, our final year of the millennium, as a Year of Prayer, and I shall distribute to every communicant in this Diocese a prayer which I will ask each of us to pray every single day in private and every time we gather for corporate prayer at Mass and at Divine Office.  God cannot bless us with growth unless our spiritual gardens have been tilled and His seeds have been planted.

What I am asking is quite simple and yet quite complex.  It is an admonition to each of us to go before the throne of God and beseech His mercy, that we may be ready to receive not only His Vision for growth, but also the people whom He will call to join us.  Before we can receive new people, we must first be prepared to open our hearts and our arms to Him.  Does prayer work?  Doesn't God already know?  Can we change God's mind?

I conclude with a story about the Skyline Wesleyan Church in San Diego, California. This story goes to the very heart of what I am trying to say. It was through prayer that a successful Pastor and His Church narrowly averted a major mistake.  The book *The Prayer Shield* written by C. Peter Wagner tells the story.

For several years under the Pastor's leadership, God blessed the Church with substantial growth.  They outgrew their facilities.  Finding a new site large enough for their bold, God-given vision for the future was no easy task in greater San Diego.  They needed 100 acres, and Real Estate agents said such property was not available.

The Pastor had 100 from his Church who are committed to pray for him and these prayer warriors prayed that the leadership would make the right decision.  Month after month went by.  Then a breakthrough came!  A 50-acre piece of prime real estate located right on the freeway became available.  A $2 million offer was made and accepted.  All the Board needed to do was to present the plan to the Congregation.  But the Pastor, as sure as he was that it was right, felt that they needed to make sure they had prayed enough.  So, the Pastor and his 100 prayer partners went to the property and prayed again.  After much prayer -- just one day before the crucial congregational meeting — the Pastor and his 100 prayer partners began to get a strange feeling — first individually and then collectively -- they heard God say "this is not your site."

From a business and financial point of view it was right.  But the Lord was clear.  The Church withdrew its offer.  The Pastor assured the congregation that if God was really telling them not to buy the property, it was because He had something much better for them.

The search was begun again.  They found 80 acres and asked the owners twice to sell, but were turned down.  The praying continued.  But the owners realized a financial crunch and considered the possibility of selling the 80 acres.  But the owners also insisted on some fine print: if the Church couldn't get the land zoned for a Church, they would not agree to sell the land but would return the land and also pay the owners interest on the amount the Church had spent.

The Church closed the deal only to discover that the true value of the land was $4.5 million.  The church was also forced to buy three times the number of shares of water rights than necessary and they paid $120,000 for them.  But drought set in, the value of the water rights soared, and the owners begged them to sell two-thirds of the right back.  By that time the two-thirds were worth $250,000, and the Church persuaded the owners to rescind the clause that they would have to give back the property if it were not zoned for their use. So, God gave them the property for the price they had offered with no fine print along with an extra $130,000.  But it doesn't end there.  They had the 80 acres surveyed and found that the land was really 110 acres.  Then the Water District needed 10 acres of the low part of the land and offered to trade 30 acres at the top, right where the Pastor had envisioned the parking lot for the 10.  Now they had 130 acres.  Finally, they were offered $4 million for a stretch of industrially zoned land, which they did not need for the Church anyway.  The Skyline Wesleyan Church now has a lovely Church site worth more than $10 million, for which they ended up not paying a thing.

In the course of this Synod and in the course of this year let us remember that before we plan, before we vote, before we act, let us pray.

"For it is true that people give, only when they care and they care only when they love," and that hearts can only change when they are grounded in the love of Jesus Christ.

In the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit.  Amen.

***+Keith Quinciencis VIII***

The Sixth Address of the Eighth Bishop of Quincy

***The Right Rev. Keith L. Ackerman, SSC***

to the 122nd Synod of the Diocese of Quincy  
at Grace Church, Galesburg, Illinois

October 15, 1999

***"Rebuild my Church"***

In the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit. Amen

"Francis, rebuild my Church!" In the year 1205 in the city of Assisi, Italy, an idealistic young man who was nicknamed "Francis" was at prayer in the church of San Damiano. It was an unusual church in some ways, and it reflected the Byzantine influence once realized in Italy. In fact, the Altar Cross directly reflected that influence, and is quite unlike the type of Crucifix which one would expect to find in Italy. The church was in great disrepair, and yet in a mystical moment, young Francis heard the voice of Christ coming from the Cross, "Francis! Rebuild my church, for as you can see, it is falling down." Certainly, Francis, an idealist who even had an attempt at the Crusades, was also a type of literalist. He was told to rebuild, and obviously the Church of San Damiano needed to be rebuilt.

In the year 1958, the Diocese of Quincy was at a crossroads. Our beloved Bishop Essex had given every ounce of his energy to guarantee a future for our Diocese. He had served both as Rector of St. Paul’s Church in Peoria and also as the Fourth Bishop of Quincy. On February 8, 1958, Bishop Essex reached the mandatory retirement age, and a new Bishop was to assume his duties as the Fifth Bishop. At a special Synod held here at Grace Church on February 12, 1958, nine names were placed in nomination. On the second ballot, the Rev. Daniel Corrigan of Minnesota was elected.

An announcement was then made by Fr. Gordon Gillett, President of the Standing Committee, that Fr. Corrigan was known to have been elected unanimously as the Suffragan Bishop of Colorado just hours earlier! Fr. Corrigan declined the election in Quincy, and accepted the election in Colorado. The Standing Committee requested Bishop Essex not to call a special Synod during Lent, but to wait until the regular Synod to be held at the Cathedral Church of St. John in Quincy in May.

At the Eighty-First Synod on Saturday morning, May 7, the Rev. Francis William Lickfield, Rector of the Church of the Redeemer in Chicago, was unanimously elected Fifth Bishop of Quincy. One week later, he accepted his election. At a meeting with the clergy on May 25, 1958, at the University Club in Peoria, the Bishop-elect announced that he planned to make his residence in Quincy.

Francis William Lickfield was born in Philadelphia, PA., on February 9, 1908, to Francis William and Mary Agnes Desmond Lickfield. He graduated from Temple University and the Philadelphia Divinity School. Ordained to the Diaconate and the Priesthood in 1933, he married Josephine Mondella of New York City in 1934. The couple was blessed with the births of Marilyn and Francis William III.

Fr. Lickfield distinguished himself as a parish priest, serving first as a Chaplain at the House of Refuge in New York City, a state reformatory for boys, and later in several Pennsylvania parishes. For seven years, he served as Archdeacon of the Diocese of Harrisburg, in Pennsylvania*,* before returning to New York City for two years. After three years as Rector of St. Matthias Church in Waukesha, WI, he became Rector of the Church of the Redeemer in Chicago, succeeding the Very Revd. Edward S. White, who had become Dean of Nashotah House.

On September 20, 1958, Fr. Lickfield was consecrated. In his first address, delivered at Evensong, Rogation Tuesday, May 5, 1959, at St. John’s Church in Kewanee, he describes his consecration as follows: "One full year has gone by since you gathered before and under God elected me to be your Bishop. Then came that great day, September 20, when ten Bishops of the Church of God laid hands on me and I became a successor to the Apostles, and despite the glory of it, all suddenly seemed right. Then I was immediately catapulted into the whirlpool of General Convention, and for a while all didn’t seem so right!" He went on to say that he soon ordained Father Lewis Payne to the priesthood at Trinity Church, Rock Island, and then after two months, he confirmed his first person. She was Vallie Mason, the daughter of Father and Mrs. Mason of St. John’s, Preemption.

Soon a major sadness was realized as on February 26, 1959, our beloved Bishop Essex died. Bp. Lickfield was particularly pleased to announce that a fund for assisting seminarians had been established in the name of Bishop Essex. Bp. Lickfield was thrilled to announce that 1958 had been a good year: "249 new Communicants were made by Confirmation and Reception," he said,"169 presented to Bp. Essex and 80 to me." The Bishop went on to say that he was looking forward to the upcoming ordination of Seminarian Donald Langstraat.

At this, his first Synod, Bishop Lickfield also placed "the Diocese of Quincy under the patronage of St. Paul, Apostle, Missionary, Martyr." His reasons were clear: he wanted to emphasize St. Paul’s missionary zeal and enthusiasm. He stated his first vision for the Diocese, "I have a vision of a group of priests in this Diocese someday living together in some central place and going up and down the Diocese as Paul and Barnabas and Timothy did where they lived, encouraging and strengthening our little Missions, perhaps enkindling them to be strong. I think this might be called the Community of St. Paul, although not under monastic vows unless that should come. But for all that we shall have to say many prayers and bide our time." He went on to establish the Missioners of St. Paul, organized with the intention of praying for Mission and with the understanding that they would contribute $25 per year to assist in Mission work. He said that he envisioned 300 people responding to his call. He also established that year the Order of St. Paul that consist of recipients who would have received the St. Paul’s Award, an award bestowed upon those who had served their Diocese well. The First Award was bestowed upon Murray Baker of St. Paul’s Church, Peoria.

At the Synod, held May 1-2, 1960, at St. Paul’s Church in Peoria, Bp. Lickfield proudly announced that the idea of the missioners of St. Paul had caught on and that the 67 members, who pray the Collect of St. Paul on behalf of the Diocese each day, had contributed $1,430. The Bishop noted that although the Canons provided for Diocesan Council, it had never been implemented until this year. He requested that a study and Planning Committee look forward to instituting a capital fund drive. He was very happy to have established a School for the training of Lay Readers to be based in Moline, with the hopes of establishing one in Peoria. He was quite pleased to announce the formation of St. Francis Mission in Chillicothe, an establishment prompted by a Confirmation, which he had done in Kewanee. The parents of the boy had to travel from the Chillicothe area to Kewanee, and Bp. Lickfield responded by sending Fr. Howard Brummitt to implement the organization of the Mission.

The Bishop also noted that he had decided to change the Synod dates from two full workdays in the middle of the week to a Sunday and Monday with the Banquet being held on Monday. It troubled him that some people skipped the Banquet in the past. Bp. Lickfield took a dramatic step at this Synod by requiring a self-insured concept of health care for the clergy instead of paying an insurance company.

He decried the fact that the lovely and historical St. Mary’s Chapel in Knoxville was in such poor condition, as was the six acres of ground on which it was located. It would take $5,000 to maintain St. Mary’s, and yet this was not an item in the Budget, and would need to be found elsewhere.

His major point, however, was that the Diocese would have no financial difficulties if the people would tithe. He suggested that some of that tithe should go to the Diocese above what one would give to the parish. He concluded by saying "As a chain is only as strong as its weakest link, so a diocese is only as strong as its weakest mission." He went on to say "we may be living in a dying civilization, much of our public morality points in that direction: the status seeking, the primacy of money, the degeneracy of education, the rationalization of divorce, the old heresies dressed in modern clothing. But the Church will stand, perhaps a smaller one, perhaps a purged one. Surely 'now is high time to awake out of sleep,' to quote St. Paul in another context. 'For if the trumpet gives an uncertain sound, who shall prepare himself to the battle?' "

At the Synod held on May 7 and 8, 1961, at St. Mary’s Chapel in Knoxville, Bp. Lickfield called the Diocese of Quincy "our immediate family". He spent a great deal of time stating the necessity of having belief in the Catholic Christian faith. He said that this Faith "is not a set of propositions to be explained, but rather it is itself the explanation of all life." The problem today, he tells us, is that far too many people are rejecting the Truth. He said, "we need to recapture our sanity, which means putting things in their proper perspective. The Christian Faith cannot be taught, it must be learned and lived."

The Bishop indicated that this year was a critical one – both in terms of finances and also in terms of the site where he was delivering this address, namely St. Mary’s in Knoxville. He said, "it is my hope to make [this chapel] the ~~life~~ center of the Diocese. I have had some difficulty communicating the conviction I have that the Diocese has no form and that we need such. Gradually, however, more of you are agreeing at least with our basic principle. We have this lovely Chapel and this considerable piece of land literally in the midst of the Diocese. There are many possible alternatives for its use. We are meeting here in order that you may see it, and seeing, may catch the vision if vision it be.".

The Bishop was passionate about the need for a Diocesan Center, and in his mind, St. Mary’s, Knoxville was the place.

In 1962 at Christ Church, Moline, Master of Ceremonies, Fr. Theron Hughes, ably assisted the Bishop at Solemn Evensong and Pontifical High Mass. The Synod was convened at 3:30 p.m. on Sunday. Monday began at 7:00 o'clock a.m. with Morning Prayer, with the Mass at 7:15 a.m. Bp. Lickfield in his address noted that there were 4,249 communicants in 1961, and 1,492 church school pupils. He sadly noted that the church school enrollment was 320 lower this year than last. He was happy to have confirmed and received 261 people. He was happy to announce that all but three churches had paid their assessments in full. He seemed a bit sad that more people hadn’t joined the Missioners of St. Paul and that only $815 had been given that year.

The big news was that the Bishop realized that living in Quincy was a problem for him since the center of the Diocese is much farther north. After having lived in Quincy for four years in what he termed "a town second to none in its beauty and charm," nonetheless he knew he must move. He hated to leave the house on Maine Street for it "leaves nothing to be desired in the way of comfort and of space, both for our Diocesan offices and Chapel. The Cathedral people as well as the townspeople have treated us as their very own family."

The Bishop initially wanted to make St. Mary’s, Knoxville, the Diocesan Center. As he said, " a place ease of access, where diocesan meetings of all kinds could be held in a place where the Diocese and the Diocesan Bishop could function by their own rights and not as guests." The Diocese did not support a capital fund drive for this endeavor; thus, an agreement was reached. The Bishop would move to Peoria, St. Paul’s Church would become the Cathedral, with the Parish By-Laws reflecting that change, and the Cathedral Church of St. John would become a Parish Church.

Thus, on the following day, by vote of Synod, St. Paul’s Church was officially renamed as "The Cathedral Church of St. Paul", but the Diocese would continue to be known as the Diocese of Quincy.

The Bishop concluded by saying that Ecumenism is essential, and that fellowship with other Anglicans, the Old Catholics, the Eastern Orthodox, and the Roman Catholics was consistent with the Archbishop of Canterbury’s reminder that "we have no faith but the Catholic Faith."

At the Synod held in May of 1963 at Trinity Church, Rock Island, the Bishop proudly introduced as speaker the Rev. Canon Albert J. DuBois, Executive Director of the American Church Union. Fr. Wayne Johnson did a superb job as toastmaster at the Banquet.

The Bishop proclaimed the year 1963 as our "year of Evangelism." As he put it, "this is a year when we shall try to learn to do better that which we must never cease from doing."

He noted with great sadness that having just ordained the Reverend Gene Cox to the priesthood on June 16, 1962, he had the sad task of celebrating Fr. Cox’s Requiem Mass on November 9. He noted that Fr. Cox had been an exceptional Chaplain at the Galesburg State Research Hospital and that the institution had "named and dedicated" the Chapel in his memory.

The Bishop noted the chore of rewriting the Constitution and Canons, but he hoped that once completed it would be many years before it would have to be done again.

But Bp. Lickfield stated that he was disturbed greatly, since he had only 146 Confirmations and Receptions in 1962, compared to 261 for 1961. He said, "I find this completely incomprehensible unless it means that clergy and laity alike are witnessing and working far below their ability."

He was saddened to say that there were only 38 people in the Missioners of St. Paul.

He proposed three experiments:

(1)  A Cathedral Day where everyone would gather at the Cathedral Church of St. Paul in Peoria for an all-day celebration and Education Day

(2)  Placing a full-time priest in Monmouth who would also work diligently with the 80 Episcopalians at Monmouth College.   
(3)  Conduct a survey, which would do an internal evaluation of the diocese in order to plan for the future. He suggested that some defunct buildings should be sold and that new churches needed to be planted.

The Bishop claimed, however, that the most important thing he had to say this year was to state a policy that in the near future every parish and mission in the Diocese would have a parish school. He was thrilled to note that St. Paul’s Cathedral School already had nursery classes, Kindergarten, first grade, and a soon-to-be-started second grade.

He asserted that the Church is always in one or more of three positions. Either we are looking out on the world or are being looked in on by the world, or we are looking in on ourselves. He feared complacency, the latter, most of all.

The Bishop concluded by charging parishes to become more sensitive to racial issues, encouraging all churches by saying "are you strong enough in the Faith to welcome [African Americans] into your fellowship and completely disregard the color of their skin?"

At St. John’s in Quincy in 1964, Bp. Lickfield analyzed what he termed the "Five Year Plan" for strengthening the Diocese. He commended those who tried to make the Year of Evangelism a reality.

Confirmations were slightly up, the Missioners of St. Paul were down, and Galesburg had started a Parish School. The Bishop was thrilled to announce that the Sisters of the Holy Spirit would be sending sisters to the Cathedral School.

On May 23, Bp. Lickfield would be enthroned in the new Cathedral, in the context of the newly initiated "Cathedral Day." Bp. Lickfield was happy that the proposed Diocesan survey would soon take place. He also stated that henceforth Synod would be held on Fridays and Saturdays.

In a joint effort with the Dioceses of Chicago and Springfield, the Diocese of Quincy, according to the Bishop, would help fund a new Church in Morton, Illinois, to be known as All Saints.

And yes, now it was time for a Capital Fund Drive, after years of talking about it.

The Bishop felt that three Churches needed to be built almost immediately:

· One in Chillicothe

· One in another section in Peoria, and

· One in East Moline

He added that he would also like to see a new Church built "in the heart of the campus of the University of Western Illinois in Macomb." He also hoped that rooms would be added to smaller missions in order for Parish Schools to be started.

Finally, he wanted to "have a training program for our seminarians as they graduate." In short, he went on to say, he wanted aplace for young priests in the Diocese. In particular he wanted to underwrite a salary for five years for "an imaginative priest who would live in the slums of Peoria and minister to people there."

His concluding comments were poignant: "Now all of those things cost money, and any talk about commitment without considering money is pious nonsense. Remember that commitment means a promise or pledge to do something, an open declaration of faithfulness."

In 1965, at the Cathedral, the Bishop continued to analyze the five-year plan. "We have had a Year of Evangelism and a Year of Commitment, and now we have entered with prayer and work, and confidence a Biennium of Growth."

The Bishop was waiting for the results from the survey, which had finally begun, and soon he would appoint a committee to address the matter of funds.

He also said it was time to have women as delegates to Synod and for women to be able to serve on Vestries and Bishop’s Committees.

Speaking of leadership, the Bishop announced that the Sisters of the Holy Spirit were now in residence in Peoria. He also added that within ten years he hoped to have seven perpetual Deacons in the Diocese.

The Bishop was also happy to announce that Christ Church, Moline, and Trinity Church, Rock Island, had a joint committee which hoped to establish two missions in the Quad Cities. He also was happy that Trinity Church, Monmouth, had moved into a new building formerly owned by the Presbyterians, and that St. Stephen’s in Peoria had moved into the former St. Paul’s Lutheran Church. He concluded with a stirring charge: "Finally, my brethren, I charge you once again in the words of St. Paul, one of whose successors I am, that you forget what is behind you and reach out for that which lies ahead, that you continue in the forward look, priest and people alike, hand in hand. Dedicated Christians from the very beginning have been conservative in theology as revealed by Scripture and the Holy Spirit and most liberal as touching man."

The Bishop’s Address at the Synod of 1966 in Galesburg began with a further analysis of the Five-year Plan. He termed the growth "small but discernable." "There has been growth, not in numbers, but in the germination of many souls, barely above the ground as yet, of the seed of the Church’s vocation."

The Bishop was most happy to announce that "for the first time in many years, Grace Church, Galesburg, has become a self-supporting parish." He was equally pleased that St. John’s, Kewanee was once again self-supporting.

Bp. Lickfield was happy to announce that the Cathedral was "about to launch a drive for further facilities in order to provide Diocesan offices and to further its considerable work of education." The Diocese had given a sizable amount towards that endeavor -- the Diocesan wing.

The Missioners of St. Paul were steady at 31 people, and they gave $763 to be used in missions. He also was excited about the possibility of some sort of companion relationship with an overseas Diocese.

The Committee regarding the Capital Fund Drive was now beginning to meet. Bp. Lickfield said, "It has recognized the needs, but the timing is another question." A report would be given after another study.

Bp. Lickfield asked the Synod to move the meeting dates from May to October. For a variety of reasons, he believed this would serve the Diocese well. Thus the next Synod would be at St. John’s, Kewanee, on October 15 and 16, 1967.

Bp. Lickfield concluded with some stirring thoughts. "Things are not always good just because they are new. Nor are they necessarily true because they are new. There are today, strongly among us and very popular, four new things false: the new theology, the new morality, the new biology and the new statesmanship. The keynote of each one is: NO FAITH.

In the New Theology he condemned the current notion of "God is Dead Theology".

In the New Morality he condemned the notion that there are no absolute virtues – that sexual immorality is not wrong in and of itself.

In the New Biology, he condemned the notion of classism and racism, advanced by whites.

In the New Statesmanship, he condemned by implication the War in Vietnam.

Once again, he challenged all Episcopalians in the Diocese of Quincy to accept the notion of giving 10% of one’s income to the Lord as normative.

In 1963, at the Synod held at St. John’s, Kewanee, the keynote speaker was the Dean of Nashotah House, the Very Revd. Donald J. Parsons. All indications are that he was well received.

Bp. Lickfield began his address at the point where he had ended one year before. He said, "The time has come for the simple, earthy, undergirding of our work with money. There is a lot of it around and we need a lot of it." You guessed it: the Capital Fund Drive was almost ready to begin!

He noted that such drives had worked in all of our neighboring dioceses, but never in the Diocese of Quincy.

The Bishop offered an assessment of the Diocese, noting that it was partly fact and partly judgment. He noted that we fell short of what the General Convention had determined was normative for a Diocese in terms of the number of churches and the number of clergy. He indicated that as he began his tenth year as Bishop that this was "not a small Diocese but a weak one. It is that weakness that we are now determined to strengthen," he said.

He spoke with joy about the expansions at the Cathedral, at St. John’s, Quincy and the proposed new building for Grace Church, Galesburg.

He was delighted that Griggsville now had a vicarage and that St. Peter’s, Canton, now had a rectory. St. George’s, Macomb, now had "a piece of land close to the dormitories of Western Illinois University where it hopes someday to build a Church, but next to this land a house and more land may soon be available and if so, the diocese will put some funds there." Also, the Mission in East Moline was "still an infant but mighty vigorous." He thanked the "strong and mission-minded parishes at Rock Island and Moline" for their efforts in this endeavor.

The Bishop said that we are third from the bottom in communicant strength, and he stated that: "we need re-dedicated priests and more dedicated lay persons. Church buildings will follow, and for them we as a diocese must provide support. We need priests who will gather people and a diocese, which can help them to be strong. We need at least three more congregations in metropolitan Peoria, and at least one more in the Rock Island-Moline area. We need priests who will be roving missionaries, gathering scattered churchmen and others to worship in homes. We need laymen who will do this, having studied the Faith, for which we do have a Laymen’s School of Religion. We need to work and we need tools." He added, "to give strength to our determination, I hereby authorize a prayer to be said from now until the first of June at every occasion of public worship and as frequently as you will in your private devotions". The prayer reflected the Bishop’s concern about truth, unity and justice.

At the Synod of 1968, the Bishop’s Address and Evensong were at St. Stephen’s Church in Peoria, and Morning Prayer and the Synod Mass at St. Andrew’s, in Peoria.

The Bishop was obviously energized by his recent experience at the Lambeth Conference in England, and spoke about the three main themes of Faith, Ministry and Unity.

The Bishop was very proud of St. Mark’s in Silvis, but saddened by the departures of Dean Gillett and Father Hughes. He was thrilled that the United Thank Offering had given $18,000 to St. Paul’s Cathedral School. He also noted that now, since women could be delegates to Diocesan Synod, the "Diocesan Board of the Episcopal Church Women had voted itself out of existence."

He was looking forward to a proposal regarding the "sponsorship of low cost but good inner-city housing in Peoria." He also noted his endorsement of the "Trial Liturgies." As he said, "I think we can predict that the shape of the Trial Liturgy will be the shape it will take for the rest of our lives."

He stated that with a new Dean coming to the Cathedral, he had a new vision of what type of leadership role the Cathedral needed to have in the Diocese. It must be "a center for liturgical renewal, for drama, lectures, study groups, seminars and meetings of every kind, just as Coventry Cathedral exists in England".

The Bishop was excited to note that the Capital Fund Drive, called "The Advance Fund was a success in a financial way far beyond our expectation." He concluded by saying, "We all agree that we want to get and keep first rate clergy. We cannot do so at our present minimum salary of $5,000 per year plus housing and utilities. I hope consideration will be given to setting our minimum rate of $6,000 plus housing and utilities."

At St. Paul’s Cathedral in 1969, the Bishop once again addressed the War in Viet Nam and racism. He also suggested that changing the Constitution to have women as Delegates to Synod was a good thing, and this was its second reading.

Bp. Lickfield welcomed St. Christopher’s, Princeton as the "newest child" in the Diocese of Quincy.

He was disappointed by the fact that only 164 were Confirmed and Received.

The Synod of October 3, 1970, held at Holy Trinity Church, Geneseo, was markedly different from previous Synods. For a variety of reasons, it was a one-day Synod, which was a follow-up to a Diocesan weekend Conference on Mission.

People went to the Conference with fear, wondering which churches would be closed. It was clear that the Diocese was operating in many places in what some would call the "survival mode." I suggested to you in my 1994 address that this mode is below the "maintenance" mode, and the prevailing mood is one of fear – a mood that can permeate a church.

Bp. Lickfield in his address attempted to summarize what was learned at the conference.

In addition to addressing the need for serious evangelism, the Bishop once again addressed the matter of the need for serious stewardship. Once again, he noted that most of the problems in the Diocese were related to the poor level of giving, which he saw as indicative of low-level commitment.

He pointed out that there might need to be a radical way of reassessing the way in which we "yoke" missions and utilize clergy in our various communities. A Task Force on Ministry had been formed to "brainstorm," he said.

Bp. Lickfield noted that another special committee had been formed to offer a revision of the Constitution and Canons. One Hundred Ninety-eight were confirmed and received that year, with several confirmations being celebrated in the Bishop’s Chapel at the Episcopal Residence ~~in~~ at the Knolls.

At the Regular two-day Synod held at St. Paul’s Cathedral, October 15 and 16 in 1971, there was a new look to the Journal and the Synod was now called a "Convention".

The Bishop’s Annual Address was actually issued as a Pastoral Letter and had been read in all Churches in the Diocese the previous Sunday.

His opening theme was to stress the servant nature of all ministry. The newly re-named "Diocesan Executive Council" had created a "Department of Ministry" which would also function as the newly required "Commission on Ministry." The General Convention had just created the latter.

The Bishop noted that the Budget was tight due to necessary expenditures regarding missions. In his address he indicates that the Diocesan Council would address the matter of a need for "plans to respond to the increasing demands for missionary strategy and clergy placement."

Bp. Lickfield also indicated that "the Department of Program and Strategy is working to bring before each of our Churches the hard facts of long-range planning." In effect he tells us that it is time to think as a Diocese instead of thinking as individual congregations with only congregational goals. He goes on to say that he has a dream about the ideal shape of the Diocese. This shape includes a vision where there is no real difference between a parish and a mission, for both must be strongly missionary-oriented, with the stronger helping the weaker. He wishes that we called all congregations simply "churches" without distinction between a parish and a mission.

He says that in his vision "everyone is struggling to over-give for others." He sees an interchange of clergy in the diocese where clergy move around the diocese sharing their particular gifts for several months at a time.

He sees a team of clergy who may even live in one place and who go out to minister in a variety of places. He also sees, instead of Vestries, Chapters, and Bishop’s Committees, which meet to "discuss paying bills," Mission Committees, which meet once a week to "brainstorm their calling."

He said that he didn’t expect to see this in his time, but that he felt it would come when we begin "to think theologically".

He concluded by saying that most of the problems in our families, in our churches, in our Diocese, and in our world are due to the fact that we do not think theologically.

At the 95th Diocesan Convention held on October 13 and 14, 1972, at the Cathedral Church of St. Paul, it was clear that one matter was immediately on the mind of the Fifth Bishop of Quincy. He was ready to assist the Diocese in making a transition into receiving the Sixth Bishop of Quincy. He tells us, "On September the 28th of this year, I wrote a letter, as the Canons require, to the Presiding Bishop, in part as follows: "I hereby submit my resignation as Bishop of Quincy to take effect June 30, 1973. I am grateful to this Diocese for the growth and love it has given to me over the years, and now I think I can best reciprocate by turning my jurisdiction over to a new and younger bishop."

By that date Bp. Lickfield would have turned 65, been a priest for 40 years and a bishop for 15 years.

He also announced that Saturday, May the 5th, 1973 there would be a Special Convention at the Cathedral Church of St. Paul for the purpose of electing the Sixth Bishop of Quincy.

He went on to say that in his 15 years there had been 110 clergy changes, involving 49 priests. He had ordained 15, six of whom were still in the Diocese. He added that he had confirmed 2,479 people.

He charged the Diocese to "have a proper leader, one whom we are convinced will, despite all his human weaknesses, lead us in living worship, in love for people which is the only path to loving God, and in undiminished constancy in searching out and gathering in people of good will who will bring us to peace on earth."

As it related to the present, the Bishop said: "I do think we are weak in faith. Many of us claim faith and trust in God, yet have a larger investment in insurance and in other financial protections than in pledges to the Church. We really don’t seem to have any more faith than non-Christians in many ways." "Perhaps the greatest truth about God and man," he concluded, "is that God deals with us according to our openness. If we come to Him with a thimble, or a glass, or a tub, that is what we take away filled."

In 1973, Bishop and Josephine Lickfield moved to Massachusetts where for the next 25 years they enjoyed their children and grandchildren, never to return to Peoria. On December 14, 1997, the Fifth Bishop of Quincy departed this life, survived by his dear wife of 63 years, his children and his grandchildren. May he rest in Peace.

"Francis, rebuild my Church."

In the course of fifteen years, Bishop Francis William Lickfield placed before us several ongoing themes.

(1)  the necessity to grow   
(2)  the necessity to tithe.   
(3)  the necessity to have a vision   
(4)  the necessity to draw all people to the love of God in Christ Jesus   
(5)  the necessity to educate, and   
(6)  the necessity to expand in witness, faith, and vision.

Inherent in his Addresses towards the end were expressions of frustration and disappointment that many of these necessities were not realized. He never seemed to give up, but his later addresses were literally cries for a movement from apathy to enthusiasm, from complacency to action, and from a maintenance mode or a "business as usual" mode to a mission mode or a "by God’s Grace and for His sake" mode so that we can expand our vision, our purpose and His Kingdom.

Frustration and disappointment cause fatigue. In my many conversations with Bp. Lickfield over a four-year period, I gained many insights, but I also remember every conversation ending with an encouraging word from him, and a loving and memorable word from Mrs. Lickfield. Even in retirement, they prayed for all of us, that even now Bp. Lickfield’s vision for our Diocese might be realized.

I am convinced that we cannot operate in a "business as usual mode." This will not serve God well, and it will not extend the Kingdom of God, but we must move beyond our comfort zone.

St. Francis of Assisi was called by God to move beyond his comfort zone. He was called to move out in Faith – to trust, to act, to encourage, and to rebuild. These, my friends, are Franciscan times.

As I have indicated, St. Francis was an idealist, and he believed that the Holy Scriptures were to be read with seriousness, as being the inspired Word of God. I also believe that similar traits are to be found in another Francis, who tried for 15 years to help rebuild the Church in this corner of God’s Kingdom.

I have been quite stunned in the last two years to hear the Presiding Bishop formally articulate two themes, which I have been preparing, through prayer, for nearly five years.

The first theme is the Theme of Rebuilding the Church, the Theme found in the Presiding Bishop’s inaugural Address. For this past year, each of us has prayed daily the Diocesan Prayer, which initiated a year of the Preparation of our hearts. In last year’s Address, I stated that this Diocese will never grow until we ask God to make it grow. I also indicated that it could not grow unless our hearts and our churches are actively and intentionally prepared to receive people.

Now, I ask us to move into the Franciscan theme. Since St. Francis was a literalist, he first thought that the words of Christ coming from this Cross*,* were instructions literally to rebuild San Damiano Church. Thus, St. Francis and his followers formeda rebuilding crew *--* who eventually expanded their efforts to place churches in "appropriate condition to give honor to God and to make the people of God feel welcome."

As I travel around our Diocese, I discover Churches which need a coat of paint or minor repairs but do not have enough people to do the task. Therefore, today I am forming a Franciscan Task Force which will be comprised of men and women of all ages who will receive invitations from missions and parishes to come for a day or two and assist in "rebuilding the Church." I have asked Dennis Brown of St. Peter's in Canton to chair this with me. This committee will be in place by Advent, but forms will soon be sent to each Church asking for information regarding the needs. With this Committee will be the initiation of phase one of this year’s theme, "Rebuild our Church."

The second theme presented by the Presiding Bishop, which I have been praying about for nearly five years, ever since I visited Jubilee College, is the Theme of Jubilee, which you have heard expressed in tonight’s readings at Solemn Evensong. The Presiding Bishop had indicated that materials are available to help Churches live out the implications of this theme.

Several concepts spring forth from the Biblical Theme of Jubilee, and as our year progresses, I will say more about it in my articles in *The Harvest Plain*. Jubilee means to set people free, to remove impossible burdens of debt that's unpaid, and to allow the land to lie fallow as it prepares for future growth. In concert with our Presiding Bishop, I proclaim this year, beginning with Advent, as a Jubilee Year in our Diocese, recalling us to our roots with Bishop Chase.

Bp. Lickfield was not the first one of our Bishops to address the problems of complacency and apathy and the lack of vision and necessary strategy essential for growth. If I confirmed one-half of the number which Bp. Lickfield confirmed – a number he saw as very low – this Diocese would experience a growth spurt.

Thus, the second theme of "Rebuild our Church" is the Jubilee concept. It is time to plan, expand, and step out in Faith, and forgive.

To be quite blunt -- we have the resources in our Diocese, but they simply have not been tapped. Many people in our Diocese die without remembering their parish or their Diocese in their wills. Many people in our Diocese contribute large amounts to charitable institutions. I fear that people still give as if it is a contribution to the Church instead of a life-giving tithe to Jesus Christ. This, my beloved, must change.

Years ago, a parishioner of mine told me that he was angry with me because I had cheated him. I was stunned – I would never knowingly cheat anyone. How had I cheated him? He told me that he had heard that my Discretionary fund was at a zero point, but that I had not asked him to help. Therefore, I had cheated him.

Beloved, tonight I will not cheat you. Tonight, I am asking you to respond. Let me tell you how.

Four years ago, I wanted to have a Capital Fund Drive. My reasons were very clear. Upon becoming your Bishop, I had the audacity to read all of the financial reports. I analyzed the investments, and I recognized the loss in assessment income due to the splitting of one church and the shrinkage of several others. I was asked to postpone such a Drive due to two churches, which were involved in their own drives. Quietly, I listened. I was encouraged to initiate a planned giving concept and Canon John Blossom, the Canon Missioner of our Diocese, unveiled the Philander Chase Fund. As of today, it remains a small fund.

Therefore, I have appointed an Ad Hoc Committee which will be charged with the task of presenting a comprehensive Jubilee Plan to the Diocesan Council by June of the year 2000.

This Plan will include several points:

A comprehensive ***Capital Fund Campaign***, which will include:

*-A reasonable and appropriate plan to raise money that will be realized in a relatively brief period of time.*

*-Within this fund, I will encourage a concept of matched giving for parish outreach programs, whereby the Diocesan Fund would modestly match an outreach plan, put together by a parish or mission, which would draw in those in need.*

*-I will ask the Committee to consider the possibility of endowing Mission work and/or the Episcopate.*

*-I will share dreams and hopes for expanding the Diocese by establishing Churches in places where there are people but no Episcopal presence.*

*-I will also ask this Committee to offer plans to reinforce our Philander Chase Fund with Canon Blossom and the endeavors related to it. Thus, we could meet short-term goals with one fund and ensure our future with the other.*

*-Finally, I will ask this Committee to work in concert with the Trustees of Funds and Properties to analyze the debts owed by parishes and missions to the Diocese. Quite frankly, some of these loans can never be repaid, and a wise and equitable plan needs to be in place to remove "the monkey" from the backs of churches in debt, however without offering a sense of irresponsibility in the process. Once again, this Diocese can only be as strong as her weakest mission.*

To be quite frank, if we had all tithed all along*,* just as Bishop Lickfield said, we would not be in this position today. As one person recently said to me, "we have some deep pockets, but some short arms."

I cannot end here, for while I am confident that this Committee, whom I will officially introduce and commission at this altar tomorrow, (and I'll introduce them then) will make excellent recommendations to Diocesan Council and that the Campaign will be successful, I must tell you the following:

In July, the Finance Committee showed me the proposed Budget, which included a $62,000 projected deficit for the year 2000. I was not surprised, because our Treasurer, Bob King, and I expected a deficit. Due to the reasons I have outlined, I saw this coming several years ago.

The old way, the easiest way is to take out the knife, and to begin to cut the budget. This is a type of way to avoid certain realities, but it is also a way to pull in our fences and to write the word "SURVIVAL MODE" in capital letters.

I immediately declined an increase in the proposed raise in my own stipend, and then after prayer, I let others know of our anticipated plight. Suddenly, by word of mouth, people stepped forward. One man humbly stepped forward and, while wishing to remain anonymous, offered to give $25,000 to the Diocese of Quincy for the year 2000 for the budget, if we could match it. Within one week, by word of mouth, we had over one-half of the $25,000 that was needed. I predicted that we would reach the $52,000 that we needed. I was wrong. It is now well over $58,000. We have exceeded the amount with most of the money and pledges coming from individuals and churches outside of our Diocese. The letters alone have brought tears to my eyes, and never have I felt such encouragement for our Diocese as I do now, with promises from others outside our Diocese to be some of the initial contributors to a Capital Funds Drive to the Diocese!

The money being given for 2000 is only a band-aid to allow us to initiate our campaign. We do not have the luxury of having endless meetings and some Bishop, 15 years or 25 years from now, reporting to you, just to see if it's a good idea. Its time is past due. But any plan will include a mission and a fiscal strategy, which will satisfy those of us who see the need for radical strategic mission planning, and those of us who have a conservative fiscal bent.

And so, beloved, I greet you with no fear, but with excitement for our future, because God is giving us another chance to honor where we have been, be faithful where we are, and to begin a new chapter with faith in Jesus Christ.

To be quite frank, most of the difficulties in our Diocese manifest themselves in financial ways. I can assure you that I have never served in a happier Diocese with a more devout group of people.

Beloved, if I may depart from this text which was printed — it won't be reflected [in the printed text] — I just love you from the bottom of my heart. I just can't imagine loving a Diocese more than I love you, because I cannot imagine being loved as much as you have loved me. And, therefore, the reason I'm not worried is because I look out Sunday after Sunday and I see the investments in this Diocese, and they are not in your pockets — they are in the pews. And the reason I believe we have a future is because I trust in the Lord Jesus Christ as my Savior and yours, not only to touch the hearts of the people of this Diocese, but because we have the size Diocese and the type of Diocese where we can be a family -- never mind all these resolutions and things that other Dioceses deal with -- we have in our midst a Diocese that knows how to love each other. And I ask that not one person ever come into this Diocese, not one person ever leave this Diocese, not one person ever serve this Diocese, not one person leave this Synod, without knowing how loved they really are -- by their Savior, by their Bishop, by their Priests, and by their parishes.

Now, as we allow God to use us in the Rebuilding process, may we be like St. Francis, who gave his all for the sake of the Gospel, and like Bp. Francis Lickfield, Fifth Bishop of Quincy, who called our Diocese into an awareness of those who are called for the sake of the Gospel. May *you* hear the words of Jesus.

This is a Jubilee. And may Scripture be fulfilled in our midst.

In the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit. Amen.

***+Keith Quinciencis***

The Seventh Address of the EighthBishop of Quincy

***The Right Reverend Keith L. Ackerman, SSC***  
to the 123 Synod of the Diocese of Quincy

at the Cathedral Church of St. Paul, Peoria

Jubilee Year

October 27, 2000

# *“This Year Shall Be unto You a Jubilee”*

There was an air of excitement and expectancy at St. Paul’s Cathedral on September 8, 1973.  It had been several months since Bishop Lickfield’s retirement and departure, and finally it was a day when the Dean of Nashotah House, the Very Reverend Donald James Parsons, would become the sixth Bishop of Quincy.  Added to the excitement was the fact that this would be the first Consecration of a bishop in the new Cathedral, and the Cathedral would be packed with former students of Dean Parsons.  In addition, the Cathedral Choir was augmented by the Nashotah House Seminarians.  One twenty-seven-year-old seminarian was particularly excited and had even strapped a cassette tape recorder around his waist, under his surplice.  That seminarian stands before you today!

Quincy would be contributing to the House of Bishops a gift – an authentic theologian trained in New Testament with a special emphasis in Pauline Theology, and also an Ascetical Theologian – the only Ascetical Theologian in the House of Bishops.

It was evident from his first address six weeks after his Consecration that Bishop Parsons would draw heavily upon his passion for the Apostle to the Gentiles, the Patron of our Diocese, St. Paul.

On October 26, 1973, at Grace Church, Galesburg, he began his first Diocesan address by telling us that he was “still in the process of becoming acquainted with the Diocese”, and thus, to attempt to offer a “state of the diocese message would be absurd.”  But he wasted no time in placing before our Diocese the poignant statement, “To be a Christian is to be an evangelist.”  He pointed out, “Episcopalians are not commonly regarded as aggressive evangelists, but our Lord has laid upon us the task of bringing others to accept Him as their Lord, and to find more abundant life by doing so.”

He says, “A sermon cannot be a whole handbook on how to be an evangelist, but it can deal with at least one part of the process.”  He pointed out that we are not comfortable in seeking “to bring others to Christ.”  As it relates to those with whom we try to share the Gospel, their question is clear “Why, what difference does it make whether I do or do not become a Christian and share in the life of Christ within His Church?”  But he went on to say, “If someone were to ask us that question, what answer would we give?”  He added, “I would suggest that before we seek to bring anyone to Christ, we need first to ask ourselves, “What difference does it make to me, that I am a Christian?”

The Bishop said that there were at least three reasons. “First, as a Christian, I am given the assurance that life has a purpose and a meaning.…  There is life after this one is over, a state of being with the Lord in eternity.  Because of that fact, life here on Earth has a meaning.  The persons we become here are the selves with which we will live in eternity with God.…It does make a difference to be a Christian, to know that life has a purpose and a point.”

“Second, as I go through the events of life, I am not alone — All around us, in every city or little town, are people whose lives are terribly lonely affairs, and some of the loneliest of all are persons who outwardly appear to be the most popular one in town. The Christian is given the assurance that he is not alone, and that makes a lot of difference.”

“Third, the Christian knows that even the worst experience of life can be turned to good by God’s mysterious action.”

Bishop Parsons quoted St. Paul three times in his Address, and concluded by saying that we can “face things in a different way” as Christians.  He said, “Here is part of my answer.  Let me urge you to make your own answer to the question, ‘What difference does it make that I am a Christian?’  Most of us shrink from the thought of speaking to someone else about Christ and His Church.  Yet our attitude will be changed when we see that being a Christian makes a difference.”  Thus, his fifteen years as Diocesan began with a call to us to be clear about our Faith as we seek to draw others to Christ.

At his second Diocesan Synod on St. Francis Day 1974, at St. Paul’s Cathedral, the Bishop began with the account in the Acts of the Apostles, which tells us that St. Paul and his companions were prevented by the Holy Spirit from going to Asia.  The Bishop pointed out, “It would appear that today there are some inconvenient and unwelcome facts of life which may be leading us in this diocese to look at things we would rather not examine.”

First, The Episcopal Advance Fund is just about exhausted — The second inconvenience,” he tells us, “Is inflation, a frightening and insidious threat.…The third inconvenient and unwelcome fact is the Clergy Study Plan.”

He believed that the Synod needed to adopt a proposal, which “only exposes a problem which existed before the (compensation) committee was formed almost two years ago”.  Clergy compensation was a problem he said and “we cannot make it go away by just pretending it does not exist”.

Bishop Parsons asked the Synod to do two things to help to correct some of the financial problems.  He asked that firstly there be a stewardship training program. He said, “I have obtained a $5,100 grant for such a stewardship training program, if we adopt the Clergy Compensation Plan and secondly, a clear-eyed examination of the way we should go about the work of the Church in this Diocese” was needed, in his opinion, particularly as it related to the number of committees and commissions. “Are we inviting frustration, overlapping, unnecessary loose ends, and wasted energy?” he asked.

He said, “I love those little churches, and I feel sure God does.  He claimed that the giving level was higher, the percentage of Sunday attendance higher, and the depth of involvement higher in our churches than many large parishes elsewhere.”  But in spite of it, he said, “facing the problem might lead us to a better way of working.” He suggested non-stipendiary priests, and encouraged us to explore many possibilities, such as “changes in the yoking of missions, a larger-parish type of program, the encouragement of worker-priest arrangements in one or two places, and allotting diocesan support in a fashion which gives priority to the areas where it is most deserved and will be most fruitful”.

He called for “planning and decision-making” and asked that we develop “clearer task-definitions from more efficient use of time and man-power, from more realistic expectations, and from a clearer understanding of what the priest can contribute and what a lay person can offer.”  He said, “Paul could not get to Bithynia, but he was led to Troas.  Perhaps we too may find our problems will lead us to a new vision of Christian work and witness in the field God has assigned to us.”

On October 17 in 1975, Bp. Parsons was ready to challenge the Synod held at Trinity Church, Rock Island by saying that “Almost every Christian has at some time felt that he would have been happier as a member of the Church in New Testament times.”  He said that this was “historically false.”

He tells us, “…two whole chapters of Second Corinthians deal with the collection for the poor in Jerusalem.”  He made it clear that we need to take care of the needs of others.  “Jesus teaches us that material concerns are not contrary to the spiritual, but are to be dealt with under the guidance of the Holy Spirit and thus made right.  The Son of God was laid in a manger, worked as a carpenter, touched lepers, fed the hungry, and paid taxes.  Therefore, it is right for us, indeed necessary for us, as Christians to care about the kind of things, which will concern us in this convention.”

He addressed the clergy salary plan and called for the creation of a Department of Diocesan Missions.  He said, “the more efficiently we can allocate the mission support funds of the diocese, the greater will be the possibility of having some flexibility in using financial strength for strategic advances.  In the near future it is likely that expanded facilities will be justified and required in some places, certainly in Silvis and very likely in Chillicothe, for example.”

He called us, also “to be concerned about the Church outside the Diocese” and commended the Presiding Bishop’s Fund for World Relief as one way of meeting the needs of people.  He concluded by saying, “I would urge that this year all of us in the Diocese place stress on the search for spiritual deepening and renewal.  Diocesan and parochial programs can help make us more ready to receive the riches of the Spirit.”

At the Cathedral on October 8, 1976, Bishop Parsons had just returned from General Convention and his Address expressed his concern about the Church.  He said, “The Church is a divine institution, not a human creation.”  “It does matter dreadfully,” he went on to say, “whether the Episcopal Church is inside or outside the catholic and apostolic Church of Christ.”

His concern about the various debates involved “the need for clear thinking about the principles of the Anglican tradition”.  He asked, “What does it mean to be an Anglican; what is distinctive about the Anglican way of understanding and loving the Christian Faith?  I believe we need a renewed effort in our congregations to help our people understand better what the Episcopal Church is all about, and I urge the priests of the Diocese to consider this matter most seriously,” he said.

Once again, the Bishop reminded us of the importance in being responsible as it relates to mission alignments and priest assignments.  He urged the Diocese to “make available to people the richness and the breadth and the balance of the Anglican approach to the worship and service of God.”  To this end he asked us “to concentrate more on ways in which the missions can be helped in renewal and evangelism”.  Bp. Parsons delighted in the fact that Quincy was “one of the pioneer dioceses in tackling (the) issue of clergy compensation”.

Finally, the Bishop announced that the Episcopal Church Center had called for a “Partners-in-Mission Consultation”; and that each “diocese will need to examine itself and to obtain the truest picture of where we are, of what we hope to achieve, of the tools we have for the task and ways to go about the task”.

The One Hundredth Session of Synod for the Diocese was held on October 21, 1977 at St. John’s in Quincy, where Bishop Parsons, in reflecting on our One Hundred years as a Diocese, focused on three points.  Succinctly put, he said “Primarily she has been the Church, doing the task of the Church.”  The main points are: proclaiming, healing, lives being renewed by the power of the Holy Spirit, and being “refreshed by that heavenly food and drink”.  He pointed out, “The real record of the church is written in the heavenly book of life and not in the archives of the local press.”  “Therefore, as we look ahead, we need to remember that our fundamental task is this old fashioned, but God-commanded one of believing, and then of helping others to be found by Christ, and to open their lives to Him, to be saved by Him.”

“Second,” he said, “the ministry is of the ordained servants of God.”  He discussed the population shifts of the hundred years and the negative effects on so many of our communities where churches have been closed.  This reality, he tells us, alters by necessity “the older ideal of a full-time priest in each small town.  May not a deacons’ training program be a significant unleashing of some special ministries?” he asks.

“Third”, he tells us, “Is the Diocese and the larger church.”  He spoke with joy of the work being done on the Medical Mission in Haiti.  “On the Day of Judgment,” he says, “I fear that I may have to answer some embarrassing questions about my activities as Bishop of Quincy, but I do not think the Haiti project will be one of them.  More important, it will not be one for you, either.”

Making reference to an “untimely spell of illness” he said that we were not quite ready to handle everything related to the Venture in Mission Program, but that we would make some “preliminary decisions.”  He hoped that the Venture would go well, but he said that he was “persuaded that the national leadership genuinely seeks not submission but mutual agreement and a common effort”.  He concluded by urging his flock to “worship the Father as Jesus did, to obey the Father as He obeyed”.

At the Synod in 1978 held at the Cathedral, the Bishop began with a quotation from II Corinthians, and then thematically started where he had left off in 1977 with the subject of Venture in Mission.  In effect, he was asking the Synod to approve the plan, but stressed that a positive response should be a result of the Pauline injunction, *“Each person should give as he has decided for himself; there should be no reluctance, no sense of compulsion; God loves a cheerful giver.”  (II Corinthians 9:7)*

The Bishop spoke about the major collection taken by St. Paul among the Gentiles to aid the believers in Jerusalem.  He noted, “Giving takes more than just one form.  Another kind of giving will be required if we adopt another recommendation.”  This recommendation would be a program for church growth.  He asserted, “Many Episcopalians are reluctant to talk to others about the Christian Faith and about sharing in the Church’s life.”  He went on to say, “Many of us have said, over and over again, that we wish our parish or mission would grow more.  Working at it and having it happen will require some giving.”  Bishop Parsons urged each church to make the Venture in Mission program available, “and that each congregation give it an honest hearing”.

He concluded by saying, “…it is not my business to tell you how to estimate (the elements of our burdens of money and energy.)  I believe it is my business, however, to suggest II Corinthians 9:8*, ‘And it is in God’s power to provide you richly with every good gift; Thus, you will have ample means in yourselves to meet each and every situation with enough and to spare for every good cause’.”*

At St. John’s in Quincy in 1979, a new concept had been suggested by the Diocesan Council, namely to have workshops on the Friday of Synod.  It was suggested that the Bishop have a charge delivered on Saturday morning instead of having a sermon at the Mass.  In effect it was to be a “State of the Diocese” address.  He pointed out that we were faced with either closing some “museums” or finding a more creative way of operating.  He chose the latter course.

He commended Father Blossom of St. Stephen’s, Peoria, Father Auffrey of St. John’s, Preemption, and Father Pierce of St. Jude’s, Tiskilwa, for “their sense of vocation” and for the way in which, as non-stipendiary priests, they “gracefully carry the special burdens and frustrations which come from time limitations and divided objects of attention”.  He also commended Father Enberg of St. Christopher’s, Princeton and Father Clanton of St. James, Griggsville for serving on partial salaries.  He noted that St. James, Griggsville, had presented twenty-four persons for Confirmation in one year alone.

The Bishop said that such new ways of doing ministry would require some adjustments.  “Before the priest did just about everything, whether by choice or by default.  Now the responsibility falls much more on the lay membership.  Above all, it became clearer that the task of bringing others into the life of the Church is in a great part a lay function.”  He said, “Creative arrangements have met the immediate problem, but we need even more imagination to realize the potential benefits of active lay-ministry in smaller congregations.”  He noted the growth at St. Francis, Chillicothe, and the creative work being done by Father O’Brien at St. George’s, Macomb, assisting Father Draper.

He said that a recent innovation was of having a joint meeting of the Missions which seek diocesan support.  These sessions, he felt, created an opportunity “to share ideas, to learn from something which one mission tried and found helpful, or even to discover why something did not work”.

He was very happy about the innovation of having a recently retired man, Fred Brooks, attend Seminary for one year and then be ordained to serve and learn “under Father Larson’s direction at Trinity Church, Rock Island”.  In addition, he announced the bequest of a generous legacy at St. John’s, Quincy, which made it possible for Father Bingham to be added to the staff.

Finally, he was very happy with the response to Venture in Mission which raised $100,000, to be divided between the Church in Haiti and the Fund for the Endowment of the Episcopate, with the former being a trust fund.  He especially commended St. John’s, Quincy, Christ Church, Moline, and Trinity Church, Rock Island, for their generous response to the appeal.  He said, “We are not left to struggle alone; for the Church is the Lord’s creation and not our own.”

At St. Christopher’s Church in Princeton, in 1980, the Bishop asked the question “What is a diocese anyway?”  He told us of how, “Down through the centuries the basic unit of the Church has been a diocese, not a single congregation, but a diocese.”  He said, “A diocese is a group of congregations whose clergy and people are joined with and by their bishop in the worship and service of the Lord.”

He then made it clear that the earliest model was a single Eucharist on Sunday, “attended by all the faithful, celebrated by the bishop surrounded by his college of presbyters and assisted by the deacons”.  He further stated, “A diocese then links together in one body all the believers in a given area.  It binds together groups of Christians in different parts of the city and those in the surrounding communities.  It reminds us that we are all part of a larger whole, just as the diocese exists only as a part of the universal Church of Christ from which we have received the Gospel of Salvation.”

He worried, however, about the “forces which divide us”, and reminded us of “St. Paul’s vivid image of the Church as the Body of Christ, of his reminder, *‘For Christ is like a single body with its many limbs and organs, which, many as they are, together make up one body’ (I Cor 12:12).*”

The Bishop was pleased with the Church Growth Project that six congregations were engaged in.  “A common enthusiasm is found in all of them, and they learn from one another,” he said.  He was especially grateful for the work being done in this venture by Father Lloyd Johnson of St. Peter’s, Canton.

He noted that in terms of Venture in Mission, St. John’s, Quincy, Christ Church, Moline, and Trinity, Rock Island, had “guaranteed their full shares.”   Three missions also were commended, namely St. Andrew’s, Peoria, St. Christopher’s, Princeton, and St. James, Griggsville.

Bishop Parsons indicated that the city of Peoria was changing, and that St. Stephen’s would soon be forced to make a decision regarding its future.  He thanked Father Johnson for working with Father Blossom and the people of St. Stephen’s, as they attempted to discern what God would have them do.

He was also quite pleased with the progress being made in Chillicothe and Henry as both missions continued to grow.  In particular he was pleased that the Diocese had purchased a vicarage for St. Francis, Chillicothe.

He concludes by telling us that he can understand that, “Our local congregation burdens are so pressing that it is hard to give any attention to affairs outside our immediate boundaries.  Hence it is all the more important for us to recall that the diocese is the fundamental unit of the Church and that the Church of Christ is a world-wide entity.”

In 1981, in Moline, the Bishop noted that there had been quite a few vacancies that year.  Father Enberg’s death, Father Meyer’s call to Missouri, and Father Leo Combe’s move to Eau Claire created several openings.  But the arrivals of Father Arthur Wooley, Father Arnold Hoffman, and Father Gerald Bebber brought joy.  The Bishop talked about how challenging the process of finding priests can be.

It caused him to ask people to show greater appreciation for their priests while they are there.  As he said, “Let us not wait until he dies or leaves for a new post to assure him that he is wanted and appreciated.”  He went on to say, “There can be lonely stretches for a priest, as for any other human being, and an appreciative word or action at that time would mean more than a eulogy at his funeral or a verbal bouquet at his farewell party.”

The Bishop went on to say that the Church Growth and Evangelism Committee concepts had “not been met with widespread enthusiasm, and it makes no sense to keep something going for the sake of appearances”.  A new approach would be found by Father Jones and his committee.

What had worked, however, was when churches gathered together to discuss their successes and failures.  Bishop Parsons encouraged the people to share their “thoughts and feelings about such (on-going) possibilities”.

In 1982, in Rock Island, Bishop Parsons used St. Paul’s First Letter to the Corinthians by stressing the theme of thanks.  *“I am always thanking God for you.  I thank him for his grace given to you in Christ Jesus.  I thank him for all the enrichment that has come to you in Christ.  There is indeed no single gift you lack, while you wait expectantly for our Lord Jesus Christ to reveal himself.” (I Cor. 1:4, 5a, 7)*

The Bishop thanked the Diocese and added, “…there is evidence also of the powerful working of the Holy Spirit.”

His gratitude was in part due to an outstanding response to a tragedy in Galesburg.  As he said, “The city of Galesburg has been steam-rolled by the economic forces which trouble this nation. Factories have been closed, jobs lost, and people have been forced to move away.”  He said with joy that Trinity, Rock Island, St. John’s, Quincy, St. Paul’s Cathedral, and St. James, Griggsville “have reached out to help”.

He was also thankful that St Mark’s Church in Silvis had paid off a balloon mortgage, and St. John’s in Henry, due to a “marvelous gift”, was now “debt free”.  He added his thanks by indicating how lonely burdens can be.  “Yet one of their greatest burdens is the feeling that they are rather alone in the face of many problems.  Yet now some of us are beginning to wonder if this ‘aloneness’ is inevitable.”

Once again, he put before the Synod the necessity of finding creative ways to share priests.  He said, “Could two or three priests working together give better leadership of an area parish, when the day comes that we are forced to abandon the practice of having a separate priest for every single community?  Two or three men have begun study to prepare to serve as deacons, and such added ministries might in time be used in such a wider area to bring increased ministry in every place.”

He went on to discuss an impending relationship with three Lutheran bodies, urging that this should not be seen as intercommunion but rather as a way of expressing our “unity in faith and baptism as well as the remaining divisions we all pray will in time be overcome.”

He concluded by telling the people, “General Convention has also called upon us (1) to have each congregation carry out a self-evaluation of its life for total ministry and mission, (2) to increase our ministry to the poor both in the local area and throughout the nation, and (3) to share in a more systematic and reasonable support of seminary education.”

At St. Paul’s Cathedral in 1983, Bishop Parsons stated in his address to Synod that he had just “Completed ten years as the Bishop of Quincy.” He said, “Somewhere between three years and ten years from now, I must hand over this office to another in the apostolic succession.” He said that this estimate was “a reasonable one.” His question was, “What kind of Diocese will be handed over to that successor?”

He cited the Department of Missions for having accomplished an excellent task, especially thanking Bill Wheeler, Bob Downs, Dick Salter, Father Johnson and Father Allemeier. He pointed out that “economic reality exploded the bubble” that a full-time priest could be in each church in the Diocese “or even a full-time priest in a combination of two missions”.  This year he commended St. James’ in Griggsville as “innovators seeking a priest who will serve at St. James, and also as an assistant at St. John’s, Quincy.”

He went on to say, “By now you may therefore be asking, ‘Well, Bishop, what’s the problem?’ With a bit of glue here, some bailing wire there, and some chewing gum here, we have struggled along up till now. True, but the problem is whether we ought to keep on this way and whether we can expect to continue forever in this fashion.”  He continued, “…most clergy who retire and look for a small mission in which to help are thinking of Florida or the Gulf Coast.  West central Illinois does not place high on the list of retirement areas.”

Again, the Bishop urged the Synod to find new and productive ways to meet the needs of our missions.  He concluded by saying, “Parish Treasurers love the non-stipendiary priesthood, but a parish includes more than treasurers alone.  Should we think about a more deliberate connecting of congregations with full-time clergy and those served by non-stipendiary or part-time clergy?”

“The Department of Missions,” he advised, “has begun to insist that we need a systematic approach, an overall policy against which to set a particular local need,” when we deal with mission asking.

The Bishop believed that there were many questions related to these problems, and he said that he “would envision a kind of mini-convention, with two representatives from each parish and one from each mission, along with the clergy.”  This mini-convention would look at various problems and solutions, and then have a follow-up meeting to “hammer out an overall policy to guide the Bishop and the Department of Missions.”  He concluded by saying, “To be a responsible bishop, I have to say the time has come to grapple with these issues and make some decisions.”

In 1984, in Macomb, Bishop Parsons talked about the struggles of Anglicanism; in particular in our attempts in establishing Anglicanism in America.  The dilemma in having our first bishop in the new nation was well known, and, “The Revolution ended (the state of) establishment,” he said, “and suddenly Episcopalians had to become responsible for their own church expenses.”  He pointed out that our Colonial forbears needed to ask why we “should struggle to keep the Anglican Church in existence.”  He then asked, “Why do we need to exist?  In every small town in this part of Illinois there are at least six churches of various varieties.  Are we needed?  Are we different, and why are we different?  Yet,” he continued, “there are a lot of folks in each of towns and cities and rural areas who have no church home.”  “Do we ask for them?  Are we prepared to answer when they ask, why we do the things we do?  I would ask every single congregation to ask whether they have an educational program which has prepared their members to know what The Episcopal Church offers to the many in our area who have no church allegiance at all.”  He reminded us, “The basic unit of the Church is a diocese, not a local congregation.  Our mission is one that goes far beyond just where we live and worship together.”

His conclusion was clear.  “The Episcopal Church in western Illinois has a task laid upon her by the Great Shepherd who *when he saw the crowds, he had compassion on them, because they were harassed and helpless, like sheep without a shepherd." (Matthew 9:36).*

At St. Paul’s in Warsaw, in 1985, Bishop Parsons reminded us of the inter-related nature of the body, as proclaimed by St. Paul in First Corinthians.  He indicated that this an “appreciation of diversity.”  He went on to mention his joy that St. Andrew’s in Peoria would be granted parish status. In spite of economic problems, St. Andrew’s had been equal to the challenge.

“When there is adversity,” according to Bp. Parsons, “it is easy to find someone to blame.”  He mentioned that government officials are often blamed in the community, and the priest “is a more likely candidate for this dubious honor.  If he should escape, then there are the wardens or the vestry or someone.  As a last resort there is always the mysterious ‘they’, an entity never defined but ever present.  Taking out one’s frustrations on a victim is a terribly human procedure,” he said, “and we need to be aware of this trap.”

“Gloomy helplessness”, according to the Bishop, “also paralyzes the whole body.…So it is that any congregation which finds its members declining because families have moved out of the community may begin to think of itself as a hopeless failure and a useless blot on the ecclesiastical landscape.”

He noted that we need to define the “form of ordained ministry” which is needed in each church.  “It is more helpful if the possible options (for shared ministry) be examined ahead of time, so that any desired changes may be made when the opportunity presents itself, and so that decisions be not made in haste.”

He added that meeting in Warsaw reminds us of how well flexibility has worked in having Father O’Brien at St. Paul’s.  He said that having Father Schaffer at St. John’s, Henry was a blessing because, “I almost despaired of ever finding another retired priest for that sturdy band of worshippers…”

Having two Dioceses share a priest was also working well, according to Bp. Parsons as, “the Rector of St. Barnabas Church in Havana in the Diocese of Springfield is also the Vicar of St. James, Lewistown, in our own Diocese."

The Bishop stated clearly, “A congregation with part-time priestly ministry has an opportunity to look afresh at the needs of the Church and at the principles of Christian stewardship.”  With additional money, churches were urged to do outreach, such as the mission to Haiti.

He made it clear that the creativity and diversity of the Diocese were very good things.  In fact, he said, “…. blind uniformity is certainly not a characteristic of the Creator whose autumn foliage has such a wonderful palette of many colors.”

At Galesburg in 1986, Bp. Parsons told everyone that he was, “…painfully aware that (this Address) is the next to the last one I shall prepare.”  He said, “I need first to assure you that I am not planning retirement because I want to be rid of you.  You paid me the highest compliment of all when you asked me to be your Bishop.…I have been a priest over forty years and your Bishop for thirteen years, and I am just plain tired.  I believe from a fresh approach with a new vision I am not retiring because of you rather retiring for you.”  He encouraged the Synod to pray and to make the transition a “vestibule opening on to a new vision.”  He was very happy with the results of the mini-convention and was pleased with the suggestions in terms of ministry in smaller churches.

There needed to be clarifications, too.  St. Cyprian’s in Carthage no longer existed as a viable mission congregation.  Grace Church, Galesburg asked to be made a mission and the St. Stephen’s, Peoria, building had been sold to the City of Peoria, but at this time it would not ask for a change in status as a mission.  It was noted by the Bishop that St. Stephen’s property had been sold for $235,000.

Bp. Parsons announced that Father Draper of St. George’s, Macomb had taken a disability pension, and that “his Bishop and Diocese are grateful” for all that he has done in his faithful service.

“The Department of Mission believed that the Diocese should provide a full-time priest to work at the University and to be Vicar of St. George’s, with Diocesan support making such a full-time ministry possible.”

The Bishop commended the retired priests who serve our missions so faithfully.  He also said that the Clergy Compensation Committee was “working towards a ‘just’ compensation for our priests.”

The Bishop found it ironic that “a study of clergy compensation had been called for just before I came to the Diocese of Quincy. As my time approaches its end, the very same request is made by the last year’s convention.”

In Peoria, in 1987, Bishop Parsons chose, as his Biblical Text for his last Convention as Diocesan Bishop, the following from Acts 20:26-27:

*“Therefore, I testify to you this day that I am innocent of the blood of all of you, for I did not shirk from declaring to you the whole counsel of God.*”

Truly St. Paul’s words ring throughout the Bishop’s Addresses,

Quite unexpectedly he said, “Lest I be tempted to boast, the total number of communicants is about 1,000 less than when I came.  Such a fact tempts anyone to feel guilty,” he said.  “On the other hand, the records show that when the Cathedral decided to clean up their lists before Dean Backus came, the number of communicants was reduced by 550. Similarly, Rock Island’s communicants dropped by 200 when a variety of causes led them to investigate their lists back in the middle ‘70’s. In the light of such facts, I may be pardoned for not putting too much confidence in membership statistics. I cannot claim that we have had spectacular successes but I genuinely believe there are many things about which you and I can be glad.”

His great joys were the missions to Haiti, “…where people were fed, given medical attention and had buildings made and repaired”.  He was joyful that the Venture in Mission Campaign went so well, and he noted that he was “…terribly glad about the splendid growth at St. Francis, Chillicothe and St. Andrew’s Peoria”.  He offered thanks for the consistent support and carrying out of responsibility shown by Trinity Rock Island, St. John’s, Quincy, Christ Church, Moline and the Cathedral Church of St. Paul.

He was glad that the diocese “…grappled in a creative fashion with the need to rethink ministry in smaller congregations,” and he was glad that “we have begun to encourage the ministry of deacons.”

While all of those things had brought him gladness, he said, “The most important thing of all has been the love and the helpfulness of so many people in the Diocese."  He especially thanked Treasurer Don Gnuse and Chancellor Bob Downs.

He concluded by making several strong suggestions. “The primary need, I believe is for some diligent and organized and vigorous evangelism.” He pointed out that statistics prove that there are many people in our area who simply do not belong to any church at all. He asserted, “There are so many who do not know that there is a Savior, and as a result, find it impossible to acknowledge that they need to be saved from anything. We can bring to people the Truth of the Catholic Faith in that Anglican form which millions around the world have come to treasure.”

“Secondly, we need to do more about unleashing the energies of those congregations which have a non-stipendiary priest. Now the lay members are free to undertake activities they used to leave to the Vicar. Have we taken advantage of those opportunities?

“Thirdly, I think we need a more deliberate and intentional Diocesan Movement in Mission.

“My prayer is that you and my successor will have at least as many reasons for being glad as I have found in the Diocese of Quincy.”

With these words the Sixth Bishop of Quincy concluded his final address as Diocesan. Little did he know that by the Year 2000 he would have either delivered or, heard from his two successors, 28 Synod Addresses. Only Canon Dalmasso and Fr. Allemeier can claim this same privilege.

It is clear from the beloved Sixth Bishop of Quincy’s Address that as Diocesan he saw a strong need for missionary zeal, for fiscal responsibility, for the creative and realistic use of resources, and for a faith grounded in Scripture, tradition and reason.  It is also clear that he was willing to face difficult matters and to engage talented people in helping to resolve that which could be resolved with God’s Grace.  Finally, it is clear that his passion for sound theology, and his love for teaching the Truth, endeared him in the hearts of the priests, deacons, and laity who were privileged to be led by this faithful successor to the Apostles.  In a variety of ways, we have heard in Bishop Parsons’ Addresses admonitions and prophetic statements which bring us to this new millennium.

Turmoil in the world and in the Church continues. Missions still attempt to find creative ways to share in the ministry of the Church, and deacons offer a glimpse of the servant ministry of Jesus Christ, not as pseudo-laity or pseudo-priests, but as a separate order under the direction of their bishop.

In 1998 I called for a year when God would “prepare our hearts” so that we might be spiritually ready to receive the people whom God would send us as we seek to extend His Kingdom.

In 1999 I called for a year to “Rebuild the Church” when our buildings would be repaired, improved, and made more welcome to receive God’s people. All around the Diocese I have witnessed remarkable repairs expansions, and improvements this year.

I have seen ***St. John’s, Kewanee***, add air-conditioning and make major improvements in the rectory.  They are now in the process of installing an elevator to meet the needs of those who are physically challenged.

***Zion Church in Brimfield*** has come alive!  A brand-new parish hall has been built with handicap accessible restrooms, a kitchen, and a sacristy; and Mass is celebrated each Sunday night now.

***St. Peter’s in Canton*** has completely remodeled the kitchen, and hopes to install an elevator soon.

***The Cathedral*** has renovated two floors of the school wing, added handicap-accessible restrooms, added air-conditioning, and rebuilt the organ.  In addition, maintenance issues, such as tuck-pointing, have been done.  Soon a renovated stage will be available for more events.

The ***Church of St. Andrew the Apostle in Peoria*** has constructed new Sunday School rooms to accommodate accelerated growth; and by spotlighting the building, it stands as a beacon of hope to the neighborhood.

***St. Paul’s, Warsaw***, has begun the process of repairing the roof and making the church more handicap-accessible.

***St. John’s in Henry*** has freshened up the parish hall.

***St. Jude’s in Princeton*** hopes to finish that section of the undercroft, which was not finished when they moved to their present location.

***Christ Church in Moline*** has renovated the church school area and is in the process of planning for the construction of a new parish hall.

***Trinity, Rock Island***, has nearly completed the massive work on their organ, with a portion of the antiphonal organ already in operation.

***Grace Church in Galesburg***, which offers meeting space to so many, has re-carpeted and refurnished the conference room, re-painted the exterior of the church, added new signs, and repaired the driveway into the parking lot.

***St. John’s in Quincy*** has added protection to those historic stained-glass windows, installed a new roof, renovated the atrium, upgraded the commercial property, and completed significant landscaping.  In addition, they have refurnished the historic Stations of the Cross, upgraded the sacristy, added new appointments in the Lady Chapel, and improved the restrooms.

***St. Andrew’s, El Paso***, after having built a parish hall, has added new siding and gutters to the church, remodeled the library and sacristy, and added a new roof.  They have just constructed a ramp to connect the parish hall and the church, making both handicap-accessible.  Future plans will include creating a prayer garden and enclosing the new ramp area.

***Trinity, Monmouth***, has painted and carpeted extensively, and installed new linoleum in the kitchen and bathroom.  Their plans this coming year include handicap accessibility and a new visible sign on Main Street, along with significant sidewalk repair.

***St. James, Lewistown***, has installed a memorial garden, painted all walls and woodwork, re-carpeted the building, replaced the furnaces and air-conditioning, and placed new lighting in the parish hall.  This coming year’s plan includes an iron fence on two sides of the church garden for “memorial bricks”, handicap accessibility, and several other attainable dreams.

***St. George’s, Macomb***, has redecorated the church school and nursery, and tuck-pointed the building, along with making the doors safe and secure.  Due to the many improvements, and the beauty of the lawn and gardens, they have received a “Macomb Beautiful” award.

***St. Mark’s in Silvis*** has doubled the size of its facility by adding a new nave and sanctuary, along with handicap accessible restrooms, an expanded kitchen, and lovely appointments in the new nave and sanctuary.

Beloved, we are rebuilding our churches, and what delights me most is in seeing and knowing that most of this work has been done by our parishioners themselves.  Our people were so committed to making our churches more attractive and available to God’s people that they took God at His Word, as He spoke to St. Francis, “Rebuild My Church.”  The churches of our Diocese are truly beautiful, and they reflect the love and devotion of our people.

But my charge last year to rebuild went beyond the physical, as magnificent as that work has been.  I said, “It is time to plan, expand, step out in faith, and forgive,” if we are to live out the plan of Jubilee.

I asked for a comprehensive Capital Fund Campaign, and after nearly a year of planning, tomorrow, you will hear from the chairman of the Ad Hoc Committee, Mr. Donald Gnuse of St. John’s Church, Quincy, regarding the progress.  I also asked that the Ad Hoc Committee investigate the matter of “debt forgiveness" in light of the Jubilee Year as articulated in *Leviticus 25:8– 17* in Holy Scripture.

This analysis was not an easy one, and it included the Mission Strategy Committee, the Trustees of Funds and Property, the Ad Hoc Committee, and the Diocesan Council.

How could we simply “forgive debt”? It isn’t a reasonable thing to do in the business world, and when we forgive some, who will be hurt?  Some might say, “If we had known about this concept, we would have borrowed for our project.”  Others might say, “What about us?  We paid our loan on time every month.”  While still others might say, “Let’s borrow now, and then wait for the next Jubilee.”

Beloved, I humbly submit few of us will see the next Jubilee, and moreover, if what Bishop Parsons has asserted three times in his addresses, namely that the Diocese is the basic unit of the Church, then we have an obligation to think as a unit, rather than as a collection of congregations who operate like Congregationalists.  Thus, as Bp. Parsons has reminded us, St. Paul is clear in his writings about the relationship between the various members of the body.  When one rejoices, we all rejoice.  When one is in pain, we all are in pain.  This bold step in debt-forgiveness will offer new hope and a fresh start for many in our Diocese who wondered how they could possibly repay the Diocese.

I hasten to repeat that this is the Jubilee. I foresee no such action taking place again.

I now call forward the clergy and laity of:

St. Andrew’s, El Paso [$102,177.29]

St. Mark’s, Silvis [$11,961.20]

St. Jude’s, Princeton [$114,310.00]

Grace Church, Galesburg [$40,444.13]

St. Andrew’s, Peoria [$14.480.96]

St. Peter’s, Canton [$9,591.94]

St. John’s, Quincy [legal fees from 1994-95 for reclaiming the church.]

**My beloved friends in Christ — As of today, your debt has been forgiven. This is Jubilee.  Not only do we respond to God’s call in this Jubilee Year, but we rejoice in His free gift of salvation.**  But, as Scripture tells us, *“To whom much is given, much will be expected.”  Luke 12:48.*

*We*, as a Diocese, are now eager to see how this trust investment in you will be used to glorify God.  Now that you have had this burden removed, we wait with joyful expectation to see what you will do this year to extend the Kingdom of Christ.  In some instances, we know that in the case of missions, you will now need less money in terms of mission assistance.  In other cases, we know that new ministries will begin. In all cases, we know that this will build morale.  In the course of this year, I will ask you to “log” what is done by you in the year of Jubilee.  At our next Synod, I will ask that we present a report, perhaps in the form of a video, which will give all of us an opportunity to share in the joy of God’s Grace in His churches.

I ask that you, along with all of our churches, will find new ways to do ministry.  If we think small, we will remain small.  I ask that each church utilize the wonderful talents available by having lay ministry training, so that, especially in part-time ministries, a greater sense of total ministry partnership between priest, deacon, and laity will take place.  Just as the national ecclesiastical structure exists primarily to empower dioceses, so the Diocese stands ready to help empower parishes and missions to do the ministry to extend the Kingdom.

This is Jubilee. Let us celebrate together, for in the Body we celebrate the joys of each other.  I now ask us to consider our theme for this year, “Receive God’s Gifts.”  I had considered the theme “Open Our Doors,” but I realized that we open our doors to receive God’s people, and they are His gifts to us.  I call upon every church in this Diocese to do the following during the year of grace:

(1) To pray the prayer which shall be distributed today, beginning Advent Sunday, 2000, until Christ the King Sunday, 2001

(2) To form and train visitation committees to visit those who have fallen away from the Church, those in need, and those   who are seeking a Church home.  This is not solely a priest’s job.  It is a partnership ministry.

(3) I designate Sunday, March 25, 2001, as Homecoming Sunday in the Diocese.  I ask that you begin to pray today for those whom God is calling to each of our parishes and missions in the Diocese.  I ask you to advertise it well, and to invite home anyone who has left the Church for whatever reason, and those who have no Church home, to gather with joy at the Altar of God.I ask that each church form a committee to accomplish this task.

(4) I ask you to be generous in your prayers, and in your giving, as the reality of the Capital Fund Campaign unfolds, and

(5) I ask you to remember your local church and Diocese in your will, so that we can ensure a healthy future for succeeding generations.

In every Synod Address, my predecessors have stated that our financial dilemmas are in part due to the fact that we do not give as generously as we should, and yet, the rebuilding I have seen this year makes it clear that when we have a goal, we meet it.

I am so proud of you, and as we prepare for another year of joy in Christ, as we seek to open our hearts and our doors to receive God’s gifts, so may we receive, with open arms, each person as Christ.

Years ago, I was in the city of Jerusalem walking in the Armenian Quarter.  I was looking for a man whom I knew, who was the Choir Director of the Armenian Seminary.  I asked a young woman who passed by, if she knew my friend, and she told me that he was her Godfather! She led me to his apartment, but he was not at home.  She then invited me to the apartment where she and her husband lived along with her parents.  As soon as her parents opened the door, I was taken to the Dining Room table, and placed in the seat of honor, where a virtual banquet was set before me.  Once I regained my composure, I asked them how a total stranger to them could be greeted with such love.  They told me that Armenia was the first Christian Nation, and that this privilege carried with it the obligation of receiving all people as God’s gift.  They told me that they must receive people as Christ Himself, for they knew that Christ would return, but did not necessarily know what He would look like.

***Thus, we must greet all people and receive all people into our homes and churches with the love of Christ.***

We on the “Harvest Plain” have seeds to sow, plants to be watered, and crops to be harvested. To accomplish this task, we must be single-minded with our eyes fixed on Jesus Christ.

“This year shall be unto you a Jubilee.” “Our Hearts are Prepared,” “Our Churches are being Rebuilt.” Now we must “Receive God’s Gifts.”

In the Name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit.  Amen.

***+Keith Quinciencis***

The Eighth Address of the Eighth Bishop of Quincy

***The Right Reverend Keith L. Ackerman, SSC***

to the 124th Synod of the Diocese of Quincy

St. Andrew the Apostle Church, Peoria, Illinois

2001

*“You have forgotten your First Love”*

On October 14, 1988 at the Cathedral Church of St. Paul, the newly consecrated Bishop of Quincy, the Right Reverend Edward H. MacBurney addressed his people officially for the first time. The greatly beloved Former Dean of Trinity Cathedral in Davenport, Iowa looked squarely into the eyes of the clergy and delegates at that Synod and announced, “There can be no other foundation beyond that which is already laid; I mean Jesus Christ himself.” (I Cor 3:11)

The seventh Bishop of Quincy decried the fact that our Church had lost one million members in the last twenty years. “But it was,” he said, the “almost total silence of the leadership of our Church with respect to what has become not a trickle but a hemorrhage” that concerned him. He noted that this would not be acceptable in the business world nor the world of sports.

He indicated that he and Fr. Bell of Galesburg had “attended a Province V meeting on evangelism” and there “were told that the greatest roadblock to evangelism is the clergy.” He went on to say, “not only are they not trained for evangelism in our seminaries, but they are positively conditioned against it.” He added “we are producing graduates more concerned about moving the furniture of the Chancel and about maintenance, than about Church growth and outreach into the unchurched neighborhoods of our communities.” He pointed out that the “charismatic movement” has been God’s response to the Church’s need.”

What did Bp. MacBurney suggest?

First –to be open to that same Holy Spirit so that the deadness of our own selves may be quickened into life;

Second, to reach out to others: to be co-workers with the God who reigns in order that the Church may once again minister life and hope to her children and be an agent for the healing of nations.”

The Bishop was very encouraged by the growth at St. George’s, Macomb and St. Francis, Chillicothe and was certain that Grace Church, Galesburg would regain parish status.

He was particularly thrilled that Canon Bryan Green would lead a “workshop on evangelism” for the Diocese.

He concluded with four concerns:

1. The Constitution and Canons of the Diocese needed to be rewritten.

2. He saw a need for a part time Canon to the Ordinary due to his increasing responsibilities.

3. He saw a need to explore a relationship with the Diocese of Uruguay – in particular with Bp. William Godfrey, and finally;

4. The Commission on Ministry had recommended that women be ordained to the Diaconate in the Diocese of Quincy.

He concluded by saying how grateful he was to Bishop Parsons “for his wisdom which he has generously shared, for his experience, for his unfailing cheerfulness in responding to my cries in the midst of crisis and perplexity.”

At St. George’s in Macomb in 1989, Bp Mac Burney quoted St. Paul again from I Corinthians 1: 23, 24: *“to those who have heard his call, Jews and Greeks alike, he is the power of God and the wisdom of God.”*

The Bishop was thrilled to introduce Bishop Michael Marshall, “seldom will we have a more distinguished or captivating teacher,” he said. To add to the joy, he told us that Bishop and Mrs. Godfrey of Uruguay had come for the Synod.

The Bishop sadly reported the death of the beloved Chancellor, Bob Downs but was thrilled to appoint Judge James Stewart of Grace Church, Galesburg to that position assisted by Greg Grimsley of the Cathedral.

He announced that the budget was up 10% and that assessments had been increased. He said, “I hope that you will in your consideration of the asked for increases, be open to the possibility that they serve God’s purposes, and will forward our ministry together.”

The real excitement for Bishop MacBurney, however, was his announcement that St. Jude’s, Tiskilwa was literally “on the move” and that with the merger of St. Christopher’s, Princeton with St. Jude’s, Tiskilwa would be a new beginning. Namely, St. Jude’s building will be moved to Princeton.

A Diocesan Bishop’s Committee was appointed to guarantee a smooth transition along with Diocesan financial support. The people appointed were: Janet Conover of St. John’s, Quincy; John Slover of Christ Church, Moline; Robert Blanchard of Trinity Church, Rock Island and John Harris of St. Paul’s Cathedral. The collection at Evensong was designated for the support of a six-mile move “down a road across a stream, through a field, back on a road, to be plunked down on a new site.”

He went on to say that St. George’s in Macomb was also considering the possibility of moving the church “to a splendid site west of town…” and that All Saints Mission in Quincy had “…purchased a fine property, just outside the city limits, and last spring moved into the building vacated by a funeral home”.

St. Mark’s Silvis had just completed their undercroft, and Christ Church, Limestone was eager to build a parish hall.

The Bishop was very sad to lose Deacon Bill and Darlene Wheeler as they moved to Ohio.

The yoking between Grace Church, Galesburg and Trinity Church, Monmouth would soon be dissolved as Grace Church moved rapidly towards regaining Parish status.

The big news for Trinity, Monmouth, though was that the distinguished bishop-friar, Brother John-Charles Voeckler would be moving to Monmouth as vicar.

The Bishop welcomed Father John Miles to St. Paul’s, Warsaw, Fr John Throop to St. Francis, Chillicothe, and Father Theron Hughes to Quincy.

Bishop MacBurney stated that with all that is happening in the Diocese, it was time *“…to begin thinking about a capital funds drive”* and to consider *“…endowing the episcopate.”* He voted that while he *“shutters at the thought of fund raising…”* the last capital gifts drive was in 1967.

He spent a great deal of time explaining the importance of the Eames Commission, which provided a place for traditional Episcopalians. He noted that the *“…Episcopal Synod of America had two chapters in the Diocese of Quincy”*, yet *“I have no desire to divide or cause dissension.”*

He stated that, *“…the presence of the Bishop of Uruguay and Mrs. Godfrey is a direct result of your willingness to consider a Companion relationship with Uruguay”* as he had suggested the year before.

In 1990, at St. Paul’s Cathedral, Bp. MacBurney quoted our Diocesan Patron saint’s words to the church in Corinth,

“For we preach not ourselves, but Christ Jesus as Lord, and ourselves as your servants, for Jesus’ sake.” II Corinthians 4:5

The Bishop proclaimed that we have “assurance God has won the victory on Calvary.” There is, however, a paradox, he tells us for “…we are to work out our own salvation with fear and trembling.” He stated, “The cross gives us hope because, in our place, Jesus has worked atonement for our sins.”

His conclusion is clear, “…the burden of our sins was lifted at Calvary, but our responsibilities as redeemed and renewed Christian persons do not permit us much time for frivolities.”

He decried the immorality and heresy that is in the Church, that takes our eyes off Jesus, and he tells us to look up “…Not only because, as the Bible tells us, our own salvation drawest nigh, but also because we would see Jesus”. If we can begin to point beyond ourselves, he tells us, “to Jesus the Author and Finisher of our faith, we will succeed in several areas.”

1. “We will lose something of our own preoccupation with self.”
2. “In looking at and listening to Jesus we will inevitably become more attractive and loving persons.”
3. “We shall be pointing others to where salvation really lies: in the Crucified, Risen, Glorified Lord.”

Bp. MacBurney was delighted with the presence of Br. John-Charles and also Canon Richard Johnson of St. Luke’s Hospital in Davenport, Iowa, and indicated that Synod would benefit from what they have to say. The Seventh Bishop of Quincy was very happy with “…wondrous things that are happening in our midst!”

The work of Grace Church and Father Bell had resulted in restoration to parish status. St. James’ Church in Griggsville would miss Fr. Eugene Stormer, but Father Theron Hughes was ably serving them. In addition, a new parish hall was a distinct possibility.

Bp. MacBurney was ecstatic about the successful move of St. Jude’s Church into Princeton, but saddened by the retirement of Fr. Marx Jones.

He also announced that Fr. William Swatos and the beloved at St. Mark’s in Silvis had begun a Marathon Telephone Campaign whereby 47,000 people were called. They planned to continue by contacting 10,000 people in 1991.

Perhaps, one of the programs which excited the Bishop most of all was a ministry to the whole Church affectionately dubbed the refugee program whereby the Diocese of Quincy would prepare ordinands for a variety of places throughout the Church. One such young man, Dr. Robert Munday seemed to have a possible future.

Related to Holy Orders was the new Training School for the Permanent Deaconate. The Bishop in particular, was grateful “…for Dean Franklin and his faculty for making the school a reality.”

Bp. MacBurney reminded everyone that a year ago he had asked if it were possible to conduct a Capital Gifts Campaign. He said, “A good list of Diocesan projects was identified, but wisdom suggested that we had not done our homework thoroughly enough to bring recommendations to the Diocesan Council. Therefore, the committee will continue, under the chairmanship of Dean Backus, to examine and sift needs identified within the Diocese as well as attempt the likelihood of financial support that we might expect if a campaign were undertaken.”

Money was needed, according to the Bishop to “…begin opening Missions, not closing them down.” Without a Capital Campaign he felt this plan could not be implemented.

He wanted to make clear it was necessary to “…be responsible to God for all the resources he has given us.” But, he said, “…responsibility cannot descend into fearlessness, nor a putting of our talents and gifts into a napkin and burning them on the Rectory lawn. There are ample talents and resources in this Diocese to give us better ways of proclaiming the Kingdom.”

The Bishop reported that the External Mission Committee would make a report next year regarding a relationship with Uruguay. He went on to say how concerned he and others were about the General Convention to be held in Phoenix where matters such as inclusive language liturgies, the blessing of same-sex unions, and the ordination of non-celibate homosexuals would be discussed. He said, “…this Convention may well be a watershed for the Episcopal Church.”

He said, “There is much, then, to distress and concern us. But in the midst of all that perplexes and upsets us, be men and women of Hope. Because our hope rests not in ourselves but in our God, and our God reigns.”

Bp. MacBurney selected for his theme in 1991 at St. Paul’s Cathedral the words of St. Mark’s Gospel (1: 21-22):

“And they went into Capernaum; and immediately on the Sabbath he entered the synagogue and taught. And they were astonished at his teaching for he taught them as one who had authority, and not as the scribes…”

Bp. MacBurney began by telling his flock that “…the crisis for much Western, historic Christianity is a crisis of authority.” He spoke of his concern about the attacks on tradition, and the tendency for “…General Convention to rise above the Scripture to set its teaching aside.” He told us that, “…our time is specially a time when humility and a willingness to learn from the saints is a priority indeed.”

Bp. MacBurney was quite pleased with the progress that had been made in terms of marriage preparation as a result of a concept presented by syndicated columnist, Mike McManus. It was clear that Bp. MacBurney had taken the lead in gathering together many Christian traditions to address the necessity of appropriate marriage preparation.

The Bishop was also quite pleased with the emergence of a new Franciscan Order, The Franciscan Order of the Divine Compassion, in our Diocese. Brother John-Charles was delighted to report that there were currently three novices living in community in Monmouth in the former Theta-Chi Fraternity House.

In addition, two seminarians, Gregory Harrigle and John Jamison along with John’s wife worked for six weeks in the Rushville, Mt. Sterling/Beardstown area to explore the possibility of establishing a church. Fr. Kenneth Innis of Mendon “…will minister to this tiny, new Episcopal community.”

Bp. MacBurney dealt delicately with the problem of clergy and sexual abuse, and announced that he had appointed Maggie Horan, of St. Paul’s Cathedral, to a committee to assist the Bishop “…in ministering to victim, Clergy, Congregation, as well as addressing the media.” The Bishop expressed his pleasure in the arrival of Fr. George Pence to serve as Vicar of St. Jude’s. He said, “I am convinced that in a relatively short time, St. Jude’s – perhaps with outside help – will be able to begin paying its debt to the Diocese and the St. Stephen’s Fund.”

He announced that a three-point ministry had been formed in Quincy with All Saints and two missions in the Diocese of Missouri. Regarding All Saints, he said, “Father John Blossom has heroically driven form Peoria to Quincy, with Linda, virtually every Sunday for four years. It is time he was free to minister closer to home, and it is time that All Saints’ had a vicar in residence.”

He went on to commend to the Diocese a Luis Palau Crusade. He said, “Luis Palau, who probably will succeed Billy Graham as this country’s leading Evangelist is coming to Peoria next May.” He then said, “A convention address which did not mention the coming retirement of our Diocesan Treasurer, Don Gnuse, after 33 years of faithful ministry in the demanding position, would be remiss.” He announced that Michael Renner of the Cathedral Parish “…will be taking up the baton laid down by Don Gnuse on December 31.” He ended by reminding us that “…our hope is in the Lamb that was slain.”

In 1992 at St. Mark’s Church in Silvis Bp MacBurney pointed out that 1 Timothy 6:19 describes Christian commitment in a magnificent way, “…so that they may take hold of the life that really is life.”

He pointed out that in 1968 he and Anne had had a six-month sabbatical and spent three months in Europe traveling and three months in residence in Cambridge, England. While at Cambridge, he studied under Dr. Owen Chadwick who taught a course entitled “The Church and State under Hitler”. He decried the fact that it is not “politically correct” to question some current thoughts which have not been able to withstand the test of time.

He went on to mention the many ordinands who have been sponsored by Quincy and are now serving successfully in the Church at large.

He also pointed out that although there was a need for a capital funds drive that “the result certainly has been negative.” He wished, however, that there was a way to enlarge the endowment for the Episcopate. He commended St. John’s in Quincy for contributing several thousand dollars for that purpose. He encouraged individuals and churches to contribute to this fund.

Good work was happening at Zion Church, Brimfield where “John McLain has succeeded in having the rotten floor of that small but handsome stone church, built by Bishop Chase removed.” He was thrilled to announce that Matthew Daniel Elliott, grandson of Ron and Lynn Funk had recently been baptized there.

He pointed out that the Deacons’ school was well attended. He was also happy to welcome Fr. David Driver to St. John’s, Henry and Fr. Robert Tiling to Grace Church, Galesburg.

In the midst of discouragement, he told us how supportive his wife Anne, and his clergy were. He reminded us “God’s Word will triumph.”

Bp. MacBurney’s theme in 1993 at St. Paul’s Cathedral was “transition”. He pointed out many changes had taken place. Father James Marshall had gone to Holy Trinity, Geneseo, Father Pence to St. John’s, Kewanee, and Father Bob Seay to St. James, Griggsville. He announced that Br. John-Charles would soon be leaving the Episcopal Church, and that he, himself, would be in transition as the Diocese would welcome in just months, Quincy VIII.

A major goal in his mind was to pay off the debt of St. Jude’s Church.

He went on to say that he was encouraged by the annual medical mission to the Dominican Republic and hoped that perhaps we might be able to have a second mission by returning to Haiti.

The Bishop announced the proposed departure of St. John’s Quincy from the Diocese of Quincy and the Episcopal Church. He made it clear that there was a growing number of people at St. John’s who do not wish to leave. Moreover, he said, “…their assessments are paid. They are here as they have always been: part of us. So, I will not accept any attempts to deny them seats or votes. One cannot be penalized for what one has not yet done - but only thought of doing!”

It was also an exciting time for the Diocese as the Synod welcomed St. Andrew’s Church, El Paso, and thus Woodford County, into the Diocese of Quincy. The Bishop announced that Father Anderson would be developing mission work in Eureka. Money from the Quincy Mission Advance Fund would be used to assist in that endeavor.

Bp. MacBurney noted that John Slover of Christ Church, Moline “…has asked if we could not have a committee appointed which might inquire into ways to commend the support of the Diocese through the wills of our people.” The Bishop said that such “…a committee will indeed address this need and encourage us in a response.”

The Great Flood of 1993 was a centerpiece of the Final Address of the Seventh Bishop of Quincy. He commended various people for their contributions, including the Presiding Bishop’s Fund for World Relief. He noted that “Father Throop and Brian Dyson spent a week sand-bagging and working for the Salvation Army in Quincy” and that “Canon Christian Pierce (a captain in the National Guard) was recalled for a two-week period of service in a wide area along the Mississippi.”

The Bishop thanked Canon Emerson, Father Peyton, Donna Johnston and the people of All Saints, Quincy for their work in Operation Rainbow as they coordinated Flood relief efforts.

Bp. MacBurney spoke of the deaths of key people in the Diocese: Margaret Markly of St. James’, Lewistown; Jack Couch of Trinity Church, Rock Island, and Rita Oechsel. He announced the establishment of “Rita’s Room” a room established in her memory at the Cathedral Church of St. Paul.

Bp. MacBurney said that Lynn Funk must be commended for her faithfulness and dedication.

He pointed out that the next Bishop would discover what he had, “…problems at budget times”, a “small staff”, and “supportive, thoughtful, responsive, and affectionate clergy.” He noted that while he has been very active in a number of organizations outside the Diocese, which required his attendance, he had resigned from many of them so that he can be more available during his last year as Bishop.

The Bishop said that “…our date for the consecration of the VIII Bishop of Quincy is set for the Feast of Saints Peter and Paul, June 29, 1994.” He went on to say that he and Anne would do some traveling upon retirement, “…but on our return we shall hope to take up residence somewhere in the Galesburg/Rock Island/Moline sector of the Diocese.”

He ended by saying “…the Bishops of Los Angeles and New York will have more committees and more paper work, as well as more parishes and people. But they will not know more love nor kindness on the part of their Diocese than the Bishop of Quincy knows.”

With these words the respected and beloved Seventh Bishop of Quincy concluded his address.

Three months later the Eighth Bishop of Quincy was elected and on June 29, 1994 Bishop MacBurney handed over this ring to his successor.

Following a magnificent tour overseas, the Bishop and Anne relocated to the Iowa side of the Quad Cities where the Bishop can never be accused of really being retired as he assists this Diocese and the greater Church in many ways.

Once again, I am inclined to say, “…the more things change the more they remain the same.”

--Maintenance ministry

--Unrest in the larger Church

--Budgetary short falls

--Budget cuts

--Raising assessments

--A capital campaign

--Endowments

--Evangelism

--Parish status for a mission

These very themes, which ran through Bishop MacBurney’s six addresses, appear and reappear from time to time in my own eight addresses as your Bishop.

Indeed, maintenance ministry is a curse because it means maintaining what is secure without considering growth.

Maintenance ministry means having answers like:

1. We tried it once and it didn’t work

2. We’ve never done it that way before

3. I was here before you were and I’ll be here after you leave.

4. Everybody in this community already goes to church.

But it asks no questions like:

1. Why aren’t we growing?

2. Why have we lost people?

3. Do we have a responsibility to our neighborhood and to the area near us that is growing but has no church?

Maintenance ministry is focused on paying bills, protecting investments, and placing blame on others when there is failure.

Maintenance ministry places fear first and vision last. It means forgetting our Lord’s admonition to have no fear. The question to be asked is, “have I forgotten my first love?” Either Jesus Christ who is our hope is first in our lives or He is not, and if He isn’t, no amount of persuasion will change a person’s mind. The first step in moving from survival and maintenance mode ministry is to re-invite Jesus Christ into our lives and proclaim Him as Lord of our life.

In the final analysis, whether you are happy or unhappy with the greater Church and those issues, if we have not made Jesus Christ first in our lives then we run the risk of being misguided political activists and we will die.

The Canon Missioner, Canon John Blossom, has made himself available to all Churches in this Diocese to begin the process of Natural Church Development. This process is a tangible way to evaluate ourselves in particular ways, so that we can move forward. Several churches are already engaged in this process, and I am asking every church in this Diocese likewise to be engaged in this concept so that we will all be speaking the same language when we ask important questions about growth. If you already have a pat answer or cynical reaction to this then you will understand how seductive maintenance ministry is.

Last year we introduced the second phase of a three-phase plan regarding financial revitalization.

The first phase was introduced several years ago, and is called the Bishop Philander Chase Fund. This planned giving concept was offered to our Diocese to ensure a secure future. It means taking seriously our responsibility to offer our spiritual descendants a financial base that is secure. In the brochures sent to all churches in the Diocese, the purpose of the Philander Chase Fund is stated as follows:

“The purpose of the Philander Chase Endowment Fund is to provide long-term financial resources for the mission of the Church.”

This is a secure and long-term plan. Frankly, many of my predecessors’ addresses called for this, and several years ago we established this fund. Such endowments include the endowment of the Episcopate, thus reducing the annual budgetary outlay related to the Diocesan Bishop. Endowing missions is another possibility, thereby establishing monies, which would assist missions as they grow towards functioning as true mission stations instead of maintenance stations. As I review the various funds held in trust in this Diocese, I recognize that past generosity now provides us with ministry opportunities today, including money to assist particular churches, seminarian assistance, and emergency funds for retired clergy.

I have become aware of the fact that there are some, even here tonight who are not aware of the Bishop Philander Chase Fund. I am, therefore, asking that a soon to be produced video tape regarding this Fund be shown to every vestry and Bishop’s Committee along with future showings at Annual Meetings and Adult Forums.

The second step of revitalization is Debt Forgiveness, which we celebrated last year. I am deeply indebted to Alvin and Brenda Spencer, faithful communicants of Christ Church, Moline, for the magnificent videotape, which they have prepared for us. You will be seeing this video in the course of our Synod. Moreover, the Spencer’s have made a tape for each church in the Diocese. Again, I am asking that each Vestry and Bishop’s Committee review this tape and then share it with the rest of the parish. The stories that are told will explain why Debt Forgiveness was not a human inspiration, but was accomplished by the guidance of the Holy Spirit. God has been glorified, and letters from around the world indicate that others agree.

Finally, our third phase is the Capital Campaign. We are indebted to the Ad Hoc Committee and Holliman Associates, especially Mr. Don Gnuse and Mr. Roger Ricketts for the excellent information we have received from around the Diocese during the discernment time resulting in the Feasibility Study. The matter has now been referred to the Diocesan Council and a great deal more information will be forthcoming as we analyze more carefully your responses including your hopes, dreams and concerns.

The long-term financial health of our Diocese is good, but we have several short-term challenges. I have referred several matters related to our Budget to the Trustees of Funds and Properties, and I am certain that corporate wisdom will prevail. In the meantime, I ask for your patience and your confidence in those whom you have elected to be trustees and custodians of the resources entrusted to them.

This however, draws me to a rather paradoxical conclusion, which I reached while on Sabbatical. I have concluded that I must resign as Diocesan Bishop, so that I may become your Missionary Bishop. God simply did not create me to maintain systems. Let me clarify what I have just said. I wish to continue as your Bishop, but I must be a Missionary. That is, I must lead us as a Successor to the Apostles in a vision that includes a real mission thrust. To that end I call us to be a Missionary Diocese, and I also ask that each church in the Diocese consider itself to be on a mission –a mission to reclaim for Jesus Christ this geographical part of the State of Illinois called “The Diocese of Quincy”.

This means a refocus in thinking. This means shifting our priorities, this means being stretched. We must be on a Mission, and that mission is to draw all people to the love of Jesus Christ. The result will be growth in every conceivable way but it will also, through the Natural Church Development process, identify and remove barriers that inhibit us from being Missionaries. Are you with me?

As it relates to turmoil within and without the Church may I remind us that we are not an American Denomination, but are a Worldwide Communion in Communion with the historic See of Saint Augustine, namely-Canterbury. You are not an isolated mission in small town Illinois. You are an integral part of a Confederation of Dioceses, which is a part of the Anglican Communion, which is a part of the ONE, HOLY, CATHOLIC, and APOSTOLIC Church.

In remembering my first love, I was drawn to two important principles:

1. You know you are in trouble when you define the rose by its thorn instead of by its fragrance.
2. No fruits of the Holy Spirit come easily from those who are always angry or indifferent. Anger destroys the plant by force, and indifference destroys the plant by starving it to death.

A Sabbatical is a good thing, and I thank you for that gift. I ask that each church in this Diocese consider ways in which Priests who have served a parish for seven years may have the gift of a Sabbatical for the purpose of reflection, meditation, prayer, and recreation. It can extend a person’s life spiritually, emotionally, and physically.

At this Synod, we will celebrate the great joy of seeing a mission become a parish. I commend Father Ed den Blaauwen and the beloved people of St. George’s for taking this leap of faith and remembering their first love. I challenge all missions in this Diocese to set goals which include a move towards less reliance on the Diocesan Budget. Impossible? Virtually every financial problem in this Diocese would be resolved tomorrow, if every church grew by 10%, and if each person in this Diocese began to tithe.

Survival says, “What happens when our money runs out?”

Maintenance says, “As long as we have the same income next year and the boiler doesn’t explode, we will be okay…”

Mission says, “How should we distribute the residue of our money this year? Should we start a new church nearby? Should we send another missionary to Nepal? Should we build a parish hall to accommodate the growth, which has resulted from our Evangelism outreach?

Failure all too often means, “forgetting our first love”.

If Jesus has changed your life, is He important enough to you to share with others so that their lives can be changed, also?

Beloved, for God’s sake and for our sake, “please; never forget your first love.”

In the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit. **Amen**

***+ Keith Quinciencis VIII***

✠ *2001*

The Ninth Address of the Eighth Bishop of Quincy

***The Right Reverend Keith L. Ackerman, SSC***

to the 125th Synod of the Diocese of Quincy

at St. Andrew the Apostle Church, Peoria, Illinois

October 25, 2002

**“I am not ashamed of the Gospel, because it is the power of God for the salvation of everyone who believes: first for the Jew, then for the Gentile.”**  (Romans 1:16)

I am acutely aware of the fear that some of you have been harboring since our last Synod one year ago, and I would like to remove immediately that fear from the list of your many burdens: I shall not be analyzing my last Eight Synod Addresses, nor shall I be attempting to give you an exhaustive report in a forty-five-minute period of my eight and a half years as your Bishop! Sensing your relief, I shall proceed to what I believe is essential in what could be termed a type of “State of the Church” Address. I have selected as my text the words of our beloved Diocesan Patron, St. Paul the Apostle, who in the midst of trials and tribulations proclaimed most vehemently, but without a defensive chord, that he truly was not ashamed of the Gospel of Jesus Christ. That is, in a multi-cultural society where the Good News had suddenly been taken to people of diverse languages, customs, and beliefs, St. Paul was not willing to compromise the Revealed Truth of Jesus Christ as contained and articulated in Holy Scripture, proclaimed by Apostles and Martyrs, and lived out in the midst of persecution. Truth in Jesus Christ was not to be seen as exclusivity or as a culturally conditioned philosophical expression, rather His truth and His Gospel were to be seen as the long awaited, promised Revelation of God’s specific presence among us – not a god among gods nor a truth among many truths, but as a fulfillment of God’s unconditional love for the Jews and for the Gentiles.

It was St. Paul’s passionate love for those committed to his Apostolic care in obedience to the Great High Priest, Jesus Christ, that would ultimately win him “the crown of glory that fadeth not away.” In short, we have through our Patron, through Holy Scripture, through Holy Tradition, and through the Ecumenical Councils a continuity of faith wherein we have recorded the accounts of those who accepted humiliation, social censure, familial exclusion, and the martyr’s crown all for the sake of the Gospel and for the sake of the Author of our life and salvation. To be specific, the Christian disciple’s path is paved with a cloud of witnesses and decorated with their blood, because they were not ashamed of the Gospel.

It would not take a critical or imaginative analyst to conclude that the Episcopal Church and other so-called main line churches are in trouble. Indeed, one might even be able to say that Christianity as a whole is being challenged in remarkable ways from internal conflict, erosion, moral decay, and attempting to function sociologically speaking as a religion among many other ones. No matter how one might evaluate and examine the various issues causing conflict and turmoil in our Church today, one conclusion is evident: an excessive amount of time, energy and resources are spent today in attempting either to canonize our own perspectives, or to convince others of our newly discovered, and in some cases, rationalized truths. In other words, our internal turmoil has, in many instances, robbed us of precious time that could be used in evangelistic efforts to win the world for Jesus Christ. Self-absorption and self-righteousness are two ways in which Satan can distract Christians from looking into a world that is becoming increasingly secularized and, in some instances, pagan. We have applied numerous litmus tests today to determine what a true Episcopalian or denominationalist is, that we all too often seem to forget what it means first to be a Christian, second of all to be a Catholic, third of all to be an Anglican, and fourth of all to be an Episcopalian. We seem to forget that one extraordinary action in one part of the Church profoundly affects other parts of the Universal Church. Unilateral actions perceived by some to be prophetic and by others to be disobedient weaken the Body, discourage the Faithful, empty our churches and run the risk of breeding a whole new generation of politically minded professional religionists.

The Gospel is not easy. If it were, St. Paul would not have said that he was not ashamed of it. To live the Gospel means to keep our eyes on Jesus Christ, who is the way, the truth, and the life. To live the Gospel is to put all elements of our life into subjection to Christ, to be willing to change our lives to conform to that Gospel, and to be more concerned with the approval of our changeless God than with the approval of a constantly changing culture. And all too often when we minimize the importance of one standard, such as Scriptural standards, we maximize the importance of other standards, such as Canon Law. Fundamentalism can be quite dangerous, as we have witnessed, but substituting one type of fundamentalism for another type is not progress. Our task has always been and will continue to be living out the implications of the timeless Gospel- a Gospel which is as true today as it was two thousand years ago. In our own age we run the risk of reversing the Creation story, by all too often recreating God in our own image. There are elements of the Gospel and of the Christian faith which are nonnegotiable, not because we think so, but because He thinks so.

So, what does this have to do with the Diocese of Quincy? On one hand what happens in one Diocese affects us, but this does not give us the right to be self-righteous, nor does it give us the luxury of living a life apart from the whole. Just as my predecessors have identified parochialism as one of the besetting sins of our Diocese, so must we not fall into the trap of isolating ourselves. We are part of a much larger reality than our own back yards. The growth of non-traditional, non-denominational, non-liturgical, non-credal churches is not a model to be emulated. It is only a symptom of a much larger problem, which in all too many cases is a judgment against us for not doing what we have been called to do and be. It is much easier to be one’s own “pope” if you will, than to live in community. I have discovered that those who have constructed in their own minds the perfect church, fall into great trouble when they try to attend it. The proliferation of churches is not only a charge against those of us who have failed to act, but is indicative of an intolerance that has crept into the church. I would call it paralabaphobia – namely a fear of that which has been received – a fear of tradition. One of the ways in which we eradicate that which has always been is by radically redefining it. We have, as it were, forgotten the truth of the Vincentian Canon the threefold test of Catholicity which states: “*Quod ubique, quod semper, quod omnibus creditum est.”* That is “what has been believed everywhere, always, and by all.” By this triple test of ecumenicity, antiquity, and consent, the Church is to differentiate between true and false traditions and innovations.

As a Diocese we weep with those in our Church who weep and we rejoice with those who rejoice in conformity to the Gospel of which St. Paul was not ashamed. At this Synod we are meeting in a most bittersweet way. We are celebrating the 125th anniversary of our Diocese at a site other than where we wanted to be, namely at out 165-year-old parish, in the 150-year-old building of our former cathedral. St. John’s is a faithful band of people now worshipping without one day’s loss since the fire on August 23. Upson Hall, the parish hall, is our current worship space, and as we rebuild, we do so with faith that God is doing a mighty work. The Rector of St. John’s, Canon H. W. Herrmann, was recently called to be Rector of a prestigious parish in the South East. After great prayer, he has accepted God’s call to stay, so that he might be an integral part of the rebuilding of St. John’s. Ironically, tonight we are in a Franciscan Chapel, where we recall the words of St. Francis of Assisi, who first heard the words of Christ, “Rebuild my Church.” Not only is that our theme for St. John’s, but well before August 23, that became the theme of our Capital Campaign.

Although at this Synod you have heard a great deal about both St. John’s and the Capital Campaign, I want to plant a few seeds. Never did we imagine when we began the campaign that the stock market would plummet, and many, including our Diocesan Treasury, would realize such negative effects. We are now being challenged to give not from our abundance but from our perceived needs. In other words, we have been challenged to give the first fruits to God, and that involves faith. Episcopalians like to vote with their wallets, and our Capital Campaign is an opportunity to proclaim that we have a faithful God who deserves all that we have. I fear all too often when I am at churches which have Offering Reception sentences that the sentences have degenerated into pious words instead of affirmations of faith: “ALL things come of thee, O Lord, and of thine own have we given thee.” It is not “Some things come of thee, O Lord, and we will keep what we think we need, especially when the stock market is in trouble.” This is a moment of truth for our Diocese. If we are a traditional, faithful, Bible believing Diocese, then we need to demonstrate it. This campaign will revitalize every church in the Diocese by providing resources that will energize and renew. I remind you that there is only one full time person in the Diocesan structure– and you are looking at him!

Likewise, many of our churches have priests who function in their church “part time” or priests who serve full time for part time stipends. It is time for us to adopt a more intentional mission strategy for each church, deanery, and region, so that we can pool our talents and utilize them wisely. As I have reviewed my Eight Synod Addresses, I note that I have made a number of points that have resulted in Resolutions, many of which have been ignored, forgotten, or misplaced. I do not necessarily see any point in frustrating any of us by making more Resolutions, but I would, however, make some observations that may result in some action.

First of all, I want you to know that I believe there is no excuse for our churches not growing. There is simply no excuse. But churches that do not pray do not grow. Every church in this Diocese should have Daily Morning and Evening Prayer. These are not liturgies that are dependent upon the clergy. If every church in this diocese recited the Daily Office, had a Prayer Group, had a Bible Study, and had an open door, changes would take place. All Bishops, priests and deacons are required to recite Morning Prayer and Evening Prayer. It is true, however, that we are not always in our churches. Clergy need to spend more time in the streets and in their people’s homes and less time in cyberspace. The recitation of the Daily Office is a joy to be shared by Laity and Clergy. Moreover, the Daily Office is not a substitute for Mass. I continue to be amazed to discover how many churches do not begin Sunday morning with Morning Prayer prior to the Eucharist. Please, beloved, institute the Daily Office, and see how you grow in grace and in size. And while we are at it, let us commit to attending at least one Eucharist during the week, apart from Sunday. Our Sunday attendance is what God asks of us. Our weekday attendance is our offering.

I also observe that we have a defeatist attitude when we are not growing. The laity blames the clergy, the clergy blame the laity. We need to accept corporate responsibility. I expect every church in this Diocese to grow by 10% this year. This will not be done by transferring unhappy Episcopalians from one parish to another parish. This must be done by visiting people in their homes at times other than when we just want their pledge cards. This will also mean calling on those who have stopped attending. It is time to find out why people have stopped attending, it is time to invite them back, and it is time to discuss what we can do to hold the family together. All natural families have disagreements, but if they miss the family reunion, people call on them. I have offered to send personal notes to our people who have stopped attending, and once again I extend the offer. I want our family to be gathered together in prayer, so that we can go forth united in the Power of the Holy Spirit. I am charging you, the Clergy and Lay leaders of this Diocese to make the recovery of the lapsed and the evangelization of the unchurched your top priorities after Prayer. We cannot possibly pray the Daily Offices without having a passion to evangelize.

Finally, I am asking you to commit yourselves to praying for me daily. I know when you pray for me; I can feel the power of your prayers. It is very difficult to be a bishop today. At our last Synod I resigned as Diocesan Bishop to be your Missionary Bishop, and I have spent a great deal of time in the Mission field this year. If I did not spend a full day in your church this year visiting the sick, calling on people, and leading a Bible Study it is because you did not ask me. You did not call me to be your Bishop because you liked how I looked behind a desk. I am not ashamed of the Gospel and I am not unwilling to walk the streets with you to proclaim it. St. Paul did not keep office hours; rather he went out among his people. When I became your Bishop I had to accept the fact that I must be willing to die for my sheep, but I will not do it in my office. I seek to be a Shepherd in the pastures of our Diocese, and I seek to proclaim the Truth of the Gospel in every community in what is called the Diocese of Quincy. I will knock on doors with you, I will meet with our mayors, and I will visit our hospitals. As an Apostle I have been consecrated to be a Defender and Proclaimer of the Gospel of Jesus Christ. I earnestly desire you to be a partner with me in this responsibility. For we have a Gospel to proclaim, and we are not ashamed of the Gospel for it is the power of salvation to all who believe – to the Rushvillians, to the Preemptionites, to the Peorians, and to those who have yet to hear the Gospel: where we have churches, where we don’t and where we should. But this I know I am not ashamed of the Gospel because it is the proclamation of the unchanging truth of the only One who has bought us with His blood, our Lord and Savior, Jesus Christ.

In the Name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit. Amen.

***+ Keith Quinciencis VIII***

✠ 2002

The Tenth Address of the Eighth Bishop of Quincy

***The Right Reverend Keith L. Ackerman, SSC***

to the 126th Synod of the Diocese of Quincy

at Trinity Church, Rock Island

October 17, 2003

***“Father, if it be possible let this Cup pass from me; nevertheless, not my will, but Thy will be done.”***

Beloved in Christ, in my last nine Synod Addresses, I have always addressed you from the Pulpit, and for good reason. I have never really done a “State of the Diocese Address”, but rather have shared with you the Good News of Jesus Christ. The pulpit must always be reserved for the Proclamation of the Word of God. In my 9 ½ years as your Bishop I have endeavored never to preach issues, never to use my Synod Address to advance my own personal agendas, nor to use the *Harvest Plain* as a political organ. In short, I have endeavored to place the Mission of the Church, the need to Evangelize, and the obligation to implement strategic growth ahead of the chaos that has infected our Church. In so doing I have shielded you from the many developments that have taken place as the American Province has continued to shrink in size and has continued to be in conflict with the rest of the Anglican Communion. That is why I am speaking *ex cathedra* at this Synod, because as chief Shepherd and chief Teacher of this Diocese, I must speak very frankly with you. In many ways, this is the Address I never wanted to deliver. It is the Cup that I have asked to be taken from me, but as a Successor to the Apostles, I am bidden to share with you certain realities in our common life as Anglican Christians in the Episcopal Church.

As you know I was born into an Episcopalian family, and I am one of those oddities in the Episcopal Church, namely a “cradle Anglo-Catholic.” At the age of five I knew God had called me to serve Him, and by the age of twelve I knew I was called to be a priest. With the exception of several diversions, including a brief stint on the pitcher’s mound, all of my efforts have been towards that end, namely being a priest in the Episcopal Church. In retrospect I can see that about thirty-five years ago, under the leadership of the Presiding Bishop at that time, some erosion of the Faith once delivered to the Saints began to occur such as respect for life from womb to tomb, the nature of Holy Matrimony, Faith and Order and our relationship with the rest of the Anglican Communion. Some of the erosion of that Faith was regional, but it was apparent that a stronger sense of centralization at the Episcopal Church Center was taking place. It was also obvious that the way in which we read and interpreted Holy Scripture was changing and references to the Episcopal Church as an “American Denomination” as opposed to being a Province of the Anglican Communion were becoming more common.

At the same time, we added to the office of Presiding Bishop the title “Primate.” Indeed, mention was even being made of the “national Church” as if there were in fact such an entity as opposed to our incorporated name, namely “The Domestic and Foreign Missionary Society of the Protestant Episcopal Church in the United States of America” which reflects the earlier reality that we are a confederation of dioceses, with the Senior Bishop being the Presiding Officer. Suddenly we had a Presiding Bishop and Primate who had no jurisdiction. Even the Pope has a Diocese as does the Archbishop of Canterbury. With this shift also came a type of “prophetic” imperialism whereby we Episcopalians in the United States began to function as if we knew what was best for the rest of the Anglican Communion. Living in a democracy is a very good thing, but assuming that God is the President of a democracy is a very dangerous thing. God does not act on the basis of our votes; rather we act on the basis of His commandments. At the Lambeth Conferences we began to see a growing animosity among the other Provinces towards the American Province partly because of our unequal representation. We were one of the smallest Provinces, one that was shrinking instead of growing, but we had the most Bishops present. Many Episcopalians interpreted that as anti-American sentiments and even tried to relate it to the policies of the United States government. The reality is that it was not and is not an anti-American sentiment; rather it is a reaction to the ways in which we as a Province have continued to stretch the limits of Anglican identity and ethos. In other words, for those who are asking, “Why are people so unhappy after this year’s General Convention”, the answer is, this has been developing for many years. In 1988 one of our priests, who was then Executive Director of a national organization and now is vicar of one of our Missions addressed the matter of the looming conflict over human sexuality by saying, “*We are pleased that the Church is exercising caution in Christian Teaching on sexuality, and that the Convention rejected efforts to weaken the Episcopal Church’s traditional teaching and practice. We are concerned about the nature and form of the dialogue to take place, particularly with the inclusion of “experience” as a theological category. This is a significant departure from Anglican method.”*  It was only 15 years ago that he made that statement.

Due to fact that I have been drawn into a variety of national and international Anglican gatherings, I have been privy to much information for a long time, almost from the beginning of my Episcopate, and in many ways, I have borne the burden of this information as your Father in God silently, but now we must carry it together. In some ways I have suffered in silence as I have witnessed General Conventions becoming more engaged in socio-political activities fueled by political pressure groups than in biblical and theological Kingdom building through the conversion of the world to Jesus Christ. But I have returned home to this precious Diocese with the knowledge that I am blessed to be the Bishop of very godly people in the Diocese of Quincy, with holy predecessors who have labored long and hard in this vineyard. Nonetheless I can feel the knot in my stomach months before each General Convention wondering how much damage control I will have to do when I return home and how many media interviews I will have to do.

Unfortunately, the Secular Media has focused on two issues only, namely the confirmation of the election as Bishop-Coadjutor of a divorced man who is living in a relationship other than that which is defined in Holy Scripture and reaffirmed by the Anglican Communion, and the passage of a Resolution that gives tacit approval to homosexual marriage, commonly called “the blessing of same gender relationships” again contrary to the actions of the Lambeth Conference. Both of these actions specifically violate the Resolution passed by more than 90% in 1998 at the Lambeth Conference. This Resolution was given much prayer and attention and was agreed upon by diverse groups. In rejecting the Lambeth Resolution, the Episcopal Church has not only refused to abide by Lambeth Conference, but it has exceeded its own authority as defined in its own Constitution and Canons and in the preface of the first American *Book of Common Prayer*. The tragedy is that the Press only likes “sound-bytes” and the media is simply incapable of explaining theological concepts with its various nuances. Moreover, when this is coupled with both a House of Bishops and a House of Deputies whose primary expression is not theological articulation and communication, our corporate life becomes chaotic. It is becoming increasingly clear that many people really believe that the crisis in the Episcopal Church is all about human sexuality, and this simply is not true. Certainly, there have been homosexual clergy throughout history. Indeed, sexuality is one part of our humanity, but it has never been, until recent years, a primary expression of the definition of our being. Indeed, in many places it would appear that our sexuality is more important than the other complex elements that constitute a human being. And the age in which we live gives little attention to the virtues of chastity and celibacy.

Our society, and indeed, the social sciences have all too often placed a greater emphasis upon its own ever-changing findings rather than on the unchanging Word of God. Moreover, speaking as one trained in the social sciences, generally speaking, we often address and treat symptoms of deeper realities than treating the deeper realities themselves. That is, symptoms invite us into looking for root problems and issues. Unfortunately, the media all too often only reports on the various symptoms. In other words, we tend to react to symptoms that are only presenting problems as if they were ends in and of themselves, rather than to look at these symptoms as being windows into significant and complex circumstances. Moreover, as Karl Menninger has written in his book *Whatever became of Sin,* we have substituted sin with new definitions of behavior by making all elements of our being subject to psycho-sociological analysis and definition as opposed to submitting ourselves to God for the purpose of forgiveness, healing, and transformation. This applies to all elements of our life and is not limited to human sexuality. In other words, human beings are not condemned to being enslaved by their nature, but are in the position of being liberated by the Healing Power of Jesus Christ that transforms nature. Through our Baptism we are made new. We repent, we participate in *metanoia*, and we become inheritors of the Kingdom. This Kingdom consists of sinners, that is, human beings who succumb to whatever impulse they have that violates the Word of God and ruptures their relationship with the One who created them. To select one sin and hold it above others is unfortunate. The Scriptures are clear: *All have sinned and fall short of the Glory of God.* But, again as the Psalmist tells us *with the Lord there is plenteous redemption, with the Lord there is forgiveness and He shall redeem Israel from all their sins.*

Therefore, all of us stand before God with our own weaknesses and with our own *bete noir.* Even St. Paul makes reference to his own besetting sin, and yet we do not define the Patron of our Diocese on the basis of whatever struggle he was having. Therefore, I beg you to open your arms to all people, for this Diocese is open to all who are seeking to know Jesus Christ as their Lord and Savior. This is what makes the last General Convention so difficult, for it has distracted us and usurped our time, resources, and energy and prevented us from doing what we have been primarily called to do. It also makes it appear that we are unsympathetic towards those who struggle with pain and conflict within their very being. The Great Commission is crystal clear: We are to baptize in the Name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, we are to keep all of our Lord’s commandments, and we are to be assured of His constant presence. Obedience is a central theme of the Gospelas is the call to draw all people to the love of Jesus Christ who poured forth His life for all people, no matter who or what they are. Our response is to live in a way that glorifies Him.

Upon returning from General Convention as I reflected on the various actions, I was somewhat stunned. Perhaps you already know what troubled me. It was, the near adoption of an innovative plan that would have allowed unbaptized people to receive Communion. It was a total misunderstanding of what Christian Baptism is all about. It was the utilization of Liturgies that make no reference to the Holy Trinity, the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit and that removes all mention of Jesus as Lord and King. It was the idea that Jesus is just one of the ways to the Father. It was the defeat of Resolution B-001 by 60% of the House of Bishops that would have affirmed absolute belief in the Old and New Testaments, the Chicago-Lambeth Quadrilateral, the Thirty-Nine Articles, the Creeds, and the Ecumenical Councils of the Church. This, by the way, was the “Quincy resolution” that was passed unanimously at last year’s Synod. In failing to pass this Resolution we are now in utter chaos as to what we have in common when we sit down to have a significant debate or conversation not only with other Provinces of the Anglican Communion, but also other Christians. It is a bit like having an intercultural debate without ever discovering the principles upon which we agree. A failure to begin with traditionally agreed upon tenets is very confusing to those who have inherited a particular body of revealed Faith. The result is chaos, because we begin to import, often without telling others, new principles that we think are more authoritative than those that we have always agreed upon. You see, it is quite wrong to say that the issues are New Hampshire and Resolution C-051. It has been said by some that they are happy to be in a Church, that is, a Province, which has conversation about very difficult matters. I concur, but the actions of this General Convention stopped the conversation. It would be as if a husband and a wife were having an ongoing conversation about buying a particular automobile. They disagree, but they keep talking. However, if the husband drives home one night in the very automobile they had been disagreeing on, I guarantee you that the conversation about a potential purchase will cease. The conversation will probably become an argument, because the husband showed little respect for his wife’s input and point of view. He says, “let’s discuss this matter.” She says, “what is there to discuss; you cut me out of the conversation.”

This is how the Primates felt as they gathered at Lambeth for an emergency meeting. They had been engaged in conversation with each other, and they had been assured by the Primates in Canada and the United States that nothing extraordinary would happen in their Provinces so that the conversation could continue, but we ended the conversation by taking contrary actions to both the Lambeth Conference and the recent Primates’ meeting held just weeks before our General Convention. The Primates believe that we have exceeded our authority, violated our own Constitution, and have told the rest of the Anglican Communion, “I have no need of you.” Thus, thirty-five years of shifting has come to a defining moment in the history of Anglicanism. The real question before us is, are we so enamored with being Episcopalians that we have absolutely no interest in remaining Anglicans, that is, being part of a world-wide Communion. To phrase it differently, I am making every effort I can as your Bishop to prevent us from being expelled from the Anglican Communion, resulting in us becoming an American Protestant Denomination in Communion with no historic See, rather than members of a world-wide Communion that is a part of the One, Holy, Catholic, and Apostolic Church in Communion with the historic See of St. Augustine in Canterbury. This has resulted in my being a part of several national and international events, which are exhausting but essential if we are to maintain full Communion with the rest of the Anglican Communion. We run the risk of being in Communion with several American Denominations while being out of Communion with the largest Provinces in the Anglican Communion.

Indeed, saying that we are Episcopalians first and that we will die with that identity gives us a peculiar form of patriotism: “My Church right or wrong,” as many who say that criticize those who say, “My country, right or wrong.” This was to be seen in the Resolutions at General Convention that were scathing denunciations of our Government and the President of the United States.

Tonight, I am speaking in very plain words to you. Like Elijah I am convinced that we cannot “*limp along with two opinions”* regarding the Word of God, or as one translation says: “*How long will you sit on the fence?”* I have mentioned the presenting problems, but what are the underlying root problems and principles?

To begin with, it is the matter of Biblical reasoning and interpretation. It means do we do scholastic *exegetical* analysis or do we employ *eisogetical* principles. In other words, how do you and I view the Holy Scriptures? Do we believe that the Holy Scriptures are, in fact, reliable, or must we revise and embellish them in light of our ever-changing culture, thus meaning that each culture or nation around the world will and must interpret Holy Scriptures in light of where they live? That is, do we believe in objective truth or do we see all truth as subjective and evolutionary? Indeed, Anglicans are not inherently Biblical Fundamentalists, but I have come to realize that there is a growing fundamentalism in the Episcopal Church; it is canonical fundamentalism, in my opinion, for it holds up General Convention and its Constitution and Canons above another Book, which we call the Bible. Biblical interpretation is, indeed, done in the context of the Eucharistic Community, but it must be understood that the implications of Holy Scripture are as significant to today’s world and Church as they were to the Church in Corinth, Ephesus, and Rome. As one of our priests has said, “It is a matter of *Love letters versus historical artifacts. If you believe that Scripture contains love letters to you, his beloved, from a God who is love, then you will hang on every word. Every precious thing said in them conveys the infinite care and solicitude of the lover who would preserve you for himself until he brings you home. You want to read them over and over, in order to experience again the breath of love that rustles in their pages. You thrill with love in your own heart as it answers to the love found in the Bible. You long to be all that He wants you to be, especially when he has promised to send you all the help you need to become the beautiful bride He will be proud of.*

*On the other hand, many who call themselves Christian today seem not to experience this intimacy in the scriptures, much to the consternation of those who do. These analytical Christians find only dry leaves of an ancient tree long dead, worthy perhaps of “scientific” scrutiny as an historical curiosity. But these dead letters have only passing relevance to the needs of people today, who are the children of a new and green tree.”*

What this priest and Rector has eloquently shared with us is the crux of the matter. He, in effect, gives us an analysis of what can be called the *traditional hermeneutic* versus the *new hermeneutic.* It is the former that has been traditionally held by Anglicans and reaffirmed by this week’s emergency Primates Meeting; it is the latter that has been adopted in a post-modern, post-Christian age. Indeed, our own Richard Hooker, the Elizabethan apologist, was rather clear about Scripture. For him it was not *sola Scriptura,* but rather it was the preeminence of Holy Scripture from which one is able to use Holy Tradition and Divine Reason as ways of reinforcing Scripture. It was not a three-legged stool, rather as one of our priests has said “*It is more like an iceberg with Scripture being at the top”.* Thus, for us today it will be a matter of determining how it is that Holy Scripture informs and guides us as we analyze new developments in all areas in our culture. Again, since this is not a *sound byte* you will not see this in the newspaper or hear it on the 6:00 News.

This leads us to the dilemma of what has transpired since General Convention in our Diocese and in our Province. Our Canons require Resolutions to be filed 30 days prior to Synod. In the past the Resolutions Committee in consultation with those who submitted the Resolution then reviews such Resolutions. These Resolutions are refined, and then are presented at the Deanery Pre-Synod meetings. Once again, they are refined in light of feedback from these meetings. Those who do not attend these meetings do us a disservice, because they often introduce matters at Synod that have been discussed or even resolved at the pre-Synod meetings. In addition, this year we had a Clergy Day to discuss the various matters of General Convention and we invited each priest to bring someone from their Bishop’s Committee, Vestry, or Cathedral Chapter. Several churches had no lay representation, and two priests did not attend. Again, not attending these meetings means that some come to Synod without a sufficient amount of information. This year three sets of resolutions were written with the full knowledge that most of the Resolutions would be revised and other resolutions withdrawn on the basis of what happened at a large Meeting in Dallas Texas called “A Place to Stand,” and the emergency Primates’ meeting in London that concluded yesterday. Unfortunately, someone shared these pre-synod draft resolutions with the Press. This then sparked a response from one of us that was used by the media. I have a healthy respect for the media, but I am also aware of what sells papers and what causes stations to have higher ratings than others. Thus, we, as a Diocese, have had to witness this year’s Synod already publicly reviewed by those who will undoubtedly be astounded by the Resolutions that actually will be presented. I have been amazed to read headlines saying that the Diocese of Quincy is splitting from the Episcopal Church and to learn of someone suggesting that all of this is the Bishop’s attempt to lead us out of the Episcopal Church because of women’s ordination. How in the world can I even respond to absurd statements such as those? **It will be the Holy Spirit who will guide us in our deliberations, and it will be the Hand of God that will guide us in our common life together.**

As a result of the phenomenal fall out since General Convention, I was asked by the Presiding Bishop along with nine other bishops to attend a two-day meeting in New York. Several things became clear: entire vestries have resigned, people are leaving the Episcopal Church, both Lay and Ordained, Special Diocesan Synods have had to be called to try to stop the hemorrhage, the Presiding Bishop has been uninvited to consecrate a priest as Bishop-Coadjutor of Florida, Islamic and Anglican dialogue has been halted, Ecumenical relationships are being severely strained, several Communions and Denominations have already issued statements of denunciation, the Episcopal Church has been excommunicated by several Anglican Provinces, with apparently more to come, and several Bishops have immediately announced their retirements. Beloved no matter where you stand on several issues, the Episcopal Church is in chaos, and I as your Bishop am giving every waking moment to praying and acting in ways that will not allow our Diocese to be sucked into this chaos. Our task is to make Christ, known, worshipped, and adored, to provide a safe place for all of you who have been committed to my care, and to take seriously the vows I made when I was consecrated as your Bishop 9 ½ years ago. My personality type is to try to avoid conflict, but just as Thomas a Becket had to decide between his love for his friend, King Henry, and his love for the Lord of the Church, I have had to keep my eyes on Jesus and not be distracted by those who wish to use me to accomplish their own ends or to sidetrack me into becoming a second rate ecclesiocrat. I am not an elected official with constituencies; rather I am a Bishop with a flock. I have been and will simply continue to be a man who can only take orders from One – namely the King of Kings and Lord of Lords. It is He who will judge me and my intentions; it will not be my supporters or my opponents. It was with openness and honesty that I spoke in New York with the Presiding Bishop and nine other bishops last month so that there would be no hidden agendas. I leave it to others to judge what I said there.

Upon returning from New York, I shortly thereafter went to London, meeting with Bishops from around the world, including the Archbishop of Canterbury who presented a significant theological paper. He shared his deep concern about the General Convention and reiterated the necessity of abiding by Lambeth Conference Resolutions. He also spoke of a possible realignment in the Communion.

And then there was Dallas. Although due to Jo’s father’s death, we were only there for the first half of the Conference, elsewhere at this Synod you will discover the significance of what happened there, as nearly 3000 people prayed and prepared for what the Primates would say.

And now the Primates have spoken. In their dramatic statement released yesterday they have spoken with clarity and boldness about such subjects as the authority of Scripture, the expulsion of Provinces from the Anglican Communion, alternative Episcopal oversight and broken Communion. In addition, a commission has been established by the Primates under their oversight to review the legal implications of Provinces that rebel against the rest of the Anglican Communion. In a typically polite way, the Primates have called the Diocese of New Westminster, the Diocese of New Hampshire in Canada and the Episcopal Church to reverse its actions. In these actions the Archbishop of Canterbury as *First among Equals* has pledged his absolute support and leadership. The commission that has been formed will do all in its power to keep the Anglican Communion together. Indeed, as one insider in London said, “This meeting was a miracle, for the Anglican Communion is protected, and those who are seen as disrupting this union are placed in the position of having to change.”

As the Primates have said, the actions of the American Church, *“threaten the unity of our own Communion as well as our relationships with other parts of Christ’s Church, our mission and witness, and relations with other faiths, in a world already confused in areas of sexuality, morality and theology, and* *polarized* *Christian opinion.”* They go on to say that the Episcopal Church has no authority *“unilaterally to substitute an alternative teaching as if it were the teaching of the entire Anglican Communion*.” In addition, they tell us that if the Bishop-Coadjutor elect of New Hampshire is consecrated by the Presiding Bishop on November 2 then, “*we recognize that we have reached a crucial and critical point in the life of the Anglican* *Communion and we have had to conclude that the future of the Communion itself will be put in jeopardy. In this case, the ministry of this one bishop will not be recognized by most of the Anglican world, and many provinces are likely to consider themselves to be out of Communion with the Episcopal Church (USA). This will tear the fabric of our Communion at its deepest level, and may lead to further division on this and* *further issues as provinces have to decide in consequence whether they can remain in communion with provinces that choose not to break communion with the Episcopal Church (USA).”* We are urged *“not to act precipitately,” but we are to “take time to share in this process of reflection and to consider (our) own constitutional requirements as individual provinces face up to potential realignments*.” Finally, our Most Reverend Fathers in God tell us that “*It* *is clear that these recent controversies have opened debates within the life of our Communion which will not be resolved until there has been a lengthy process of prayer, reflection and substantial work in and alongside the Commission which we have recommended. We pray that God will equip our Communion to be equal to the task and challenges which lie before it.”*

In all of this, the Lord has drawn me more and more into the Garden of Gethsemane, the Chapel in our house, where before the Blessed Sacrament I have prayed slept, and wept, interceding for each of you, for the Episcopal Church, for Dallas, and for the Primates. The Lord has ministered to me in ways that I cannot even express, but in ways that only reinforce what I have been saying to you since General Convention. We are first and foremost to be people of prayer. I am grateful for the many, many e-mails, letters, cards, and Mission and Vestry Resolutions that have conveyed the theme of support. But in all things, beloved, remember that when the history of this Diocese is written, it will be your support of the Gospel of Jesus Christ that will endure, long after you and I are called home from our earthly pilgrimage.

This is a remarkable time to be an Anglican Christian and it will require our Province and our Diocese to recognize how significant our relationship is with our brothers and sisters around the word. Or as one overseas friend put it, “Your Diocese is just boringly normal in the Anglican Communion.”

I wish I could have shared with you all of the excitement I have about our Diocese – a good Capital Campaign that is winding down, parishes and missions working together in partnership to share resources, starting a new church, St. Francis Chillicothe moving into a high growth area in Dunlap, growth in our churches, the rebuilding of St. John’s Quincy, a UTO grant for the youth center in the new parish hall basement at St. George’s Macomb, the new parish hall at Christ Church Moline. But tonight, you deserved to hear what is really happening rather than what others perceive is happening.

**For my failures to pray often enough, for my failures to thank you enough, for my failures to give you enough of myself, I ask your forgiveness. For your unconditional love, for your loving support, for your hugs, and for your generosity I give thanks. But in all things, I ask you this, Be firm in your faith. Listen carefully to others but not more than you listen to God. Pray more than you worry and complain, and have compassion and love for those who feel abandoned and hurt. You, beloved, represent me, but more importantly you represent the One who called me to be your Bishop.**

I can truly say that while I have prayed that this Cup pass from me, it is obvious that the Primates under the guidance of the Holy Spirit are with us in the Garden of Gethsemane. We are not alone, and as your Bishop I am more convinced than ever that I must say to you, in spite of the pain, in spite of the conflict, in spite of praying that this cup pass from me*, not my will, but Thy will be done,* at this Synod, in this Diocese, in this Province, and in this Communion.

To God Be the Glory

***+ Keith Quinciencis VIII***

✠ 2003

The Eleventh Address of the Eighth Bishop of Quincy

***The Right Reverend Keith L. Ackerman, SSC***

to the 127th Synod of the Diocese of Quincy

at St. George’s Church, Macomb, Illinois

October 15, 2004

***“And even if our gospel is veiled, it is veiled to those who are perishing. In their case the god of this world has blinded the minds of the unbelievers to keep them from seeing the light of the Gospel of the glory of Christ, who is the image of the Father.”***

*2 Corinthians 4:3,4*

It is very difficult for me to imagine that this is my eleventh Synod Address as Bishop of the Diocese of Quincy. I can most certainly say that eleven years ago when I was first contacted by the Search Committee of this Diocese I, along with you, would never have imagined all that would take place in our nation, in our world and in our Church. In fact, in some ways a great deal of what has transpired is to me both incomprehensible and incredible.

As it relates to the Church as a whole, we are dealing with issues that one would never have imagined, and as a nation we have encountered what virtually no one would have predicted, namely an attack on our very own soil. The responses to being attacked vary; we can ignore them, we can say that they do not affect me, and we can incorporate into our soul the fears, doubts and uncertainties that come with the trauma of being attacked. Indeed, even included in the various manuals that explain psychiatric and emotional disorders, we find Post-Traumatic Situation Disorders, which to a large extent cause us to function in ways that are not characteristic of normal behavior. Indeed, there are often flashbacks and also responses that formerly would have been termed as limited to those who function in a psychotic way, with a complete disconnection from reality. Admittedly we often create our own worlds and our own limited environments where we establish our own subjective truths and rules that are generally not based on reality or the prevailing universal truths, but rather on our own wounded experiences.

But if there is one thing, we have learned of late it is that we are, in fact, a global environment, and our Patron St. Paul’s teaching regarding the relationship of the various members of the body is now an international reality. Little did St. Paul imagine that one day one could say, *“If my brother or sister in the Sudan is in pain, then I in the United States am in pain.”* Thus, the reality of the global interconnectedness that we observe makes it impossible for us to retreat into a personal existence that is devoid of a well-informed conscience that is subservient to universal laws and principles. Moreover, given the rapidly changing landscape, the one thing that is needed is a sense of stability. Neither the Church nor the world any longer offers that stability. Indeed, it is ironic that sociologically speaking, the movements and religions that are growing operate, to a large extent, on principles of absolutism. Again, sociologically speaking, one might conclude that a perspective that carries with it a stated principle that can be supported is what the society is longing to have. In fact, that is precisely what God intended in revealing to us the ***Ten Commandments***. To a large extent these universal teachings when not followed lead to chaos, family break down and cultural decadence. Moreover, in virtually all cultural breakdowns, one sees a severe change in the articulation of belief in a personal god. To quote *Christian A. Schwarz* in his book **Paradigm Shift in the Church**:

*“I am in no doubt that a wrong (e.g., institutionalistic or spiritualistic) ecclesiology certainly can lead to hindrances towards church development, but they are not the causes, they are merely symptoms of a far more deep-seated defect: a wrong view of God. And where we do not understand the nature of God, however conscientiously we phrase the details of our ecclesiology, we cannot really understand the nature of the church.”* (page 49)

It would appear that, the more appealing we make our construction of God, the less enthusiastic the vast majority of people are to our new hypothetical construct. Indeed, one of the best ways to deconstruct God is to rename Him. To alter the root metaphor that has transcended all time and cultures is to offer a reversal of the Creation Story, where we as people now have the democratic authority to vote in a God of our own creation, one who is created in our own limited ethnocentric realities. Either the revealed, personal God whom Jesus our Savior calls “Father” is the One whom we worship or adore or He is not. God the Creator is not a *George Burns* look-alike who one day retired and turned all of His authority over to the created.

Therefore, the Church and the world will continue to fight enumerable battles as if they were the worst yet, treating them as if they were the penultimate misrepresentation of truth, or we will look deeper to discover that our real crisis deals with the nature of God and the nature of the Church. Virtually all heresies, including the traditional ones and the reworked ones now being passed off as new and fresh have at their very foundation a misunderstanding or misrepresentation of the nature of God, the undivided Trinity, and the Body of Christ, the One, Holy, Catholic and Apostolic Church. Do we believe in a personal God, one who can still break into this sinful world? The former Archbishop of Canterbury, ***George Carey*** in his book **Why I believe in a Personal God** says, that perhaps one of the real dilemmas we face is a misunderstanding of evil. He says,

*“Pain and evil are inevitable consequences of the world being, as it is.”* (page 78)

He goes on to say,

*‘Because only “persons” can understand, think, or reason it is only with persons that we can enter into relationships of the deepest kind. At a much deeper level of personhood, we judge a person by his or her moral behavior and capacity to love, honor, and respect others. It is in these qualities that Christians find the full flowering of their idea of what it is to be a person. That God is a person they have no doubt, because he has shown himself to be that in Jesus Christ.”*

Thus, any conclusions reached that are inconsistent with the revelation of God in Christ are at the most rudimentary level subjective constructs that often exist as diversions at best and sin at worst. Our Lord’s Temptation in the Wilderness shows us that no one is exempt from temptation, and while it is true that we are tempted in weakness we must remember that the temptations will almost always be in areas where there is the possibility for the misuse of the gifts that have been given to us.

To put it in another way, Satan is real and he continues to be the One who makes sin attractive and even acceptable. One need only watch television for one hour to see that what we invite into our living rooms today is what Christians have traditionally fought and avoided. St. Peter tells us, ***“Brethren be sober be vigilant, for your adversary the Devil like a roaring lion prowls about seeking whom he may devour.”*** He goes on to tells us *(II Peter 1:20, 21)* that ***“...no prophecy of scripture is a matter of one’s own interpretation, because no prophecy ever came by human will, but those moved by the Holy Spirit spoke from God.”*** One of the tasks of the enemy is to lead us astray, to confuse us, to blind us from truth, and to alter seriously that which God has revealed in His Son Jesus Christ, “who is the same yesterday, today, and forever.” Thus, the world HAS found the answer - and His name is **Jesus**; and no one comes to the Father but through Him...

Therefore, Satan seeks to change the revealed image of a personal God and Savior, to confuse the faithful interpretation of Scripture and to leave us with a confused and ever-changing sense of the nature of the Church, that is suddenly not governed by the revealed Word of God, but by canons and procedures created in an age of confusion. As *G.K. Chesterton* tells us through a character who functions as a “Satan symbol” in his book **The Man Who Was Thursday**,

*"I tell you this: that you will have found out the truth of the last tree and the topmost cloud before the truth about me. You will understand the sea, and I shall still be a riddle; you shall know what the stars are, and not know what I am. Since the beginning of the world all men have hunted me like a wolf – kings and sages, and poets and lawgivers, all the churches, and all the philosophies. But I have never been caught yet, and the skies will fall in the time I turn to bay. I have given them a good run for their money, and I will now.”* (Pp.160, 161)

Therefore, not only have we been able to slide into the treachery of believing in an impersonal god, but we have, in our pseudo-sophistication and to our own soul’s detriment determined that there is no personification of evil. Not only have we constructed a non-transcendent God, but also, we have created a Satan who is only symbolic of social ills and injustice. Ironically while we have elevated our own mortal nature into being the saviors of society, we have demythologized evil into that which seems only to be needed to be defeated in this world.

Therefore, evil and good, rather than being manifestations of their authors, become issues that must be attacked, once again treating the symptoms rather than the root. In their book **The New Tolerance**, *Josh McDowell* and *Bob Hostetler* tell us that,

*“Traditional tolerance values, respects, and accepts the individual without necessarily approving of or participating in his or her beliefs or behavior. Traditional tolerance differentiates between what a person thinks or does and the person himself. But today’s definition – the concept our children are being taught in schools and through the media – is vastly different.”* (P 18)

As *Stanley J. Grenz* points out in his book **A Primer to Postmodernism**:

*“…this new tolerance is based on the unbiblical belief that ‘truth is relative to the community in which a person participates. And since there are many human communities, there are necessarily many different truths.”* (P.14)

McDowell goes on to define postmodernism as follows:

It is *“…a worldview characterized by the belief that truth doesn’t exist in any objective sense but is created rather than discovered. Postmodernists think things like reason, rationality, and confidence in science are cultural biases. Truth – whether in science, education, or religion – is created by the specific culture and exists only in that culture. Therefore, any system or statement that tries to communicate truth is a power play, an effort to dominate other cultures.”* (P.208)- see also *Jim Leffel:* **Our Old Challenge**: Modernism- The Death of Truth.

The result of this amalgamated reasoning is that it is neither sound theologically nor sociologically and is inconsistent with the image of God and the image of the Church as revealed in the Holy Scriptures, the Church Fathers, and the Ecumenical Councils. This form of “process theology” can only work with a radical redefinition of God, of Satan, of the Church, and of the Holy Scriptures. A particularly symbolic mantra is the one that proclaims that “social justice IS orthodox theology.” By radically redefining our terms we can even create syllogisms that are initially illogical and incongruent but are ultimately logical. Moreover, at the root of the dysfunction is “anecdotalism” that elevates “my experience to the level of truth, and canonizes “opinion” as necessarily divinely inspired. As *Edmund Burke* said on November 3, 1774 from his speech to the Electors of Bristol:

*“Certainly, Gentlemen, it ought to be the happiness and glory of a representative to live in the strictest union, the closest correspondence, and the most unreserved communication with his constituents. Their wishes ought to have great weight with him; their opinions high respect, their business unremitted attention. It is his duty to sacrifice his repose, his pleasure, his satisfactions, to theirs, - and above all, and in all cases, to prefer their interest to his own.*

*But his unbiased opinion, his mature judgement, his enlightened conscience, he ought not to sacrifice to you, to any man, or to any set of men living. These he does not derive from your pleasure, - no, nor from the law and the Constitution. They are a trust from Providence, for the abuse of which he is deeply answerable. Your representative owes you, not his industry only, but his judgement, and he betrays, instead of serving you, if he sacrifices it to your opinion.”*

Thus, the battle before us is not as easy as one might think, for it is an attempt to reclaim the very soul of a revealed Religion that transcends denominational barriers, for the evils of the world transcend the old definitions. David Nichols (Two Tendencies in Anglo-Catholic Political Theology - -Politics and Theological Identity) sees all of this in what he and others term an “incarnationalist slant”. He believes that God’s kingdom will come “slowly, silently, and peacefully, and that the mighty will be lowered so gently from their seats as not to feel the bump when they reach the ground.” It sees reconciliation in a very different way from the usual secular view that sees reconciliation as that which exists on a totally horizontal plane; that is, reconciliation is that which WE accomplish with each other. HOW that is accomplished is not necessarily important, and is often the political divide between those who believe in force and those who do not. The Biblical principle regarding reconciliation, however, is that Christ IS reconciling us with Himself, and in so doing, we must be drawn ever closer to Him. Horizontal reconciliation may coincidentally include some general concept of a deity, but Christians believe that we must be reconciled with Christ. Even the Kiss of Peace is only an empty reconciling exercise unless we realize that we are greeting each other with the eternal objective Shalom/ peace of God, rather than the transitory, subjective and fragile peace of the world. Therefore, as Nichols tells us, “The incarnationalist sees the purpose of God in Christ as the ultimate reconciliation of all things, yet insists that the death of Christ on the cross represents the mortal battle between the forces of good and evil in the universe *(cf. Ephesians 6:12.)*

Thus, once again, identifying the enemy all too often is far too simple, and conceivably the enemy is “anyone who disagrees with me.” But, beloved, individual disagreement is not unhealthy. Conflict does not need to be a matter of division. But when we take debate to the level of canonical strength that is achieved through a majority vote as if “might makes right” then we have succumbed to the temptation to elevate human opinion to the level of Divine Revelation. In a society that demands a quick meal and “instant messaging” I fear we have fallen into the trap of assuming that “thinking is praying”, “praying is thinking”, and God will only fully reveal Himself when He is blessed with a world of reasonable thinkers who can quickly produce a position paper.

*St. Gregory the Great* in his classic work **Regula Pastoralis** warns us,

*“The quarrelsome are to be admonished that if they turn away their ears from heavenly precepts, they should open the mind to what happens in the lowest order of beings – the fact that often birds of the same kind do not separate from one another, but fly together in a flock. The peaceful are to be admonished that in loving more than is necessary the peace which they have, they may not be in a mood to achieve that peace which is everlasting... The peaceable are also to be admonished not to desire human peace too much and so fail entirely to reprove the evil conduct of men. By thus conniving at their perversities, they will sever the bond of peace with their Creator, and in fearing to deal publicly with human quarrels, they will be punished for a breach of the law that binds their souls. Indeed, what is transitory peace but the footprint, so to speak, of the peace that is eternal? What, then, can be more insane than to love footprints made in dust, but not to love Him by whom they were impressed?”* (pp. 165, 166 Part III)

Our response to all of this, unfortunately, is to be found in a statement by *Lyle E. Schaller* in his book **The New Reformation**:

*“Will schisms and divisions be the dominant pattern in the twenty-first century, or will the urge to merge continue as the politically correct stance?” He goes on to say that the so-called” middle” is shrinking and that the two extremes in Christianity can be characterized as “those who believe Christianity is a revealed religion filled with givens that come from God the Creator….where the central focus (is) on Jesus Christ as Lord and Savior…” versus “..those who are convinced that each new generation of believers has both the right and the responsibility to define new images of the faith, to introduce new language and to redefine the basic belief system…”* (p 133)

Perhaps now we have come to the crux of the problem. In terms of Anglicanism in general and the American Province of the Anglican Communion, called the Episcopal Church, the lines seem to be drawn. Unfortunately, the lines change, and each new issue results in more fractures, more divisions and more hemorrhaging of the Church into which many of us have been born. And with each new issue there are another set of enemies. There are those who analyze all of these ruptures in terms of political realities, but I must take us back to the earlier points I have made: if we continue to treat symptoms, then we will have more generations of conflict that result in decreased membership and no resolution to the underlying issues. The underlying issues are ecclesiological - what do we believe the Church is, Biblical – what is the authority of the Word of God, Spiritual – what is the relationship between God and Satan (spiritual warfare) and finally what do we mean when we say “God?”

Until the Church seriously addresses in a theological fashion, which includes well informed people, rather than small groups that pool limited information married with feelings and opinions, we will be condemned to a future of what appears to be entrenched chaos. These matters will not be resolved by Synods and Conventions, nor will they be resolved by Concordats and Treaties. These matters can only be resolved by humbly submitting ourselves to God and by being reconciled to Him through His Son, who has bought us with the price of His life. Anything short of that will make us no different from any organization that seeks to exalt its own importance.

I did not become your Bishop to enter into every skirmish that could be resolved with humility and prayer, but I also did not become your Bishop to shirk from my responsibility as a Successor to the Apostles who is bound to speak the truth with love and Apostolic zeal. I can understand why the vast majority of Anglicanism resents the cavalier nature of our Province when it seemingly disregards the very tender unity that exists between us and many who laid their lives on the line daily just for professing that they are Christians. It is not our mission to force martyrdom, nor is it our mission to place those in our global Church in situations that may result in their harm. The health of Anglicanism worldwide is great, and along with you I wait upon the Lord for His guidance, which will not come from our anger or our self-righteousness or our sociological self-martyrdoms, that pale in comparison to our brothers and sisters who are dying daily for their faith in Jesus Christ.

I ask you to join me in my prayers for unity, for an increase in the study of Holy Scriptures, in praying for those with whom with disagree, and in placing ourselves at the foot of the cross, for it will only be at that place that we will begin to understand. The Church is long past the luxury of Renewal. The Church must be engaged in the Reclamation of the world, not in the pretentious sense of being “co-creators” with God, but as servants who are obliged to live under the Lordship of Jesus Christ, who came ***“…not to be served but to serve.”***

***“Therefore, since it is by God’s mercy that we are engaged in this ministry, we do not lose heart. We have renounced the shameful things that one hides; we refuse to practice cunning or to falsify God’s Word, but by the open statement of truth we commend ourselves to the conscience of everyone in the sight of God.”***  *2 Corinthians 4:1, 2.*

***“To God be the Glory”***

***+ Keith Quinciencis***

✠ 2004

The Twelfth Address of the Eighth Bishop of Quincy

***The Right Reverend Keith L. Ackerman, SSC***

to the 128th Synod of the Diocese of Quincy

at Christ Church, Moline, Illinois

October 14, 2005

***“Be it unto me according to Your word.”***

***“Then Satan entered Judas.”***

I am certain that you have found my opening of this Synod Address to be quite peculiar and unrelated. I must confess, that as I have been praying about this Address and these two apparently unrelated verses came to mind, I also wondered. On one hand to preach a Sermon or do a meditation on the Blessed Virgin Mary would be a refreshing task for me, and it would consist of quite a few biblical references. On the other hand, doing a meditation or preaching a Sermon regarding Judas Iscariot would be, for me, a brief offering consisting of a few references and I would present it during Holy Week. Nonetheless I believe that the Lord has not taken me off the hook this year, and inasmuch as I am bidden to share with you what I perceive He has given me, rather than what I feel like giving you, I hope to show what I now see as an incredible connection between these two significant characters in terms of Salvation History.

In the case of the Blessed Virgin Mary, it must be obvious to you after my eleven and a half years with you that I have a great devotion to Our Lady, and have always been convinced that one of the dilemmas in the Church today is a failure to reconcile her role as clearly revealed in Holy Scripture with a world view that either elevates her beyond what appears to be her vocation or reduces her to the status of being a minor and coincidental participant in an event that is perceived by some as shrouded with legend. In both perspectives we can see a great deal of projection, much of which is emotional and thus very human.

In the case of Judas Iscariot once again we see extremes. Either he is shown to be symbolic of all that is in opposition to God’s plan or he is seen as a willing or unwilling participant in the greatest injustice ever perpetrated in all of history – the murder of the only begotten son of God. Or he can even be seen as a helpless pawn in a heavenly chess game engineered by God Himself. No matter what one’s point of view maybe he can be dismissed easily enough fifty-one weeks per year and brought to the surface only when we wish to give a former friend a new name or when we have run out of positive sermons during Holy Week.

In order to approach these two Biblical characters, we must first look at the circumstances involving their vocations. Clearly, from what we can determine, neither one applied for their positions. Perhaps the vocational purist might say that in one sense both did, because they both were practicing Jews, and therefore, by virtue of their convictions at least in theory they had to be willing to be obedient to the one true God since they lived in a world where they were distinct minorities. Rome barely tolerated the Jews, and various inhabitants of Palestine adopted an attitude that there were many points of view about the deities; so, for the sake of unity just humor these misguided people. Some progressive thinkers of a more reconciling disposition even believed that the greater good could be realized when we put aside our personal religious beliefs because ultimately no one knows the truth. The question of truth was even posed to Jesus during His trial. Put truth aside for the perceived greater good of the society. That is, once the culture decides what it wants then its next task is to make certain that all dissidents conform so that the greater good can be realized. This has been a prevailing principle throughout all of recorded history. Ironically it is difficult in some ways, from a purely sociopolitical perspective to understand how the minority religion of Christianity ever grew outside the confines of the tiny country of Palestine.

The scene for the first appearance of Our Lady is Nazareth. We know the details; she was young, she was engaged to be married to Joseph the carpenter, and she had a cousin, Elizabeth, who was eager to have a child. Suddenly the Archangel Gabriel appears, announces to Mary that she has been chosen by God, and she responded by saying “I will do whatever God tells me to do.” The Bible says that Mary regularly pondered revelations in her heart, but it would only be a matter of time before the result of her vocational obedience would become visible. Certain realities cannot be hidden forever. What we see is that she did not run up and down the streets to announce what had happened. There are no e-mails from her suggesting that if you really care and do not wish to break the chain, you will forward her good news to twenty-six friends. There is no mention of how the townspeople reacted. We just know Jewish law, and we discover that Joseph was a **just** man who ultimately willingly participated in Mary’s vocation. Indeed, perhaps he privately hoped that he could be the God bearer himself, but God’s principle of complementarity and His respect for the definable limits of His own created order meant that Mary would bear His son, and Joseph would protect and present God’s son. God defined the parameters, and two obedient people lived within the definitions provided by the One who created all things. From a careful reading of Holy Scripture, it is obvious that whenever God’s plan is thwarted chaos ensues. Indeed, human history indicates that we as mortals have worked diligently in bringing chaos out of order. God ordered and we have “disordered.” In fact, disobedience to God’s plan for us has resulted in the collapse of civilizations and the eradication of movements. Ironically history proves that this destruction is usually internal, and even the casual observer is able to identify the fact that attacks from the outside by force are often unnecessary, because the internal self-destruction has generally been effective enough. To summarize the human condition, one could say that God’s plan has been to save us from ourselves. Even current history indicates that erosion from within a culture, an institution, or a country has been a major contributing factor to a collapse.

In classic Ascetical Theology we are aware of the identification and articulation of the so-called “Three Wills of God”; that is: the Manifest Will of God, the Permissive Will of God, and the Redemptive Will of God. In fact, **if** we apply these principles to the lives of the Blessed Virgin Mary and the Apostle, Judas Iscariot, we see a rather specific pattern. The Blessed Virgin Mary was willing to accept God’s Manifest Will for her, she participated in His Permissive Will, and she lived out the implications of the Redemptive Will of God. She totally accepted her vocation to be the Theotokos or God Bearer, by saying “yes” to God. She accepted the Permissive Will of God by participating in the Passion of her Son, and she rejoiced in the Redemptive Will of God as she participated in the Resurrection of her Son, who was also her Savior.

Judas, on the other hand, took matters into his own hands. Presumably he accepted our Lord’s call to be an Apostle, but endowed with the gift of Free Will, he succumbed to a type of isolationism from the Apostolic College, whereby he seems to demonstrate that he knew how matters were supposed to transpire as opposed to the Eleven who seemed to be waiting upon the Lord. As the Gospels say, Satan entered Judas and he acted. Obviously, there are several questions that can be asked, and the conclusions to each question are treatises in and of themselves. But, suffice it to say that Judas succumbed to the temptation to take matters into his own hands. He was not privy to what the Father was directing Jesus to do. As to whether or not Judas was used or misused is not the issue. The reality is that he acted upon the gift of Free Will, and fulfills, as it were, the Biblical prediction from the Gospels on the Mount of Temptation, namely that Satan left Jesus after our Lord had overcome three temptations, but that Satan would return at an opportune time. Clearly the most effective way to erode an institution or an organization is to use one of the leaders. The number of intriguing stories real and fictional regarding betrayal from within fills many shelves in every library. Ultimately Judas chose to operate in isolation, to effect collusion with enemies of Jesus, and then out of despair destroyed himself. Was he a puppet? Did his plans of perhaps trying to prove that Jesus was the Messiah go awry, or was he simply out of control? As Treasurer of the Apostles, he probably could have used the paltry amount of money for which he bargained to replenish the treasury, but his motives are unclear. Herein lies a principle: when we take matters into our own hands and we do not work together with the righteous, because we do not agree with their timetable or their plan, we all too often are sucked into a chasm of self-destruction. In no time at all Judas discovered what it meant to be alone when perhaps all along he may have even had some good intentions. Despair is often a result of perceiving that we are powerless, and then due to the anxiety that despair brings frenetically attempting to make sense out of what appears to be senseless.

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 those 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.

I have now been your Bishop for over eleven years. I can surely tell you as a cradle Episcopalian that I am astonished by the phenomenal changes I have witnessed in this church in my fifty-nine years of life. For most of you this has been unsettling while for some of you it has been exciting. There have been some dark moments for me filled with self-doubt when I have wondered if I am the right bishop for you. It is not because I do not love you, and it is not because I fear that I will displease some of you, but it is because it is very difficult to hear the still small voice of God when so many are shouting. I do not mean you, personally, but I mean the voices of those in great pain. I do not have the luxury of just being the Bishop of Quincy. By virtue of being a bishop I am also part of a Province and part of an International Communion. From time to time I am asked to explain more thoroughly what it means to be an Anglican. In fact, I fear that some people even think that to be an Anglican is not to be an Episcopalian. I find that extraordinary, especially in light of the fact that many of our brothers and sisters in the Anglican Communion move to this country not having ever heard of the Episcopal Church and not realizing that it is a Province of the Anglican Communion. To be an Episcopalian has historically meant to be but one Province in a worldwide Church. Therefore, we do not have the luxury of making our own decisions as it relates to our regional beliefs. The authority of individual Provinces has been to order our lives non-doctrinally. It has always been assumed that Provinces do not have the authority to change what has always been maintained and believed by the Communion as a whole. Different opinions can well exist, but authority to make unprecedented doctrinal decisions is not a function of a Provincial Church. If the rest of the Anglican family is upset with the American family, then we should never be surprised when we are told to conform. Failure to conform can result in being asked not to return to family gatherings, and to be expelled from the family resulting in the creation of a new independent sect not connected with the rest of the world. Apparently, many Americans have the opinion that this sort of independence is admirable, and a Yankee privilege but the issue is what God’s opinion is. The Blessed Virgin Mary thought only about conforming to God’s Will, but Judas wanted to force the Hand of God. Lest you infer that I am assigning current names to biblical personages, I must say I am not. What I am saying is that failure to conform to what God has revealed and the willingness to “go it on our own” is deadly. Indeed, it is a type of suicide.

One of the realities of crisis is that it changes our focus. The devastation in the South has clearly shown us how fragile and uncertain life can be. In terms of focus I sincerely doubt that many vestries in the churches that have been destroyed are currently battling over many of the internal matters that consumed their Vestry meetings prior to Hurricanes Katrina and Rita. In the midst of crisis, we either work together or we run off on our own. As tragic as this devastation has been people are forced to define what the word “church” really means. Is it the building we have lost, the people who have been spared, or is it wider including those people around the world who have stepped forward and given generously even when they had little to give? Crisis, like death results in a redefinition of what our plan and mission as a family must be. With that in mind I am asking the following of you:

* that each church in the Diocese of Quincy implement a Strategic plan for the future. In that plan I am asking that you define who you are as a parish, mission or cathedral, and why you exist. I ask that by next Synod every church submit a Strategic plan that includes immediate goals, intermediate goals and long-range goals. I am asking that we as a Diocese do the same.
* that each church have a series of classes entitled “What it means to be an Anglican.” In those classes I ask that there be a study of the structures of the Communion along with historical data that will help all of us identify our own presuppositions. I will disseminate an outline in conjunction with the Regional Deans.
* that each bishop’s committee, vestry, and cathedral chapter begin all meetings with a brief Bible Study and discussion on topics related to being the Church. Again, I will disseminate topics and Scriptural citations in conjunction with the Regional Deans
* that each church be committed to specific plans of fundraising that will draw more people into our parish halls and then to our naves.
* that each rector, vicar, or dean meet with clergy and lay leaders in the community to assess matters related to growth, faith, and conflict within their own churches and within the community and report back to the next Synod with data related to their findings.
* that each church implement a specific plan for calling on those who have left the church, and that they gather data that will help each church in ministering to those who feel disenfranchised.
* that each church commit itself to a specific program of numerical, spiritual, and economic growth that can be approved by each vestry, bishop’s committee, and cathedral chapter and that a report be made at the next Synod of those plans and results.

Beloved, before we can presume to be prophetic about what may or may not lie ahead for our beloved Church, we must each commit ourselves to such congregational development, and diocesan development that if the Lord were to return this weekend, we would hear his words “well done thou good and faithful servant.”

Forgive my naiveté, but each one of us must take the lead in drawing more people to the love of Jesus Christ. I know that it is difficult to draw people into a Province that is in turmoil, but strategic leadership demands that the diocese function as a diocese and not as 20 plus independent churches that are disconnected. In this year we have endeavored to keep people well informed, only to discover that church FAX machines are not working, e-mail availability to the average parishioner is unknown, and churches fail to send in address changes so that general mailings are received. The goal of good communication is that all people have the information that is needed. The Diocesan House that you have generously provided this year is a tangible attempt to better connect our people and provide resources to each person in our diocese. Have you used the video and audio tapes that have been made available this year? Have you purchased curricula without first checking to see if the Diocesan Resource Center has it, and then you can have it for free? Have you used the book that was sent to each church entitled “To God be the Glory” that is now being used internationally and contains exciting and attractive ways to “be” the Church? Have you committed yourself to the Steps Covenant program and other intentional Stewardship programs? Have you participated fully in the Capital Campaign so that youth can be served, new churches built, and resources be made available? In short, do we think like Congregationalists, and if so, you can understand why some Episcopalians think like a “national church” instead of a worldwide Communion under the sovereign Lordship of Jesus Christ.

In crisis, there is always a chance for rebuilding and I promise you that I will continue to be an active participant in this worldwide rebuilding, but I desperately need you to become equally intentional about local rebuilding.

May we renounce the alluring and attractive seductions of Satan which prey upon our emotions, and may we adopt the total commitment of Mary which is “be it unto me according to Your word.” In my opinion, one path leads to death and the other leads to eternal life.

+ To God be the Glory

***+ Keith Quinciencis***

✠ 2005

The Thirteenth Address of the Eighth Bishop of Quincy

***The Right Reverend Keith L. Ackerman, SSC***

to the 129th Synod of the Diocese of Quincy

at The Cathedral Church of St. Paul, Peoria, Illinois

October 20, 2006

***“God wants all to be saved and come to know the truth. And the truth is this: There is One God, and there is one mediator between God and men, the man Christ Jesus who gave himself as a ransom for all.’ This truth was attested at the appropriate time. For this I have been appointed a preacher and apostle (believe me, I am not lying but speaking the truth) a teacher of the nations in the true faith. It is my wish, then that in every place men shall offer prayers with blameless hands held aloft, and be free from anger and dissension.”***

***I Timothy 2: 4b – 8***

Beloved in Christ, in my last twelve Synod Addresses, I have made it quite clear that being under the patronage of the Apostle Paul, as our diocese is, can be a blessing and a burden. On one hand it is marvelous to see numerous statues in our diocese that depict St. Paul. In this Cathedral, which is also under the patronage of St. Paul; we see stained glass windows, statues, and a bas relief. Being under the patronage of a saint means discovering the essence of that saint. For example, we know that Saul of Tarsus was a Jew and also a Roman citizen. We know that he witnessed the martyrdom of St. Stephen the deacon, and we also know that he had a conversion experience on the road to Damascus, wherein he encountered the risen Lord, Jesus Christ, who asked this Jewish zealot,” why are you persecuting me?”

This encounter changed the life of Saul of Tarsus to such an extent that his former zeal for the Law became zeal for the Gospel. Moreover, just as he had participated in the persecution of Christians, so he became one whose own persecution would finally lead to martyrdom.

Tragically, while St. Paul was merely attempting to proclaim the truth of the Gospel, by implication this meant that in proclaiming this truth he would appear to be in opposition to people. As many of you may know, I am rather fascinated with adages, because in many instances people use them in ways which allow us to look deeper into the person. As one of my psychology professors used to say, “If you hear five adages which people truly believe you will learn more than you would learn by administering a Rorschach.”

The point is that if we truly believe the adages we use, then we are revealing what is, in effect, a type of belief system, or perhaps, what we subjectively see as truth. For example, the adage, “Love me, love my dog” if truly believed means “if you love me then you must love all that is connected with me.” On one hand knowing this principle at the beginning of a relationship can be helpful, but what happens when new realities or hidden realities emerge? In effect what must emerge is the principle that one can love someone without necessarily liking what they do. But in the culture war that exists today, all too often it would seem that this distinction cannot be made. That is, if I oppose my child’s choices then I am not demonstrating that I love them. This was the dilemma with which St. Paul was confronted. He knew that he was called to a ministry that exceeded his abilities; he knew that he was literally going into uncharted waters, and he knew that by teaching the truth that had been revealed in Jesus Christ that people would oppose him. The greatest concern for St. Paul was not that he might be opposed, but rather that the Gospel of Jesus Christ might be opposed.

To a large extent St. Paul was dealing with people who could comprehend the truth as St. Paul conveyed it, and certainly they could understand the truth of the words of Jesus Christ the Savior to whom St. Paul sought to introduce them. In just a matter of time they were able to experience the words of Holy Scripture, “The Truth shall set you free.” But these words would only make sense if they knew the truth. “I am the way and the truth and the life. No one comes to the Father except by me” were words that changed the lives of countless people not only in St. Paul’s lifetime, but to this very day. If St. Paul had encountered other “truths” in his numerous travels, then one must ask why they were not incorporated into a revised faith. In fact, at the Council of Jerusalem matters of custom and tradition were debated, but the debate did not entail an alteration of any central truths. It was understood that Jesus Christ died on the cross for our sins, descended to the dead, rose from the dead, and ascended into heaven. Other cultures and religions existed, many of which St. Paul encountered, but to claim that he was totally conditioned by his time would be to minimize the significance of his role, and more particularly to minimize the role of the One who reclaimed his life and sent him out into a multicultural environment. St. Paul ultimately would lose his life for the truth of the Gospel, and on numerous occasions he was confronted with a culture that, in effect, said to him, “Love me – love my dog.” In fact, St. Paul loved them so much that he loved their potential for eternal life more than he needed their positive response to his words. In an age when we often conclude that public opinion polls must dictate the ways in which we function, and by virtue the numbers, must be true we all too often operate as the majority rule concept must be the way God operates, too. If we accept every element of a person’s life, as if to say that opposition to one element of that person’s life is a complete rejection of them, then we have missed the whole point of conversion, repentance, forgiveness reconciliation and restoration. This pattern I s to be found in the Parable of the Prodigal Son, or as many would prefer to say, the Parable of the Forgiving Father.

About one year before each General Convention for about the last thirty years I get a knot in my stomach, and it continues for at least one year after General Convention. I fret and I pray, and then I pray and fret, only to be reminded by Jo that it was God’s Church before I was born, and it will be His Church after I die. Unfortunately, as a bishop, I do not have the luxury of ignoring all that leads up to the triennial “shooting match” nor what follows. Each General Convention has a particular theme, but numerous people of both sides of issues have skillfully learned how to derail the theme in favor of their agenda. If, in fact, the General Convention does reflect the people in the pews then I think I would be even more depressed. Based on the numerous priests, deacons, parishes, and laity who have left the Episcopal Church in the last few decades it would appear that there is a serious gap between the various actions of General Convention and the daily life of faithful Christians in the pews. Numerous people even tell me that the word “Episcopal” is now eliciting responses that are less than positive and are counterproductive in terms of church growth, mission, and evangelism.

I am reminded of the words of the spectacular former Presiding Bishop, John Maury Allin who said upon retirement, “I fear that I loved the Church more than I loved the Lord of the Church.” It is possible for the institution to become an idol even if it is called to be the Body of Christ. It is possible to become so enamored with an ecclesial identity that we forget that our primary identity is as a Christian. When asked what we are in terms of faith, all too often people respond with a denominational or Communion response rather than saying “I am a Christian.” Ask a Reformed, or Conservative, or Orthodox Jew what they are and listen to the response. It is Jesus whom we follow, and to love Him in His absolute Perfection is to love everything about Him – His words, His teachings, His presence and His corrections. He corrects us because He loves us. He corrects us and chastises us because He wants us to spend eternity with Him. He loves us because He was charged by the Father, that He was not to lose anyone who was committed to His care by the Father. He has decided to love us rather than to have to reconsider each day whether He should or not based on our behavior and His feelings that particular day. And we are told that if we love Him, we must follow His commandments. It all sounds rather simple. It’s a bit like installing a new program on our computer, and then seeing several pages of small print asking us at the end if we agree with what we have been asked to do. In our zeal to begin the new program, we check “yes.” I wonder what would happen if upon breaking one of those agreements we would then discover that everything in our computer was erased. Or, upon violating one of the agreements, we were visited by a representative who chastised us. We may say, Sorry, but I really didn’t read the fine print,” or “It’s none of your business what I do with this program because I paid for it.” We may think that we know the Gospel because we hear versions of it, but unlike computer programs there are no upgrades to the Gospel. The Gospel was given so that we could be upgraded. We were not created to upgrade the Gospel.

Thus St. Paul wanted to make it clear what an Apostle is charged to do. He wanted to explain to the Church what appropriate behavior in all levels of life was. There is no warranty on the Gospel – The Gospel literally has a lifetime guarantee.

Therefore, for twelve and one-half years as your bishop I have sought to preach the Gospel and not the politics of the Church. From time to time I am asked by some, “Why don’t you say more?” and by others, “Why don’t you say less?” I am here to tell you that if I could escape all that has transpired in a political way in our beloved Church, I would. If I could just retire and walk away, I would. If I could move to Texas tomorrow, see our children regularly, play with our grandchildren, and sit around in the corner coffee shop having a second cappuccino, I would. But I have not been given that luxury anymore than when St. Paul was shipwrecked or under house arrest and perhaps thought about retiring early to a condo in Tarsus, with a small apartment in Jerusalem. Sometimes the temptations we follow are not direct calls from God.

Am I happy with the State of the Episcopal Church? Absolutely not, because I am weary of witnessing the Church into which I was born continue to disintegrate while other parts of the Body of Christ both within the Anglican Communion and outside are prospering.

I am heartbroken that the very things that I thought God had called me to do as a deacon, priest, and bishop are all too often subservient to the agendas that are thrust upon us by a war that is being fought between the culture and the Church and within the Church. I am heartsick that some of the various programs that I believe I was sent here to implement have not taken place because all of us are involved in just trying to survive. I am brought to tears when I realize that more and more divisions are occurring because far too many people have blindly said, “Love me – love my dog.” When we begin to define our very identities in ways other than “I am a child of God and I am a Christian” then we may be guilty of having extracted one segment of our personhood and elevated it to an immutable identity. And that concludes my words about “trouble in River City.” If I define my ministry as a bishop on the basis of the disease of an institution, then I have failed miserably to do what our Patron St. Paul expected of Timothy and those upon whom he had laid his hands.

What motivates me is that this year in the Diocese of Quincy we have looked outside ourselves, by providing health care in the Dominican Republic. We have asked all churches to be involved in intentional stewardship by utilizing the Steps Covenant program, and we have fed and distributed goods to countless churches in Louisiana and Mississippi. Moreover, we have been engaged in an intentional educational process in this diocese whereby every church has been charged by way of last year’s Synod Resolutions to understand, who we are, where we have been, and where we are going. The center piece of this Synod will be your reports, hearing what you have done in these endeavors, and in hearing from our guest speaker, Fr. Jerry Kramer who has lived through a tragic and yet vivifying period in history as rector of the Church of the Annunciation in New Orleans. I am indebted to Deacon Phil Fleming and all the deacons of this diocese who have coordinated our outreach efforts.

I am weary of hearing excuses as to why people do not accomplish goals that the Gospel has placed upon us. I am equally weary of procrastinations that prevent solid ministry from being exercised. I am cut to the quick when I realize that there are some churches who still believe that they are independent congregations, and that the “diocese” is merely the entity that receives their assessments, and sends out their apportionments. In fact, you are the diocese, and the incredible strides this diocese has made this year are reflected in the rebuilding of St. John’s Quincy and the expansion of every form of service now found at the Diocesan House across the parking lot from your cathedral. Upon completion of this Synod, I ask you to join me tomorrow at the Diocesan House: Center for Mission and Ministry as we consecrate this building for God’s use, and give thanks for the ongoing generosity of each church and person in this diocese who by virtue of their participation in the Capital Campaign have made this resource available.

The challenge before us this year is defined by some as financial. But you have heard my response to someone who told me that we have people in this diocese with deep pockets. I said, “Then they must have short arms.” If every person in this synod today tithed, then our Synod would be charged with having to distribute more to those in need of being fed with the Gospel. Maintenance and survival ministry are only precursors to death. If every person in every church in this diocese really believed what is often said at the Offertory “All things come of Thee, O Lord, and of Thine own have we given Thee” then you and I would never fear the back-room threats of black mail that are often lodged against churches by an unhappy person, and they would be treated as someone in need of the riches of the Gospel rather than someone who can save us with their riches. The Canons and Prayer Book are very clear about our wills, for example. Clergy, have all of you remembered the church in your Wills? Laity have all of you remembered the Church in your Wills? If not, why not? I would ask that each church in the diocese identify the attorneys in their parish, and sponsor a day this year when the attorneys are present in the parish hall to write pro bono, Wills for all people in the parish who are willing to remember the Church in their Wills. If money hampers us from doing ministry, then shame on us. That is not worthy of those who follow the One who gave up His life for our sake.

I am, therefore, challenging every church in this diocese to increase its overall pledged giving by 15% this year, and I am challenging each church to increase in size this year by 10% in spite of whatever chaos you may perceive is happening due to General Convention fallout. Do not allow the lack of church growth to be a convenient excuse for not growing. Once every person in our neighborhoods has been visited, once you have contacted people moving into our neighborhoods, once you have provided programs that engage people in Christian Discipleship, then we will be I n a better position to evaluate our overall health. Until then we must pray and we must act. If you review carefully previous Synod Addresses you will discover the ongoing themes of: discipleship, evangelism, stewardship, pastoral care, and growth. I conclude with this thought. Think of the churches that are growing in our communities. What is their denominational identity? The reality is that many of the churches that are growing do not identify themselves primarily by their denomination, nor do they necessarily reflect the perceived tenets of that denomination. Rather, they identify themselves by what they are doing locally to proclaim the truth of the Gospel. And, as a teaser, for the people of the Peoria area, name a Mennonite Church, an Assemblies of God Church, and a Missouri Synod Lutheran Church – all of which are growing – and find out if they are coasting on the success or reacting to the lack of success of their denomination.

Finally, as our Patron tells us, “it is my desire that in every place you will pray with your hands uplifted with pure intention, excluding angry or quarrelsome thoughts.” The way in which we conduct our lives will become an adage, “Actions speak louder than words.”

***+ Keith Quinciencis***

✠ 2006

The Fourteenth Address of the 8th Bishop of Quincy

***The Right Reverend Keith L. Ackerman, SSC***

To the 130th Synod of the Diocese of Quincy

At Christ Church, Moline, Illinois

October 19, 2007

***Votive of the Holy Cross***

***“I want you to know, beloved, that the Gospel I preach is not something that man made up. I did not receive it from any man, nor was I thought; rather I received it from revelation from Jesus Christ.”*** *Galatians 1:11*

I greet you in the name of Our Lord and Savior, Jesus Christ!

Much has happened since our last Synod, in fact some unbelievable things: Who would have ever imagined that the Colorado Rockies would win the National League pennant, and that the Cleveland Indians might actually be in the World Series? It appears that this could be the year of the underdog, at least on the baseball field…

In my fourteen years as your Bishop, we have all seen some unbelievable things. So much around us is changing so rapidly, and it would appear that the world is changing so drastically that we can barely keep up with it. At least it would seem that it is a cultural expectation that we always keep up with every change. There is even a type of “gospel” or “good news” message inherent in the culture that failure to keep up with all change indicates a non-progressive spirit. In other words, since some change is good, all must be good.

In seven of my Synod addresses in the past I have summarized the messages of each of my illustrious predecessors in this Apostolic Order, and I have noticed that, in spite of disease, unemployment, demographic shifts, several wars, and ecclesial turmoil the central themes of your bishops have remained the same: *there is One Gospel, there is One Savior, there is One Lord, there is One Faith, and there is One Way. His name is JESUS*.

Moreover, as I have analyzed the central messages of my predecessors, I have discovered a remarkable sense of unity with them as it relates to theological and Biblical premises. In other words, there has been a remarkable consistency in our 130 years as a Diocese – a consistency which carries with it a type of “holy boldness” or “sanctified tenacity” that seems almost disproportionate to the size of the Diocese. That is, this Diocese, whether one likes it or not, has been in the forefront of the defense of the Gospel revealed in the One Lord, and lived out in the One, Holy, Catholic and Apostolic Church.

The most significant shift in these 130 years, however, is that in previous generations this Diocese and her Bishops were in the position of stating what the Church has always believed and has listened carefully and prayerfully to minority perspectives that sought to change her. Today we find ourselves in the unusual position of holding majority positions as it relates to the Faith delivered unto the Saints, but we live in an ever-shrinking Province that tends to elevate speculation and socio-political hypothetical constructs to the level of the Gospel, and responses to Baptismal Covenant that are seen by some as having the same authority as the Baptismal Creed. In searching the writings of my predecessors, I find principles of the Defense of Truth which are helpful, but it is also in searching the writings of the Patron of the Diocese that I find remarkable consolation and clarity. In truth, as it relates to truth, from a cultural sociopolitical perspective with narcissism and hedonism often at the center, we find that for all its theological sophistication our days are not unlike the days of St. Paul.

I am the wrong Bishop of Quincy to convey the essential theology of the Apostle Paul, inasmuch as the Sixth Bishop of Quincy (Bishop Donald J. Parsons) is a Pauline scholar, but I believe that I can assert that we find ourselves, in philosophical and sociological terms, in an age not unlike Pauline times, and we can assume that Pauline principles are as appropriate today as they were 2000 years ago. In fact, upon occasion, I find helpful to think of St. Paul as a Primate who has decided to review the state of the Church and address those things which are preventing personal growth, spiritual growth, church growth, missionary endeavors, and evangelism. In spite of these passions, however, first and foremost he returns to foundational matters. If we have constructed a faulty foundation, it does not matter how ingenious or attractive the subsequent layers of the building are. In time the building will fall. The attractive brick a brack will crumble if the foundation has fault lines. Therefore, while St. Paul has a passion for the building, he is willing to die for the foundation.

In the first Chapter in his letter to the Galatians St. Paul says:

***“Grace to you from God, our Father, and the Lord Jesus Christ, who gave himself for our sins to rescue us from the present evil age, according to the will of our God and Father, to whom be glory forever and ever. Amen. I am astonished that you so quickly deserting him who called you by the grace of Christ and are turning to a different gospel – which is really no gospel at all! Evidently some people are throwing you into confusion and are trying to pervert the Gospel of Christ. But even if we or an angel from heaven should preach a gospel other than the one we preached to you, let him be eternally condemned. As we have already said, so now I say again: If anybody is preaching to you a gospel other than that which you received let him be eternally condemned! I am trying now to win the approval of men, or of God? Or am I trying to please men? If I were still trying to please men, I would not be a servant of Christ. I want you to know, brothers that the Gospel O preached is not something man made-up.”***

If we look carefully at the pastoral letters of Bishop Paul to his dioceses, we will note that the foundational gospel of which he speaks carries with it the reality of revelation, as opposed to an ongoing, fluctuating contextual process. The latter is a necessary principal for those engaged, for example, in theological endeavors, but this principle applied to objective and revealed truth is inconsistent with the methodology articulated by St. Paul, our Patron.

Indeed, some of St. Paul’s followers were eager to hear what St. Paul had to say. In some ways they may have even awaited his letters as a student awaits a progress report from the teacher. Some students will reserve their impression of the brilliance and effectiveness of the teacher until they have seen their grade card. An “A” means that the teacher is a brilliant judge of intelligence, but a “D” will mean that the teacher has failed to disseminate essential information. Unfortunately, in the Church today we often measure the “success” of leadership on the basis of agreement, numbers, and preconceived notions of what we decided what a good leader is. In some ways St. Paul was a poor leader in terms of some principals of leadership today; he traveled too much and was not in his office enough. He was not very democratic; he rarely broke up his leadership teams into small groups for conversation purposes, and he did not seem to offer many opportunities for opinion polls. In his clarity, not always coupled with the world’s new meaning of charity, St. Paul kept going back to his “Damascus Road” experience. For St. Paul, without conversion there can be no conversation. Without repentance there can be no forgiveness.

I have found it fascinating of late to fill our warranty cards. In the last ten years any hint of religion has been removed from these cards. I have discovered recently that I am the CEO of a small business, that I am a “Mr.” or “Dr” but that must of the time I am consistently, in terms of the culture, an “other.” Actually, that does not trouble me because the Scriptures tell us that *we are not to be conformed to this world*. Nonetheless this consumer culture is still unsettling, and I suspect that if St. Paul were to write a Pastoral Letter to the Church today that his amanuensis might have suggested a few adjectival changes.

However, there are still some principles that can arise from the verbiage of our culture that require some response; and I offer them as observations:

* Just because one has been a member of a particular church his or her entire life does not mean that they understand the Church to which they belong.
* For most people, “my Church” means “where I go on Sunday.”
* Most Episcopalians are convinced that they belong to an independent American Denomination except every ten years when there is a ***Lambeth Conference***.
* Anti-Racism means not articulating the sense of intellectual superiority we have in our hearts towards those who “are not like us.”
* “Liberal” no longer means being able to coexist with a number of incongruities.
* Respectful, charitable, and intelligent debate has been replaced with anecdotalism, ad hominum aggression, and feelings.
* “Objective truth” has been replaced by “Subjective voting.”
* Verbal ambiguity is a new art form.
* Critical thinking now means critically thinking of others.
* Anyone who actually believes what the Bible says is a Biblical Fundamentalist.
* When we fill out a “pledge card” to God, it is really seen as a financial “opinion poll.”
* Ever-changing scientific truth ranks higher than the revealed truth of the Gospel.
* Being patient means waiting 29½ minutes for someone to return my call or answer my email.
* It is important that YOU follow all of the rules, as long as you understand that none of them apply to me…
* Some people think that Pre-Synod Resolutions are “final form” documents.
* *Abbot & Costello* would literally have a field day if they attended many of the church meetings currently.
* People who are desperate to prove a point use statistics.
* Dialogue and conversation place us on the stool; Scripture, Tradition, and Reason, are the stool, and God decides “if” it is a stool.
* We check our email more times than we read our Bibles.
* People fear that the judgment of transitory civil courts more than the judgment that comes from the Eternal Throne.
* Finally, people would rather see a stained-glass window of St. Paul than to listen to his words about “our stains.”

I am absolutely convinced that the culture has value! It has value because God has made that clear to us in the Doctrines of Creation and Incarnation. What I have enumerated as musings if viewed by themselves could be construed as being caustic, cynical, flippant and judgmental. I offer them, however, as the challenge that is before us. Far too much time is spent wringing our hands instead of folding our hands, and far too much time ignoring what exists instead of offering up what exists to ***“the only Name that is given for health and salvation.”*** My enumerations are on my prayer list, and I pray as a sinner who has been thrust into leadership whether I like it or not and whether anyone likes it or not. To be a leader today is to have one’s heart broken daily, but even more so it is to be before the throne of Grace beseeching the mercies of the only One who can repair a broken heart.

Our Patron speaks to my heart again in his letter to the church of Corinth when he says,

***“When I came to you, brothers, I did not come with eloquence or superior wisdom as I proclaim to you the testimony about God. For I resolved to know nothing while I was with you except Jesus Christ and him crucified. I came to you in weakness and fear, and with much trembling. My message and my preaching were not with wise and persuasive words, but with a demonstration of the Spirit’s power, so that your faith might not rest on man’s wisdom, but on God’s power…”***

***“The Spirit searches all things even the deep things of God. For who among men knows the thoughts of a man except the man’s spirit within him? In the same way no one knows the thoughts of God except the Spirit of God. We have not received the spirit of the world but the Spirit who is from God, that we may understand what God has freely given us. This is what we speak, not in words taught by human wisdom but in words taught by the Spirit, expressing spiritual truths in spiritual words. The man without the Spirit does not accept the things that come from the Spirit of God, for they are foolishness for him and he cannot understand them, because they are spiritually discerned. The spiritual man makes judgments about all things, but he himself is not subject to any man’s judgment:***

***…For who has known the mind of the Lord that he may instruct him?***

***But we have the mind of Christ!”*** *I Corinthians 2*

Beloved in Christ, this Synod is not about Resolutions… This Synod is not about keeping the Bishop happy… This Synod is not about crafting creative sound-bytes for the media. This Synod as has been the case for 130 Synods is about being a Christian family, by keeping our eyes on Jesus, by being faithful to that which has been entrusted to us, and by never forgetting the call that has been placed on the lives of all Christian disciples.

As our Patron says in his letter to the Philippians, and so I say to you,

***“But whatever was to my profit, I now consider loss for the sake of Christ. What is more, I consider everything a loss compared to the surpassing greatness of knowing Christ Jesus my Lord, for whose sake I have lost all things. I consider them rubbish that I may gain Christ and be found in Him, not having a righteousness of my own that comes from the law, but that which is through faith in Christ- the righteousness that comes from God that depends on faith. I want to know Christ and the power of His resurrection and the fellowship of sharing in his sufferings, becoming like Him in His death, and so somehow, to attain the resurrection from the death. Philippians 3: 7-11***

**+Keith Quinciensis**

✠ 2007

The Fifteenth Address of the 8th Bishop of Quincy

***The Right Reverend Keith L. Ackerman, SSC***

To the 131th Synod of the Diocese of Quincy

at St. John Church Quincy, IL

November 8, 2008

I greet you in the name of our Lord and Savior, Jesus Christ, whose servant I have been very privileged to be. From the epistle of Jude, mercy, peace, and love be yours in abundance. Dear friends, he says, “Although I was very eager to write you about the salvation we share.” I felt I had to write and urge you to contend for the faith that was once for all entrusted to the saints.

For certain men whose condemnation was written about long ago have secretly slipped in among you. They are godless men who change the grace of our God into a license for immorality and deny Jesus Christ our only Sovereign and Lord. That's second through fourth verses of the Appraisal Jew.

It's appropriate that I am here in the city of Quincy because, ironically, this is where I actually began most activity. You may say, how is that? Well, my very first action as your bishop was to be in the city of Quincy so that a lawsuit could be handled over to me. I was the proud recipient. Of a lawsuit related to St. John's Church and the remarkable split that had occurred. The very first picture taken of me after my consecration was taken before the judge. As I stood there and received all of the documents and papers. I suppose there's a phenomenal amount of irony in all of that. But I allow you to look at the irony.

During that time, we had a most remarkable and sad set of circumstances because it was clear that the Bible makes it to us manifestly clear that Christians don't sue Christians. That's a Bible teaching. Christians don't sue Christians. And as your bishop, I felt that... it was imperative that we extricate ourselves from lawsuits and get ourselves into mediation and have a Godly settlement.

And as a result, we do. There are two St. John's churches in this town, but nonetheless, the relationship continues to heal. The difficulty was, as a neophyte bishop, at that point, being one of the youngest bishops in the church at 47, I had asked naturally for help, and I called the church center in New York City, only to be told that there would be no forthcoming assistance of any sort, except at one point, a little bit of legal advice.

I was actually hoping for a little bit more to be really blunt, because we were pretty much on our own in trying to figure out how it was that we could proceed. In this very difficult situation. It was not the first time that the diocese was faced with some parochial splitting because a very significant split had occurred at St. Paul's Church in Peoria in the previous century. That resulted in two distinct churches. One being St. Paul's Church and the other being Ting Chapel, T Y N G. Similarly, there was an attempt in Kewanee, but I have to say that St. John's prevailed. But, nonetheless, we know that there were a variety of tensions which existed, and it's ironic, of course, once again, that here I am in Quincy, where in a jubilant day, we finally were able to resolve not only the out of court settlement, but we were able to recognize that within the Diocese of Quincy that there was a galvanizing which took place.

And the galvanizing which took place was the strengthening of lay ministry as more and more laity began to know how important it was for them to be an integral part of the ministry of the church. In one of my first synod addresses, I discussed with you the remarkable nature of Caesarea Philippi. I explained in that address to you that what had happened is Jesus had taken his apostles to this Place which couldn't have been God forsaken because God's always there.

But nonetheless, the world might have said God forsaken. Because there was nothing but hard rock. It was a desolate place. And it was also considered to be a place of remarkable immorality. Because it's where Philip the Tetrarch would have his wild weekends. It was also a place where above each of the caves that one can still see to this day were niches.

Niches which the locals called booths. And that's where they put the household gods. The household gods that they put in there were typically the god Pan. That was the popular one of the shepherds. And, in fact, to this day, only some people call it Caesarea Philippi. Most call it Panias, named after the god Pan.

And when the shepherds would pray, they would begin to shake nervously. And that's where we get the term panic. From the reaction to the God Pan. Jesus in this place that was certainly not Jewish, certainly was not being a place where the Lord God was being worshipped. Nonetheless, looked at his apostles and he said to them, “Who do men say that I am?”

At this point, it was a rather remarkable set of circumstances, because you know what it's like when you say, “So what are they saying about me?” Usually, you get a lot of responses. This is what they're saying, but of course that's not what I'm saying. I'm just sharing this with you for your own good, so that you would know.

This is the way it usually works. But then, after they had said, “John the Baptist, some say you're a prophet come back from the dead, some say you're this and that.” You remember, Jesus then looked at them and said, yes, that's all well and good, but who do you say that I am? Now, Saint Peter, of course, in his impetuous style, looked at Jesus and said, you are the Christ, the son of the living God.

Jesus looks at him and he says, “I say this to you, Simon Bar Jonah, and he changed his name, you are the rock, and on this rock I will build my church, and the gates of hell shall not prevail against it, and whatsoever you loose in this world be loosed in heaven, and whatever you bind in this world be bound in heaven.”

Now that was not a high rent district, folks. This would not have been where our marvelous church planters would have planted a church. This was a bad place. But it was in the midst of ambiguity and destruction and difficulty that Jesus says, “On this rock I will build my church.” And it was Saint Peter, who was not noted as being the most articulate, who is nonetheless able to say you are the Christ.

And this I know with all my heart and soul. I don't know what's going to be asked in heaven on judgment day. But the one question I'm rather convinced will be asked of us is, “Who do you say that I am?” I'm rather convinced that each one of us will be asked, “Who do you say that I am?” And what was very clear from what Peter said when he said, “You are the Christ, the son of the living God.”

And Jesus pointed out, this has not been revealed to you, Naturalis. That has not been revealed to you in a natural way. This has been revealed to you, he says, not in flesh and blood. This has been revealed to you, Supernaturalis. See, this has been revealed to you from outside, that is, breaking in, by revelation by God.

That's how you know who I am, because you're in relationship with the father. That's what Jesus was conveying. But was Saint Peter saying, you're one of the ways? Was Saint Peter saying, you are a way? Or was he saying, you are the way? But to be a way, we must see who he is. And the question that has always been before me as I've addressed you with this, my 15th address, is who do you, by your life, say that Jesus is?

For us, Jesus must be King, Jesus must be Lord, and Jesus must be Savior. As Lord, He is the one who directs our life and whom we must serve without reservation. He cannot be semi-Lord. He must be the Lord of our life. And King? We are bidden to obey Him, and not constantly challenge His authority. You don't challenge the authority of the King.

And Jesus is the King. And Savior? Well, we are fallen people. We are all sinners. I recently was listening to a bishop who was trying to explain to his diocese that there was no such thing as original sin.

And of course, I've seen enough sin in my life to dispute it, but I'll leave that for another time. But I was astounded because you see, all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God is what the Bible says. That's not good news. The good news is that Jesus washes away the sin of the world. And that's what he does as Savior.

We are guilty. And no one and nothing else can save us but Jesus. Because no one else has ever paid the price for you and me. No one. Saint Jude, however, in this epistle tells us that we have been entrusted with a faith and that the predicted godless have secretly slipped in among us and have changed the grace of our God.

That is, they have misrepresented God according to St. Jude. Then he goes on to say, “In the last times there will be scoffers who will follow their own ungodly desires. These are the men who will divide you.”, it says in verse 18. Well, this is hardly what we want to hear when we ponder God's love. Why? Well, because we're told that God's love is all we really need.

Everything can be resolved by love. And while I certainly believe that, because God is love, I would today want to deal with a few mantras with you. Mantras that are often times stated. One is, all we need is to love more. Well, the problem is, we have to understand what we mean by love. For humans, love is typically an emotion.

We're in love, we're out of love. You're nice, so I love you. You did something nice for me, so I love you more. But for God, love has never been an emotion. Love was a decision. And you've heard me say it many times. John 3. 16 and 17 will explain the nature of God's love for us. It has never been an emotion for God.

And thanks be to God that it hasn't been an emotion because there would be a number of days of the week when I think that I would have to see him from a distance. If it were based on my behavior. Therefore, our response, Jesus says, is very simple. We say, Oh God, I'll do anything for you, just tell me what you want me to do.

And what does Jesus say? If you love me, you will keep my commandments. It's very simple. If we love him, we will keep his commandments. So therefore, for us, love must also be a decision. But a decision is oftentimes only possible to be reached when in relationship. Now, we live in a very difficult time. And for Christians, we are faced with the question of the conflict between a religion of revelation versus a religion of relativism.

And the relationship between Christ and the culture. The question often times should be, is it the task of the culture to change the church, or is it the task of the church to change the culture? For those familiar with Richard Niebuhr, I will not bore you with any of what he has had to say, but this has been an ongoing question.

That is, as the culture and the church intersect, what is the relationship? The second mantra that proceeds from this concept is, Sism is worse than heresy. I think that must be a relatively new mantra, but it's one that's mentioned with some regularity. Uh, it's a very intriguing thought. It's just difficult to support biblically.

And it depends upon the significance of the heresy. To deny that Jesus Christ is the only way to the Father, to be able to deny certain essential creedal statements, goes beyond just what by nature of the word we mean when we talk about heresy. Brokenness, unfortunately, has been a way of life. And when ultimately, we look at the heresies which have crept in over the years, we have a very strong statement.

We cannot be saved by the culture. Only Jesus saves. The third mantra is that I made vows to a particular church. Or in my case, as I've often times said, I'm a cradle Episcopalian. Let's check out what we mean by church. What's the first thing that comes to a person's mind when the word church is mentioned?

Well, most of the time it's where they go on Sunday. That's generally, when they say my church, that's often times the reality of what is being said. As you know, I've had a fondness for all of my predecessors. And in so doing, I've read every single word that they wrote, that I possibly could, so that I could see if I could learn from what they learned.

And the one theme that has run throughout all of my predecessors, is. That they thought that our people, when we use the word church, meant the local congregation. Each one said that Congregationalism, parochialism and isolation were the problems that were controlling and defining us according to Catholic ecclesiology.

And I think you understand when I use that word Catholic, I'm talking about the universal church. According to Catholic ecclesiology, it is the diocese. That is the basic unit of the church. And if you were, if you've read the writings of the Archbishop of Canterbury, Rowan Williams, you will see that he not only has said that in his books, but he proclaimed it at Lambeth Conference.

The diocese is the basic unit of the church. There is not a subunit. He goes on to say, as Catholic ecclesiology has taught, that it's, there's not that larger organism, namely a national entity, But the largest organism is the universal church, that is, the church throughout the world. Not some nationalistic perspective, but rather that which has been revered and seen throughout the course of the world.

And when Jesus talks about his church, he makes it very clear. He is the bridegroom; the church is his bride. And that's why it's always been historically true. Incorrect to refer to the church as an it. When we speak of the church, we speak of her.

We speak in the feminine, because that's how Jesus spoke of her. Because of his being the bridegroom, ready to meet his bride. And one element of this faith that we have been able to celebrate, is that which is articulated in the Vincentian canon of 434 AD. The essence of it to be found in the Latin, “Quod simper quod ad omnibus.” Creditum est. Looking at it in its larger context as, “As St. Vincent articulated it, it would be this.” Now in the Catholic Church itself, we take the greatest care to hold that which has been believed everywhere, always, and by all. That is truly and properly Catholic. He goes on to say, “Thus we are inheritors of this faith.”

This is what St. Jude is telling us. Because we are inheritors of the gospel, and of the church Catholic as expressed in our creeds. For us, the church is not the building, nor is the church the financial assets as important as they are. Our vows are to the Lord of the church, and as we have heard from a previous Archbishop of Canterbury, we do not have our own ministry, or our own creeds.

Just that which is of the Catholic Church. In fact, in the current book of common prayer, deacons, priests, and bishops first make an oath that they believe that all things necessary to salvation are found in the Old and New Testament. That's the first vow. It's an oath. Then they vow that they will be faithful to it as it relates to what this church has received.

Then the third section has... A question regarding the juridical ordering of our common life. But all of that must be seen in the total context of the vows and promises which are made first to the Lord within the context of the one holy catholic and apostolic church. Tragically, we have even imposed our understanding and church government unto God himself.

As Americans, we prefer democracy, so that must be what God prefers. We prefer Congregationalism. And as an American, Congregationalism is normative. So it must be normative for God to believe in that. My friends, Jude says that godless people have slipped in and have caused people to believe that the church is something other than what she is.

The church is not a democracy. It never has been. The church is a theocracy. It may have elements of it which require democratic responses. But the church, the bride of Christ, has been and will always be a theocracy. Because God is in charge. God is not waiting to find out if we are going to vote him in or vote him out.

Nor will he change his behavior when we vote. The task of the Christian is to conform to the will of God. The task of the Christian is to discern what God is saying. God has spoken through his prophets. He has spoken through his word. He does not contradict himself. St. Jude tells us of the faith entrusted to us.

“Is he referring to a denomination or is he referring to the Christian faith? Moreover, are there limits? What are the limits that exist in terms of what God says will be?” Anglicanism is unique in that she has always seen the Sea of Canterbury as an historic sea. And has seen the occupant of that sea as primus inter pares, first among equals.

For some that means adopting a spirit of independence, the stance that many Americans take. Versus an understanding of interdependence, which is the prevailing view of the Anglican communion. Interdependence. This, by the way, for those who are, particularly are, pleased with the Conci approach to church order will recognize that this is not unlike that which has historically existed from the beginning.

That is to say a sense of interdependence is still celebrated in the Eastern rites today, the Eastern Orthodox. Now I want to make something clear. This is not my Swan song. There'll be many opportunities for that, I'm sure. But due to some questions I must shift from the corporate, as it were to the personal.

I need to say some things to you. Because I need my family to hear it. I have sought to be the bishop of every person in this diocese. Every person. Those who have agreed, disagreed, been lukewarm, hot, whatever it may be. I really endeavored to be the bishop to every person in this diocese. And that's all I've ever wanted to be.

The bishop to everybody in this diocese. Fairly simple. You know that I received a call to be a priest when I was five years old. You know that I recognize that's the only thing that I was called to be. The baseball thing was only a diversion, folks.

And, what I sought to be when I finally realized that you had called me to be your bishop, which, by the way, this is the 15th anniversary this, next week of my interviewing, is that I have sought to be what the bishop is called to be, that is the symbol of unity. And I told you that if I ever became a symbol of disunity, that it would be time for me to go.

This is expressed in the Chrism Mass, symbolically, and also liturgically, when the bishop gathers with all of his priests and deacons, and the growing number of laity, thank you very much, where the renewal vows takes place, the blessing of oils occur, and we celebrate our servanthood together. I have retired, although my week this week would not indicate that thus far, but I will function as a bishop for the rest of my life.

There are retired priests in this room who still function actively in this diocese. There are retired deacons, I couldn't wait for them to retire for their employment so they could function actively as deacons. And if you think that Bishop Parsons and Bishop McBurney are retired, well, I'm not abandoning anybody. I would not do that to you, and I would certainly not abandon you at a difficult time.

When it became increasingly clear that numerous parishes and clergy, nationally, would leave peacefully or be forced out of the Episcopal Church, no matter how hard I tried. to keep them in. I felt my heart being tested and broken. Most of my ministry has been spent trying to hold the family together, not just locally, but nationally.

And when the hemorrhaging escalated in the past few years, when three of my brother's bishops became Roman Catholics, when some of my closest friends began to leave, I had difficulty saying goodbye to my family.

I tried to protect you for fourteen and a half years. I tried to protect you from some of the things that were going on because I always prayed that none of that would ever affect us. I just wanted to preach the gospel. I just wanted our churches to grow. I just wanted the sacraments to be celebrated and I wanted you to know the love of Jesus Christ for you.

But I'm afraid that litigation has become the only response to conflict today in many quarters. And now here it comes. If charges are ever brought against me for reasons that I don't totally understand, I simply wanted to spare you from that pain. I just didn't want you to have to go through that. Yes, I have some health problems, but I'm not anticipating immediate death.

Yes, my heart is broken, because I wanted to help hold things together, and I simply underestimated the outside intervention interference.

Jo and I have no immediate plans to relocate. I plan to do whatever I'm asked to do by the Standing Committee, just as Bishop Parsons and Bishop McBurney have done. This will, by virtue of the canons, mean that I will not be handling the juridical and administrative ministries, nor will I violate the conditions of the Church Pension Fund.

I did not take my pension to avoid problems. In addition to helping as needed, Jo and I hope to expand DoveTracts Ministries into a more significant ministry for you and for the wider church through education, mentoring, preaching, consulting, healing missions, and mentoring seminarians.

I'm reluctant to say very much more to you at this time because I recognize that in the climate of the church today, anything said by a bishop will be held against him. Could be put on a website. Can result in inhibition and deposition. I have never knowingly or willingly tried to say anything negative publicly. Because I don't think that when you blow out somebody else's candle, it makes your candle any brighter.

It's not fear, but it is rather that I think that we do better when holding together, we try to hold up the gospel of Christ, which is what I believe this diocese has tried to do. I promised that I was willing to die for you. But when it became evident that we were not 100 percent together, the only thing I could lay down for my sheep was my life as your diocesan bishop.

That's the death that I will offer you. The impending votes are not a vote for me or against me. I don't want this ever to be a personality issue. This is not about this, this fellow who stands before you today. Rather, there are opportunities to make a choice without fear or coercion or looking to see the expression on my face. The only threats of which I am aware have come from outside and to me, indirectly, I'm sorry to say.

And one of the things that I've discovered is the distinction between sheep and constituents. I've never thought that my people were my constituents. Jesus did not lay down his life for his constituents. He laid down his life for his sheep. I've never told you what to do in 14 and a half years. And I've never preached a sermon or given you a synod address that tells you what to do.

The next mantra is, whose hands are on the wheel? Or, who's in charge around here? Well, there are now nine pairs of hands on the wheel. Three retired bishops, six standing committee members. My style of leadership for fourteen and a half years has been at times what I have called intentional and skillful neglect. That's what parents do. You see, always know what's going on with your children. Make sure that you know that, that they know that you are available. And then give them some space so they can build up healthy independence and as a result, self-worth. That's what skillful and intentional neglect does in a loving relationship.

It tells people that they are worth enough to be able to do some things as they grow. Even though my, and I don't mind mentioning it, maybe it'll help others, even though my depression has caused me to beat myself up quite a bit in the last few months. When I am objective, I can honestly say with Billy Joel, **We Didn't Start the Fire**.

I didn't dream any of this up. And in fact, nobody really asked me my opinion. 22 provinces out of 38 are either impaired or broken communion, currently, with our province. The Lambeth Moratoria and that which Archbishop Rowan Williams have proposed appear to be ignored. When I was with him three weeks ago, he put his hands, his head in his hands, shook his head, and I thought he would weep.

As we held hands together and prayed together. The next General Convention in a few months, and before our next Synod, will consider additional litigation that will be punitive in nature. The next General Convention in a few months will consider new and innovative liturgies that are extraordinary to say the least, because I've seen them.

The next General Convention will examine what is now normative in many dioceses, namely, marriages that are other than what we have defined in the Bible as marriage and allowing the unbaptized to receive Holy Communion. That's normative. I'm sorry, I've gone to seven general conventions, first as a priest and then as a bishop.

I simply cannot attend another one. I can barely recognize what occurs anymore. As a cradle Episcopalian who has no idea as to how many generations before me in Wales were Anglicans, I'm simply beside myself. I wanted it all just to be resolved. I wanted it just to all go away. So, I had to look within myself and I had a conversation with my three children.

My three children told me something that was rather remarkable. I guess I always knew it, but I never was able to say it. My 37-year-old son, my 35 year old daughter, and my 31 year old daughter and I have never had an argument in their life. And it's not that we didn't discuss difficult things, but we've never had an argument. And that's because we always believed that we could reach conclusions with love, prayer and consensus. And to be really honest, that's what has happened in this diocese most of the time. We have been able to come to various points through prayer and consensus. It may not always seem that way at synods, but if you served on councils and committees in this diocese, you know that that's the truth. I have to confess to you that I'm simply much better at street ministry than street fighting. I'm just not a good street fighter, folks. I have also been traditionally somewhat unsuccessful in dealing with passive aggressive behavior.

I've never received a phone call from anyone who states that they care very much about us. who happen to be in official leadership outside the diocese, even though I've read that there have been attempts. They just somehow missed my desk. I've never seen any actions that would indicate that there really is a passion to provide space for traditional conservative Anglo Catholics. And I'm not giving up. But it's clear that the general convention is not a form in which my voice, which I thought represented many people from around the church, will make any difference. As a trained therapist, I'm an observer of behavior and I observe body language. I can look usually at people and discover when I'm tuned out.

I can usually determine when they don't like a word I'm saying. And I can usually determine when somebody is in disagreement.

But there are certain behavior patterns that we cannot adopt. Anger is not an appropriate response for Christians. Treating people uncharitably is not an option for a Christian. And even with people with whom we may disagree, the burden is on us to come up with the better behavior. Fear is a precursor to anger. And it usually begins with me. What I want, what I wanted didn't happen, and anger is either intra punitive or intra punitive. You know what that means? We either punish ourselves or we punish others with our anger. It operates oftentimes on the level of feelings, but when we look at the nature of feelings, we must remember this. Everyone is entitled to his or her own feelings as long as we are willing to acknowledge that they are not necessarily accurate representations of reality. Feelings are not the test of truth. Truth is not a result of my feelings, nor my vote, nor my perception. But truth is objective. And truth is what Jesus Christ the Savior is. Discernment is not a matter of a predetermined outcome with a few weeks to let the people think that they really have some input.

Discernment is to identify what God has revealed in his only begotten son, Jesus Christ, with the responsibility to teach the scriptures and to explain theology. They're very good and conscientious people who take different points of view. The way in which they conduct themselves indicates whether their positions proceed from scripture, tradition, reason, canon law, self-righteousness, condescension, pseudo intellectualization, fear, anger, or egocentricism.

The Bible says, by their fruits you shall know them. We are bound to proclaim the truth in love. But not one without the other. As a successor to the apostles and in the spirit of St. Jude, I commend you to the great shepherd of the sheep, whose servants we are and whose judgment and opinion and vote is the only one that counts.

I pray that my words will not be an occasion for people to return to the churches to say, Bishop Ackerman has criticized, lambasted me, lambasted the church, said something negative about somebody or manipulated us. To say so, or to think so, would be a point of utter sadness for me, because that has not been my attempt. I have simply said what I understand, and like you, every word I utter is subject to God's judgment. I recognize that some of you have wished that I would have spoken out more over these fourteen and a half years, with greater clarity, and with some bottom-line answers. Sorry, I am less like St. Paul, but I hope that by my parable telling...that was an attempt to draw you closer to thinking for yourself in Jesus Christ, so that you would know the mind of Christ was understood.

And now, I have no conclusion. Because my life and your life continues on. On two occasions here in the city of Quincy, I thought life was over. First the lawsuit, and then a devastating fire. Life goes on. But I want to tell you something, beloved. Life without Jesus is not life. Life without Jesus in the very center is merely an existence.

Thank you very much.

Thank you for allowing me to wash your feet. At this time I have the duty to do some official acts. I turn over for trust to the standing committee. Uh, one of the official croziers of the diocese, which I now will not be able to use.

I turn over to the standing committee, the pectoral cross that has been worn by every bishop since the second bishop.

I hand over the ring that you had made when we found the stone that had been lost for a hundred years. And you donated gold so that it would be made so that every bishop could wear it. I hand over the signet ring also that has the seal of the diocese because I am no longer authorized now to act on behalf of the diocese. And I hand them over to the president of the standing committee in trust that God will raise up someone who will lead my people with love. Is, uh, is my friend Bishop Beckwith here? Could I have my friend come forward? This man has, uh, lived up to his name. For me. He has been a rock to me, and our friendship, uh, will continue. He has assisted me. I don't want any of my people Ever to be in the harm's way with the wolves. And Bishop Beckwith and I have tried to work in every conceivable way so that we can help people so that they may be safe.

And my brother, you're spectacular.

Historically, there's been a good relationship between the two dioceses, but I want to go on record as saying, historically, there's a spectacular relationship between the two of us. I'd like to give this to you as a personal gift, if you would open it up, I'd be grateful. It's not as spectacular as the one you gave me two weeks ago.

“I hope it's candy.”

Two weeks ago, he gave me a baseball bat that has my name engraved on it, and it was carved in the state of Illinois.

While he's doing that, give my wife a hug. Without Jo...

I want you to look. That's why, because now we have the same style. How about that? I bought for my dear brother a cross that is very, very similar to mine. Uh, so as we continue to work together, we will pray for each other and remember how important it is for us to continue in this endeavor. Indeed. Thank you brother.

Applause

And now for my final official act. The bestowing of the St. Paul's Award. One of the greatest joys I've ever had. Jesus said, See I am sending you out like a sheep into the midst of wolves. Therefore, be wise as serpents and innocent as doves. Matthew 10, 16 To work in a capacity such as this evening's honoree, and for so long, takes initiative, tenacity, a brave heart.

But above all, clear understanding of what this diocese represents at every conceivable level. Oddly enough, the recipient and I met each other in court years ago. In Quincy. Through this unforeseen encounter, I faced him with the opportunity After a few months, if he would want to be confirmed. To which he is seated promptly with an eagerness rarely seen by me as your bishop.

His professional attitude is first and foremost Christian. Which has truly gained notoriety amongst his colleagues and church family. Whether at national conferences or international events. He has actively and proudly represented the Diocese in several general conventions, and assisted in the actions the Synod has acted upon for several years, including being the Chairman for Constitution and Canons Committee of the Diocese.

He has truly been there during the most successful, trying, and controversial times this Diocese has faced. Always portraying the attitude of one who is. Skillful as a serpent, but tender as a dove. It is my privilege to present this award to Talmadge Tad Brenner, the Chancellor of the

Diocese.

Well, that's it. I won't say goodbye because I'll be seeing you. Uh, thank you very much from the bottom of my heart. I love you.

Blessings.

A few more from here, but I have been advised that I have, that this is what we'll do next, and I would love to give you a blessing if I may. Our help is in the name of the Lord.

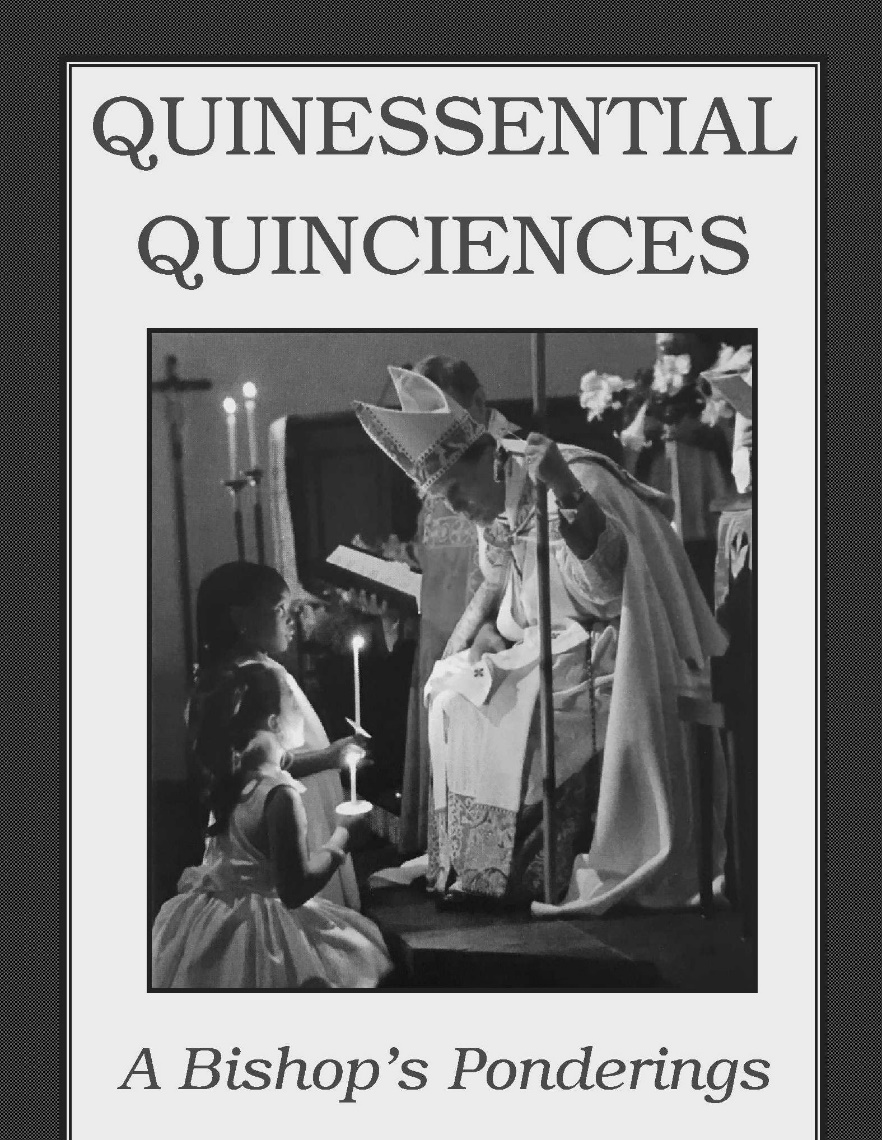
Blessed be the name of the Lord for the blessing, mercy and grace of God Almighty, the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit be upon. You'll remain with you forever. Oh,

thanks. Alright. Alright.

**QUINESSENTIAL QUINCIENSIS**

***Inspirations of a Shepherd***

***Walking in the Steps of the Apostles***



***An Ackerman Allegory***

Growing up in the 1940's and 1950's in Western Pennsylvania meant learning how to pronounce peoples' last names.  Virtually every nationality was represented with multiple languages being spoken and ethnic neighborhoods with ethnic churches, being maintained.  "Multi-culturalism" and "Diversity" meant going to the First Grade and meeting your classmates.  Sometimes we saw a paper Menorah in our classroom window and sometimes we saw a Christmas Tree.  Some of our classmates took a few extra days off during the year to go to their place of worship, and some of us walked in with ashes on our forehead once a year.

When we had a Jewish teacher, she did all of the Bible readings from the Old Testament.  When we had a Christian teacher, he read to us from the Old Testament and New Testament.  Some people from the same family spelled their last names differently because not everyone at Ellis Island could spell properly.  When my grandfather moved from Sweden, he was Axel Frichoff Åkerman (with one dot above the "A"). He very quickly became "Fred Ackerman."  My paternal grandmother was named Paulina Jonsson and she quickly became Jenny Johnson - after all weren't all Swedish women named after Jenny Lind (which wasn't her real name anyway!)

Not too many years ago I received a letter indicating that I was not a member of the "TRUE" Ackerman family. The true Ackerman family, so the letter told me, came from Germany. Now, I recognize that the Vikings travelled quite a bit...but this was a stretch! The letter contained quite a bit of information that was designed to explain that I was not a TRUE Ackerman, and at the same time WHO the true Ackerman's were. Obviously from the letter those who wrote it put themselves in the position of determining what the criteria was to be a TRUE Ackerman. The letter even attempted to say that the Swedish Åkermans needed to stop using the name "Ackerman" since it might confuse people.  My family and I had a “lengthy meeting” of about 3 1/2 minutes and decided to call ourselves what we have been called for generations.

In life some people and some groups have a need to function in a superior fashion.  They have a need always to be right, and they need to be a part of what they have determined is "true."  While there certainly is objective truth, "I am the Way, the Truth, and the Life; no one comes to the Father but me" being an obvious example, there is no mention in the Bible of which "Akerman/Ackermann/Ackerman" is the TRUE Ackerman.

There are still "Ackerman" people who think we're not a TRUE "Ackerman," but we have simply decided to live a happy Ackerman life, and let the TRUE Ackermans spend time trying to figure out who is not a TRUE Ackerman.  They have more time than I do to work on that worthy project!

***“All Bishops and other Ministers.”***

***“Maybe that’s why we hang a picture of our Bishop –***

***so we don’t forget who he is.”***

Growing up in the Church, and hearing at every Mass, prayers for “...all Bishops and other Ministers”…as is the case with the “Prayer for the Whole State of Christ’s Church,” we knew we were praying for our Bishop, but we didn’t always know his name. This led a few of us to consider that the reason why we hung a picture of our Bishop, in our churches, is so we wouldn’t forget what he looked like, since we hardly ever saw him. When we finally did see him, we thought that he didn’t look very much like his picture, until we were told that he had been our Bishop for a long time. We supposed that there was great enthusiasm in sending out a picture during the first year of the new Bishop’s consecration, but that we had to accept another catechetical mystery — the mystery of aging.

Praying aloud for our Bishops by name is a relatively “new” feature as it relates to the Book of Common Prayer, although, in truth, it is a revival of the ancient practice of naming our Bishop at every Mass. Nonetheless, Prayer Book “fundamentalists” prior to 1967 would NEVER add or subtract from the Liturgy as printed, in whatever Book of Common Prayer was in use. In 1967 “The Liturgy of the Lord’s Supper” was printed, and quickly there followed, the Green Book, the Zebra Book, the Son of Zebra Book, the Draft Proposed Book…with many etcetera. There are those Prayer Book fundamentalists, however, who would continue the use of THE Prayer Book, and if they did, they realized that there was no place (being obedient to the rubrics) where names were placed…for the sick….for the clergy…for the departed, etc. Perhaps that’s what the bulletin was for in those day!

In the age of Liturgical Renewal, and with the recovery of the Prayers of the Faithful (called the “Prayers of the People” — not the historical name — but descriptive) people could now hear the names of the Bishops…AND we were actually praying for them! Considering all that was happening in the Church in those days, it makes one wonder what might have happened if people actually had been praying for their bishops, daily by name! Of course, with the availability of a variety of “Prayers of the People” including rubrical permission in the “Prayer for the Whole State…” people were now hearing the names of bishops other than their own: a Presiding Bishop and/or an Archbishop or two and in some places even Patriarchs, with whom we were not in Communion.

Having been brought up with virtually every type of Eastern Rite (both Orthodox and “R.C.” Byzantine) I was quite taken by the fact that at every Divine Liturgy the Priest who is celebrating, at the Prosphoron in the “Liturgy of Preparation” prays for the Bishop who ordained him. I have been overwhelmed over the years as I have attempted to do the same after being ordained a Deacon 50 years ago and a priest nearly 50 years ago. +William (may he rest in Peace.). When I was consecrated as a Bishop 30 years ago, it became a bit more complicated, but remembering at the Altar the Bishop who consecrated me, along with the co-consecrators, is a privilege. At various points in my fifteen years as a Diocesan Bishop I told my Ordinands about this Eastern Rite practice, and from time to time I receive a note or two from the many priests, whom I have ordained, who tell me that they pray for me at every Mass they celebrate. This is a very humbling gift.

At this point in my life and ministry I am assured of the prayers of two Dioceses: the Diocese of Quincy where I am the Eighth Bishop and also Bishop Vicar, and the Diocese of Fort Worth where I serve as an Assisting Bishop to the Diocesan Bishop. At every Mass in those two dioceses, I can be assured of being named: Alberto/Ryan our Diocesan Bishop and Keith our Bishop Vicar/Assisting Bishop.

I wonder if people ever consider how important it is for a bishop to have the certainty of prayer. I know that when we are sick or when it’s our birthday, that people say a prayer — BUT to have a Liturgical Tradition where we pray for our Bishops by name is a blessing beyond measure. I can remember being told in seminary in Sacramental Theology that priests must “take many things to the grave.” I am also aware that as a Bishop I will be taking even more to the grave. “To whom much has been given, much will be required.”

I recognize that when “the Bishop” comes on a Sunday, the natural rhythm of a parish can be disrupted. I recall vividly, a priest telling me that “a good Bishop is one who comes annually, celebrates Mass, preaches, Baptizes and Confirms, and then leaves me alone for a year.” Fortunately, that has not been my experience, but having served in the odd position for years as a “Flying Bishop” — visiting parishes that were at odds with their Bishop — I do understand that not everyone is thrilled to see their Diocesan Bishop! As another priest told me once, “Bishops are a ‘theological necessity’ for Confirmations and Ordinations.” Another priest said, “Having a Bishop present is a good opportunity to show people what a Pontifical Mass looks like.” I tend not to be overly troubled by misspoken words, but I believe that we can see that there are some who do not desire to have intimacy with their Bishop as it relates to pastoral care and oversight. Nonetheless, even they can pray, even if the prayer is to keep the bishop away!

I sincerely hope that people will pray more for bishops. In our Tradition we do not have “pastors” as a synonymous term for “clergy” (even though some mistakenly say that) rather we have Bishops, Priests and Deacons — the historic Three-fold Ministry, and our responsibilities exceed simply being a pastor. I pray that each Order will exercise pastoral leadership, but we are dependent upon the prayers of God’s people. Please pray even more intentionally for your Clergy: Bishops, Priests and Deacons, and when they retire or die...remember — there is still a place in our Liturgies for their names! There may be pictures of new Bishops hanging in the Narthex or in the Parish Hall, and names of new Priests in the bulletin and on the office door, but those who have served need our prayers, and the Clergy should consider taking on the custom and tradition of giving thanks for the Bishop who ordained them. He trusted them enough to share the Gift of Holy Orders.

***An Easter Story***

A priest was told that elementary school aged children do not know much about the Christian Faith. He decided to check it out and gathered several children together to see if this was true. He asked if the children could tell him what happened on Easter.

One child said, "The Easter Bunny comes."

Another one said, "That's when there is an Easter egg hunt."

Another child said, "That's when people dress up and ladies wear a hat."

One child said, "That's the Sunday when my Daddy rises from the bed and goes to Church with us."

Finally, one child said, "That's the day when Jesus came out of the Tomb." The priest was elated. The child continued, "And then when He came out, he saw His shadow, and went back in the tomb for another 6 weeks."

As ludicrous (and maybe sacrilegious) as this is, let's check it out.

If you know Elementary School aged children, simply ask them:

+What happened on Palm Sunday?

+What happened on Maundy Thursday?

+What happened on Good Friday?

+What happened on Easter?

+Name 4 Super heroes.

+Name 4 Apostles.

+What does Jesus think about sin?

+What does Superman think about Kryptonite?

+Can you sing the song from Frozen "Let it go?"

+Can you recite the Apostles Creed, the Ten Commandments, and the Lord's Prayer?

In the end, we need to teach our children who the real Superhero is, who washed away our sins, rose from the dead, and opened the Kingdom of Heaven. Now that's a Superhero!

***“Are We There Yet?” Arguing About People Who Do Not Exist - Not Caring About Those Who Did.***

I recently overheard an argument that was filled with an amazing amount of data about the subjects in the argument. The spirited debate included birthdates, siblings, and alleged accomplishments. Since I appreciate people caring about details related to historical figures, I listened more carefully. The individuals were arguing about Super Heroes, that is characters who have never existed except in comic books and movies. This is, of course, a problem that exists when we are inundated with media — people begin to believe that these characters actually exist.

Today my mind goes to the Wise Men traveling to Bethlehem by following a Star and bearing gifts. Of course, many legends have been created regarding this extraordinary event, but some skeptics know more about Superman than they do about Jesus, and when they are faced with the Gospel, they enjoy pointing out what they see as inconsistencies in the Bible. Sadly, since many of these skeptics have never read the Bible, they read other skeptics who point out matters like: were there Three or not? Were they Kings or not? Were they three specific Races or not? Did it really take Twelve Days to make the trip or not? The list goes one, and I am happy to say that over the years since my childhood I have read almost all of the assertions and almost all of the objections. The problem is that to argue over the inconsistencies or theories or details is to miss the whole point. What we do have on our side as Christians, unlike comic book aficionados is that our texts have stood the test of time of Two Thousand years, and while we love seeing the alleged names of Three Kings/Wisemen we know that the point is that the Messiah who was seen by most as an answer to Jewish prayers came to save the entire world - not just Jews. The Wise Men (Magi: kind of astrologer, astronomer, “priest” types) were not Jewish and they understood the signs. In fact, recent studies of the “Star of Bethlehem” reveal much more than we could have ever imagined in terms of appearance and dating. Once again, the real issue is not how many there were, what they brought as gifts, what their names were, how long it took them to get there and which countries they claimed as “home.” The real issue is that non-Jews came and worshiped Jesus Christ.

All of the glamorous details make Epiphany Pageants much more fun but once again the real issue is that Jesus Christ, the only begotten Son of God came to save everyone. If God created all things, would He have come to save only a portion of His creation? Was sin a state only for the Jewish people? (Stay tuned for February 2.)

I know the details are fun, and I love looking at the significance of Gold, Frankincense and Myrrh and representatives of various Races, but in the Mind of God all of His children are in need of His presence and His grace. When I let my mind wander, though, knowing human nature as we do, I wonder what the Magi talked about (if they could understand each other’s language) as they traveled to Bethlehem. What did they expect? What did they share with each other as they traveled. What did they do to occupy their minds as they made the trip?

I will let others debate non-Biblical details (which I enjoy) but what I simply do not understand is why so many of the modern Christian Churches, formed in the last few hundred years, do not celebrate the entirety of the Christmas story which includes the Manifestation of Christ to non-Jews. Why is January 6 not celebrated in so many churches? Why is it transferred sometimes to other days when for millennia we have celebrated the Twelve Days, and why for those of us who do celebrate January 6, do so many of our own churches do nothing on that day? How do we expect to teach others if we ourselves do not keep those days? As I study the societal trends and the predictions of what Christianity will look like 100 years from now (if Jesus has not yet returned by then), I am intrigued as I discover new generations wishing to return to those Liturgies and Feast Days and Celebrations that have been dismissed or compromised by my generation. You and I are the “keepers of the coals” and I fear that all too often we allow the world to blow out the flames for which many in the past have died. I do not fear those who are robbing us of our Faith; I fear those of us who allow it to happen.

***Biblical Fundamentalists***

Since moving from the Biretta Belt to the Bible Belt, I have had to make a few adjustments. One is that many wear a necklace with the State of Texas on it, but won't wear a crucifix since, they will say, "Jesus isn't on the Cross anymore." I love what Texas stands for, but it would seem to me that a Christian who wears a Crucifix has a great opportunity to remind himself and others that "**Jesus is my personal Lord and Savior** **who died on the Cross for my sins."** Also, one can go into a store called "The Baptist Bible Bookstore" to buy a Bible, but a whole section is missing — the Deuterocanonical Books or Apocrypha. I was recalling years ago walking into a Religious Book Store in London to buy the "Authorized Version" of the Bible aka "King James" — and couldn't find a Bible without the Deuterocanonical books! (Not that I really wanted one without the Apocrypha.) Another problem is that people will tell me that they believe every word in the Bible — so I am somewhat confused when they speak of the Eucharist — "Lord's Supper" as they say — as if it were a memorial event. Apart from not looking at the Greek word for "Memorial," they would contend that it is not His Body and Blood. "This is my Body." "This is my Blood." Luke 22 and "Except ye eat the flesh of the Son of Man, and drink His blood, ye have no life in you." Luke 6:53.  
 So, in the end I am happy to bring my Biretta to the Bible Belt, where we can agree that when Jesus says it — He means it. The answer to His words, however, is "Yes" not "Yes but.”

***Bishop Ackerman Quits Baseball***

(Or ***Why People Say They Don’t go to Church Anymore)***

In spite of a lifetime of being brought up in baseball, I am quitting baseball. I have had it! I have quite a few reasons for my decision, and here there are! Today I could not find a parking place, but when I did they wanted money for me to park! That means I had to drive around numerous lots, and then when I found a spot not only did I have to pay, but I had to walk a great distance just to get inside the ballpark. It became worse. I had to pay to get into the game! These people should simply be happy that I came to see them. Then nobody said hello to me. Just when I thought it couldn't get worse, I had to wait in line to go to the bathroom! Can you believe it?

Then I went to my seat. The people around me had no respect. They talked, they blocked my view, and they expected me to pass money down the line to a man holding a bottle of water that cost more than what I usually pay for lunch! Everywhere I went there was someone trying to sell something. I also find the times to be inconvenient. They are too late at night for me, since I go to bed at 10 P.M. Besides, who decided to add lights at the ballpark to force us to come at night?

Then there are the games that are in the middle of the day when I take my nap. Now here is my complaint about the manager. I have waited in line to talk to him, and he is too busy for me. If I show up, he should give me some of his time, after all what I pay to go to this game helps to pay his salary. Plus, one of the ushers offended me by telling me to move from the aisle. I don't have to put up with that. I was a baseball fan before he was born.

Then there are all the changes. It wasn't like this when I was a boy! Designated hitters, artificial grass — when Ford Frick was the Baseball Commissioner, we didn't have any of this. And those uniforms — artificial materials. Wool uniforms were good enough for Babe Ruth! AND they expect me to come to all of those extra games. When I was a boy and Danny Murtaugh was the Manager, we had 150 games - not 162. And the best team in the National League played the best team in the American League. It was simple - no playoffs. Too many rules have changed. Abner Doubleday would be furious.

Now they want me to give them my email address so that they can send me information about what is coming up next. I want to enjoy baseball in my own way. So, I am staying away. If they want me back, they will have to invite me personally. After all, my grandfather and my father paid a lot of money to keep that ball park open during the Depression. So, on baseball days I will sit in my chair and think about the former baseball players. That'll teach the new players a lesson!

***“Bishop! Why in the world did you and MaMa Jo buy a Publishing Company?”***

As almost everyone reading this knows, we own a wonderful Publishing Company called “The Parish Press.” The question, of course, often asked is why in the world would a Bishop and his wife with “retirement” on the horizon take on something like a publishing company? The initial answer is very simple:

We wanted to republish the books of the beloved Bishop Donald J. Parsons: Professor of New Testament and Ascetical Theology at Nashotah House, then Dean and then the Sixth Bishop of Quincy. The Parish Press owned the rights to two of his three books, and for a variety of reasons the Parish Press was unable either to publish or republish books.

After having a worldwide appeal as the only Anglo-Catholic Publishing company of its time (early 20th century) a staffing problem occurred and suddenly the owners in Fond du Lac, Wisconsin decided to close the company and sell it. A priest in Kansas purchased it, and when he no longer was able to manage it, the very recently “retired” Bishop of Quincy and his dear wife, Joann, purchased it. The story of the acquisition reads a bit like a mystery book, and if you want the details, you should ask our dear friend and priest, Canon H.W. “Sandy” Herrmann, SSC, DD to explain it!

My dear wife and I had already founded a company called “Dove Tracts” and we had already produced quite a few books, DVD’s and tracts, including a book we wrote together, entitled “To God Be the Glory” (which has sold out twice and is ready for its third revision!) So, the Ackermans suddenly had a “blended company” which continues to grow. The need for instruction led us to produce DVDs; ***an Instructed Eucharist for Children, an Instructed Eucharist for Adults, How to recite the Daily Office in the Book of Common Prayer tradition, and a Commentary on the Book of Common Prayer.*** “Dove Tracts” presented a new means to helping churches put tracts back in tract racks, and the Parish Press would provide a “tried and true” product that could be taken into the next century. It was an excellent “marriage!”

Obviously once we did the necessary inventory of what we had purchased we immediately began the process of working with Bishop Parsons to republish his book “***A Lifetime Road to God***,” and some of the sweetest moments we had in our nearly forty-year friendship was to see him go over every page in his book and change a word or two. With Jo designing a spectacularly redone cover, the book was republished and continues to be one of the finest books available in Ascetical Theology (the nature of prayer.) We then acquired the rights to another book he had written on Sacramental Theology and the Eucharist, and along with his excellent book on the Gospel of St. John, “***In Time with Jesus***,” we had the “Parsons Trilogy!”

This led us to begin working with our friend the very well-known Bishop William “Bill” Wantland (sometime Bishop of Eau Claire) in republishing his immensely popular ***Foundations of the Faith*** confirmation book, and working with a dear friend and priest, Canon John Heidt in producing his book. We were “up and running” and since then have published numerous books including the book by Bishop Jack Iker, the Third Bishop of Fort Worth, a book by the well-known English theologian, Fr. Arthur Middleton, a book by Canon Scott Wilson, a Trilogy by Fr. Paul Sterne, and a remarkable Memoir written by Katrina Wilson, the granddaughter of the first President of Lativa.

We were also blessed to receive a manual typewriter manuscript of children’s Old Testament stories written by Fr. Homer Rogers for his children, and I stood back and watched Joann “do her magic” in producing this popular book for children. This has been so popular that we picked up where Fr. Rogers left off in the Old Testament, and we followed with a new book ***More Old Testament Bible Stories and Apocryphal Stories for Children with Bishop and Betty.*** These stories were read by Bishop Ackerman to granddaughter Betty and streamed on Facebook and YouTube during the COVID Pandemic years.

The Rogers family has also made it possible for people to acquire from the Parish Press the remaining copies of what could be called “Anglo-Catholic Confirmation 101,” ***“The Romance of Orthodoxy***.”

As we travel around the Church and go into the Narthex, the Priests’ Sacristy, the Altar Guild Sacristy, the Choir Room, and even the Nave, Chancel and Sanctuary we see the Charts, Prayers, and Godly direction cards (“The Blessed Sacrament is Reserved, and silence and a genuflection…………….”) that have been produced for almost 100 years by the Parish Press. We see Altars with Traditional Altar Cards and we see our Tracts in the Tract racks and in the little card holders in the pews. We even see, on the Nave walls, framed Stations of the Cross that we produce, and even a few Confessionals or “Confession areas” where the Confession card for the Penitent and Confession card for the Priest are prominently displayed.

We are honored, humbled and delighted to own a Publishing company that is so unique and that has served so many people over the years. One of the things that is fun for us, is when we see our books in parish bookstores, our charts on the walls. We love hearing what people need, and with a publishing company that is noted for providing what no other publishing company does, we love the suggestions.

Take a moment out and go to **https://theparishpress.com**. You may find something you need, and you can be sure that each order is mailed with a prayer for the recipient!

***Christ is Risen***

Yesterday a man mockingly said to me "Christ is Risen" and held up his hands. I asked him if he believed that, and he said "No!" I asked him why, and he said that as a boy he was taught not to eat meat on Friday, and that changed. Nuns looked like nuns and that changed. Priests could be trusted and that changed. He then said, "I grew up and I saw the hypocrisy."

What a tragedy it is that Jesus was never mentioned. The meat did not rise from the dead. Habits for Religious do not wash away our sins. Priests represent Jesus - so did the Apostles - and they weren't perfect. I am more and more convinced that people need to be healed by Jesus, and that they spend a great deal of their life dodging that healing which He offers freely.

The Church must be engaged fully in the healing of persons: their memories, their fears, their pseudo-intellectualism, their prejudice towards other believers, and their unresolved anger towards others and also themselves. When their hearts and minds are no longer prisoners of the culture, then they can proclaim most sincerely with absolute certainty: "**Christ is Risen**."

***Daddy, My Friends don’t Play with Me anymore***

One of the saddest things that parents ever hear, when their child is in elementary school, is that the other children do not want to play with their child. The parent sees the tears, sees the hurt, sees the expression of exclusion in the face of the child. "Is there something wrong with my child?" "Is there something I can do to correct this?" "Should I talk to the other parents?" The parent, in so many ways, is the "fixer." Sometimes this is because the parent cannot bear seeing the pain in the child, but sometimes it's because the parent has had similar experiences — not only when they were the age of their child but even now. "No one wants to play with me." Of course, the older one becomes, he or she becomes aware of ways to deal with such feelings: ego defense mechanisms such as rationalization, projection, sublimation, and withdrawal. For many adults, the anger that they feel for believing that no one wants to "play with me" becomes anger - sometimes directed towards others with the intensity of many years of having those feelings - to the turning in of the anger, resulting in depression - to additional, projected fears of future rejections which results in anxiety. Indeed, no matter how old a person is, the hurts and real or perceived slights of the past lie dormant ready to spring forward the moment a similar, albeit, adult situation reminiscent of childhood occurs. It gives a whole new meaning to "Everything I needed to know I learned in Kindergarten." That includes a wide range of social rejections.

Loners are often people who are not emotional risk takers. They may well either "play alone" or may isolate emotionally, in order not to be further hurt. Their adage is often, "never expect anything and then you will never be disappointed." Sadly, many Christians project all of these feelings onto God the Father, and He can become the symbol of "all men who ever broke my heart, rejected me, ignored me, yelled at me, or hurt me in any number of ways." God the Father is, in many ways, much more pliable in the minds of people since "no one has seen the Father." But Jesus, God the Son, breaks the perceived mold. Through the Incarnation, "the Word became Flesh and dwelt among us." That is, God "came down" and decided to play with us; He decided to include us. He demonstrated to us and still does today, His willingness to pay the price of our pain and pay the price of those whom we perceived were never admonished for the ways in which they treated us. Now - our real friend, Jesus, plays with us - to such an extent that when the game is over, He wants to continue to play with us, and is willing to take us to an endless state of being with Him, never being rejected, and always being loved.

In this world, we can connect with our Heavenly playmate by playing and praying. Worship is a type of "Holy Play." In particular, Traditional Worship and Liturgy convey ways in which we have been "playing" with God for many centuries by the use of every one of the five senses that He gave to us as gifts. In this "holy play" we always win - because God has designed our play time to include constant connection with Him by praying when we are playing. "Playing" in Church is different from "playing church." The former means linking up with the **ongoing joy** of the connection between the Mass — which is a foretaste of Heaven — and Heaven itself where life is described as a nonstop liturgy - a nonstop Mass where Jesus sits at the right hand of the Father. The latter is where many of the structures of a fallen world are incorporated into an ecclesial institution.

It is God's will that everyone participates in His plan, but there are those who simply do not want to play. They find the game to be boring, they want to change the rules, or perhaps they want everyone else to participate in playing with God precisely as they play. Or, maybe they think that by having a nice thought or two occasionally about playing is simply enough. God's love for us is so great that he neither forces us to play or pray. He wants the players and prayers to contain a love that carries with it appreciation - so that we can understand that each one of us has a purpose and plays an important part in His plan for others.

As we children become older, we begin to see that the children we enjoyed playing with most begin to leave us. In one sense, they did not leave, but at least to us they are no longer with us. When we see that God's plan for us includes being with Him forever, we also discover that the "game" was much bigger than we could have ever imagined - and that those with whom we enjoyed life the most can now play without pain, grief, exhaustion, and many limitations.

Letting go of those with whom we have played is never easy, but knowing that a place has been prepared for us gives us hope. And in the end, we can see that much of the game we played in this world was simply exercise, preparing for the endless one with the One who will never allow us again to claim "My friends don't play with me anymore."

***Dealing with Difficult People and Ministering to the De-Churched***

Have you ever noticed that when there is conflict “I” am not a difficult person — but the person with whom I have conflict is VERY difficult?

During the course of living the Forty Days of Lent, in particular, it is a good practice to look over our lives and recall the various conflicts we have had with people. Then it is a good thing to look again and see what God has done with those relationships. When the Bible addresses conflict and estrangement it is understood that conflict and estrangement relate to relationships with those who do not follow Christ. In the Christian community, conflict is seen as an opportunity for reconciliation and grace and the Bible even tells us how to do that.

Sadly, many who have had significant conflict outside of the Church all too often bring into the Church those behaviors. Conflict and estrangement related to parents, spouse(s), children, grandchildren, friends, neighbors, relatives, members of social and fraternal groups, etc. — unless we and they repent and amend our ways — we should never be surprised when we/they find ourselves/themselves in the middle of a conflict. Sometimes it is because strong-willed people expect everyone else to “fall in line.” Sometimes it is because when a strong-willed person must work with another strong-willed person, without grace and humility there is conflict and estrangement. Sadly, for some, there are two ways to do something “MY way and the wrong way!”

A great deal of my life has been spent ministering to and with what we call the “de-churched.” As both a priest and as a bishop I have planted churches. So very often today when we think of “church plants” we focus on the unchurched. Obviously, this is an important and significant goal, but what about the people who were formerly members of a church, were active, and then they were gone from the Church never to be seen again. Although we may conclude that this departure is usually a result of a “crisis of faith” it should not be surprising to know that more often it is due to conflict with fellow church members or with the leadership: ordained and lay. Why? How can that be if the parish is the Body of Christ?

Over these 50 years of ordination, I have heard numerous stories from the de-churched, and I always listen very carefully. In Social and Educational Psychology and Sociology we have studies regarding Learning-Unlearning-Relearning. Those studies reveal that the amount of energy and time that it takes to “unlearn” and “relearn” is infinitely more significant than simply learning. Often times the de-churched are simply categorized as “inactive,” lapsed,” or “lost sheep” but as l have listened to their stories and when they are completely honest with me their unwillingness to go to or return to “church” has little or nothing to do with theology. Their reasons are not unlike lapsed members of the Elks Lodge or the Moose Lodge: strong-willed personality types battling for control causing a situation to be out of control.

So, now what do we do? At another time I will write about “reclaiming the de-churched” because it is a very complex and difficult task, but the people are really worth it. In many instances they have not lost their Faith but they have lost their faith in the local church. They have felt “run off,” “unappreciated,” “forgotten,” and healing needs to take place. What I would like to say is that this only happens with the laity, but remember much of my ministry is with clergy and clergy families.

I would encourage us as we do our self-evaluation regarding conflicts to look and see how often we, ourselves, may have been the “difficult person” and to ask God to heal us of that, since very few people really want to be difficult and many more would be surprised to hear that they are seen as “difficult.” Then let’s pray for the difficult people in our life. In many instances they need to be healed of damaged relationships of the past, and they need to have a recovery of Joy — a state of being, and not simply seek to be happy — an emotional state that can change.

Pray for those who no longer walk into a church, and if you are one of them, ask God for His healing power to enter you. You are worth it.

***“Did You Have a Nice Christmas?”***

I discovered many years ago that arrogance is a hurtful sin. We do not draw people to our loving Savior, Jesus Christ, by attempting to prove to others that we know more than anyone else about customs, traditions, and even the Faith. We draw more people to the love of Christ by daily speaking to ourselves the words of St. John the Baptist, “He must increase, but I must decrease.” If we are to be bearers of the Truth and Love of Jesus Christ, then Ephesians 4:15 “speak the truth in love” should be another phrase that we utter to ourselves. It is so easy, once we have been catechized and trained and formed to forget that there was a time when we did not know what we know today. I often wonder how many people have turned their backs on Jesus because of the followers of Jesus who turned their backs on those who needed Jesus the most. There are far too many “war stories” about church leaders: lay and ordained who have injured the flocks entrusted to their care.

And so, what I am about to say is not meant to be a judgment, but rather, I pray, a teaching moment. On December 26 when someone says to me, “Did you have a good Christmas?” something is stirred up in me, and I want to say, “I AM having a good Christmas” because after all everyone knows that there are Twelve Days in Christmas. Of course, the more accurate answer is “I AM having a good Christmas” but the innocent question allows for us to say kind words to people who in many instances simply do not understand. The culture and also many of the recent church denominations of the last few hundred years have eliminated the Christmas Season, and, as we know, everything ends on December 25, and the new statement beginning on December 26 is “Happy New Year.” This, of course, ends by January 1, and sadly the poor Wisemen have not even arrived yet! But most people don’t know that today. Arrogance and anger will not help them extend the Season as it has traditionally been celebrated, and there is absolutely nothing in the culture to support us as we try to explain the Season and what Epiphany means. For those who simply become upset with the culture it may well be that the “burden” rests with us to explain lovingly and yet with conviction, the importance of all of those days. It also means that if we are priests, we celebrate Mass on January 1 for Holy Name Day/Circumcision, and that we celebrate Mass on Epiphany, January 6. Even if no one shows up we need to do it. We need to set the example, or else our ways of correcting the culture will consist of empty and sometimes arrogant and judgmental words.

So, I hope you are having a good Christmas, and I especially hope that you have taken the days of the Season to feed your souls with Word and Sacrament, and that upon being fed, you will share those fruits lovingly with those who simply believe that everything they need is to be found in the culture. You and I know that’s not true, but how we share it may change a person’s life.

**Keep your eyes on Baby Jesus. If you want to look into the Crèche, you must get down on your knees.**

***Do you hear what I hear? Running your life through the electronic world.***

During Christmas our dog found my hearing aid on the carpet where it landed when I inadvertently knocked it off the end table of the bed. When we observed that she was playing with something other than a toy, and we discovered that it was my hearing aid, I told my wife that maybe our dog’s favorite Christmas Carol was, “Do you hear what I hear?”

Hearing and listening are, of course, very different. There are quite a few of us who have the gift of hearing but we are not necessarily good listeners. For some personality types it is essential, when listening, to have no distractions. Some people can read and study with music and noise all around them while there are others who can’t remember a thing they read if there is any noise at all, including the loud ticking of a grandfather clock.

However, when someone acquires a cell phone people rarely ask if the person will be able to hear and listen at the same time. I believe that it has gotten so bad that people are even making critical decisions from their cell phone. Priests are driving down the highway allegedly paying attention to the speed limits and other traffic and at the same time are handling critical pastoral matters.

Cell phone conversations and Zoom meetings are not substitutes for a face-to-face meeting. These means may be very helpful, especially when emergencies occur, but the clergy cannot run their parishes from a cell phone and clicking a heart emoji is not an appropriate substitute for a hug.

I fear that during the Pandemic we adopted some extraordinary means of communication that are becoming normative.  We are blessed to have technological ways in which we can reach people in emergency situations, but we must beware that they not become usual or permanent substitutes for human interactions. People need to be with people.

Connecting with relatives who live miles away by using Zoom is an amazing blessing. Driving in our cars, trying to hear what someone is saying through their sobs and tears may well mean that we are not listening. As I recall the advertisement of a technology company which had as its key point “Can you hear me now?” I have wondered what it would be like if someone said “Are you listening to me now?” Often, we can “hear” words, but we need to “listen” to their meanings. Many depressed people are convinced that no one really listens to them. Calling a depressed person on our cell phone from our car is a good first step, but it is not a substitute for “the sacrament of presence.” Many a bad decision has been made while driving down the highway and being distracted by all that is around us. There are people who hang on every word we utter, and we need to offer them the best that we can.

Can we use our cell phones driving down the highway to confirm appointments, to double-check an address, to say “I’m on my way” — of course, but far too many bad decisions can occur when we are distracted. **People formerly would write an intense letter, then place it in the drawer and pray over it before mailing it**, whereas today with one click we can send a message that upon reflection should have remained “in the drawer.” These instantaneous messages, once sent, cannot be retrieved, and hurried and distracted words on a cell phone may well be words that cut like a knife. Listening means looking into someone’s eyes and heart, pondering their words and praying that we respond in a godly way. All distractions should be eliminated when we are truly listening. Not all questions require an immediate response, and now that we are conditioned into thinking that everyone deserves an immediate response, (especially ME) listening, pondering, and praying are all too often removed from the dialogue. It is not inappropriate to say, “I need to pray about that, and then I will get back to you.” In this way, we can demonstrate that God is in the middle of our decision-making, as we seek His direction and counsel, rather than us being the source of sound decisions.

Maybe when we approach Lent, we can take on the discipline of evaluating how we communicate with people, how we LISTEN to people, and how we can eliminate distractions from our communications. Do we REALLY need to read on social media what people’s opinions are about what we say, or do we need God’s direction and affirmation in order to give to others our undivided attention that is not dependent upon people with opinions, but rather upon God whose Word is not open to a satisfaction survey.

PRAYER: Do you hear What and Who I hear?

***Donnie Osmond Will Not be Playing the Part of Joseph Tonight***

Years ago, I had the privilege of playing the part of Joseph in the Musical, “Joseph and the Amazing Technicolor Dreamcoat” in a Church Production. It was a great honor and I still hum the tunes from time to time. Years later former parishioners wanted to take us to see the Production in Chicago that was “on the road” starring Donnie Osmond. It was terribly difficult to get the tickets, but by God’s grace, the tickets were bought and we were ready to go. The parishioners were especially excited and made extra plans to enhance the experience of going to the performance. Dinner, a limousine — it was A+. When we arrived, at the Theatre in Chicago, we were greeted by the Concierge. Then we saw a somewhat nondescript sign on the door. “Donnie Osmond will not be playing the part of Joseph tonight. Joseph will be played by ” Well, it was his understudy.

Now, of course, the question was “How should we respond?” All of this trouble simply to see and hear an understudy! I mean, after all, didn’t the Theatre and the Musical understand that we were there that night and that we had to go through a great deal of trouble and money in order to see an understudy?

Over the years I have had an opportunity to ponder that night. The food was good. The friends were wonderful. In the past, I had ridden in a limousine with some regularity, and the Funeral Director was usually a very good driver! The ride was pleasant and the night was fun. But it was not Donnie Osmond. I have also wondered what it was like for the understudy when he called his family that day and said, “Guess what! I’m in Chicago. Donnie is sick and I get to play Joseph!” Can you imagine how excited his family must have been? Can we even imagine how many people the proud parents called that day?

On June 2, 1925 the “First string” First Baseman for the New York Yankees could not play that day. His name was Wally Pipp and he was greatly respected. A newcomer named **Lou Gehrig** played that day and then went on to play 2,130 games in that position. Very few people sit around and tell their favorite Wally Pipp stories these days. The understudy did very well, and the only thing that eventually took him out of the lineup was the disease that would kill him — still to this day — ALS — is called “Lou Gehrig’s Disease.”

How often today, I will turn on the television set and skim through the stations noting how many televangelists there are. A big Pulpit with a big Choir, and I wonder what people would say if they heard that Pastor Jones was not teaching and preaching tonight. The lights, the camera, the action are all on him. We have a very odd tendency to create “personalities,” “influencers,” and “media heroes” these days. Instead of simply doing what they set out to do — what they were called to do, a cult begins to surround them: It’s a little bit like the song in “Grease” “Tell me more, tell me more.” We want more than the news. We want to know all about the newscaster.

Fortunately, we are a part of a Tradition where we require a validly ordained priest standing at the Altar — oftentimes not even looking at us, as the Bread and the Wine become the Body and Blood of Christ. The priest does all that he can not to draw attention to himself, and when we go to the Altar Rail to receive the Blessed Sacrament, we are less concerned about who hands us the Sacrament than we are with Whom we receive.

In the 1920’s people went to see the Yankees play baseball. There are nine men on the field. It’s about baseball. And when we went to see “Joseph and the Amazing Technicolor Dreamcoat” we went to hear the music and to focus on the message of God’s redemption as a brother was sold into slavery in Egypt and wound up saving his father and brothers from starvation. Yes, there is more to the Biblical Story and the Musical than Donnie Osmond playing the lead. Baseball players come and go. Entertainers come and go. TV personalities come and go and Clergy come and go. **But Jesus is still the Star and every single day he has the Lead!**

***Executive Pastors, Sanctuary, Fellowship Hall, Worship Leader and Other New Imports***

One of the joys of Anglicanism is how many non-Anglicans have come into Communion with other Anglicans. For those who are new to Christianity there is often a crash course on simple basic ecclesiology and theology. The foremost statement must be “Jesus is Lord.” On the pilgrimage then comes the Apostles Creed, and then the Nicene Creed, and then maybe the Athanasian Creed. If good Catechetical work is being done, delving into the Holy Scriptures, and understanding how Faith has been lived since the Ascension of Jesus Christ, Our Lord and Savior, is obviously essential. This, of course, means learning about the Early Church, the Church Fathers, and the Saints throughout the ages. Reform movements like the Franciscans and Dominicans will naturally be a part of our Catechesis along with the influence of Benedictine Spirituality. Then, of course, will come later Church history beginning with 16th Century reforms, noting the differences and similarities between the Continental Reformation and the English Reformation. Finally, we deal with contemporary expressions. First and foremost, we must introduce neophytes to the Living Lord and His plan for us. The Church does not stand as an alternative to Christianity, of course, since she is clearly the Bride of Christ — the Body of Christ. She is not a humanly conceived concept introduced at a later time, but the Church and the meaning of Church leaps from the pages of Holy Scripture. On the other hand, there are some who are introduced to a type of “Churchianity” and then later discover that Jesus is the Lord of the Church!

I live in the status of a “mixed marriage.” My wife is clearly “PC” and I am clearly “Apple.” Our personalities could be a key to the “why” part, but it means at times that we have to learn different vocabularies and also the names of functions. I do my best to think PC when I am talking with her but then in my mind I am translating, much as I do when I am reading the Bible in Hebrew and in Greek.

Over my seventy-seven years as an Anglican, I have heard the standard titles describing who the clergy are, what the names of “things” are in the church building and what the names of those buildings at the church are called. However, in the last few decades, I often feel as if I am dealing with people who have brought along their old “names” and are now using them in a setting where names and titles were already established. The other tendency is to assume that a computer literate culture which must understand every conceivable name for computer functions suddenly becomes very dumb when they walk through a church door and they are not asked to learn terms that are quite venerable. Sometimes this is done assuming that the only target group they have has never been inside a liturgical church before. Not everyone comes from a Protestant oriented environment. Not everyone is in the “PC” world, so aren’t we wise enough to understand that some people have lived in an “Apple environment” or do we want everyone to become “PC?”

Let’s look at a few terms that have crept into Anglicanism in the last several decades:

Executive Pastor

Senior Pastor

Co-Rector

Congregation (referring to parish or mission)

Sanctuary (meaning the entire worship space)

Vestibule

Fellowship Hall

Pastor Fred

Worship Service

Worship Leader

Board of Elders

Turning back the clock in Anglicanism just a few decades these terms were rarely, if ever, used.

Of course, the question is, as I have moved around the country, when I need to establish something in the church, do I first check what has traditionally been used in Anglicanism or do I see either what the local churches use or what I formerly used when I was part of another Tradition? Now I still have some “punch outs” from computer cards that my Dad gave me from the large computer rooms in the 1960’s at U.S. Steel (nice confetti) but if I assume what I saw back then was the only computer, without discovering what led up to it and followed it, then I am focused on my own personal understanding without putting it into context. We can assume that the casual computer user doesn’t care — but those who work with computers need to know the history and discover why certain terms continue to be of value — even if the circumstances have changed.

Executive Pastor: When I worked in a working-class environment, workers avoided executives as best as they could. It may work in some environments — but not all and it can even be a “turn off” for some. I will look at the word “Pastor” a bit later. We Anglicans have had a pattern in the USA (a bit different in the State Church in England.) The term “Senior” is very confusing to some people, but I guess if it means getting a discount at some restaurants well…!

Rector: the duly elected and instituted Priest of a Parish. A Parish is “self-sufficient church” financially.

Vicar: (in USA) the duly appointed priest of a mission church — a church dependent upon their diocese for assistance and often appointed by the Bishop, for the purpose of Mission Strategy.

Curate: from “the Cure of Souls” — usually a full time “assistant,” selected by the Rector

Assistants: Priests (and Bishops) can assist but their “Office” (Bishop, Priest, Deacon) has its own integrity, so that those other clergy may be “Assisting”) “Assisting Priest and Assisting Bishop.” Also given the nature of the status of “Rector” there cannot be an “Assistant Rector” but there can be an “Assistant to the Rector.”

Co-Rector: Once, when I was the President of the Standing Committee, the Rector of a Parish called me and asked if he could appoint a “Co-Rector.” Of course, canonically there is no such category; moreover, it creates a problem as it relates to “Instituting a Rector.” Sorry for the bad analogy, but that would be like crowning two kings to be co-kings. Being a Rector is more than being the primary priest of a parish; it has numerous legal ramifications and after centuries of having a system that has worked, the question remains — “why change it?” A pastor has particular pastoral oversight while a Rector has pastoral and legal oversight.

Congregation: Indeed, we find that word in our Books of Common Prayer, but much of its intention is to note those who “congregate.” That is, if a parish has three Eucharists on a Sunday, it has three congregations. The term was originally not meant to be synonymous with “parish” or “mission” although it could be, perhaps, a collective term, just as “Minister” in Anglicanism means “Bishops, Priests, Deacons” as a collective term and not a reference to just the second Order.”

Sanctuary: This is a very odd phenomenon to refer to the entire “worship space” as a Sanctuary. Clearly from our Canons and Books of Common Prayer, we have two or three “levels” of flooring in the churches. The people are in the Nave, the Choir is in the Chancel, and the Clergy are in the Sanctuary. The concept of having a Choir Loft above a Narthex is historically defensible thus leaving us with a Sanctuary — behind the rails – and a Nave on the other side of the rails. Many generations of Anglicans have been brought up learning of the relationship in terms of the “Whole State of Christ’s Church” as it relates to these building divisions: Nave-Church Militant, Chancel-Church Expectant, and Sanctuary-Church Triumphant. Great teaching material!

Vestibule: I suppose this is a great name for a movie theatre where we hang our coats, but in the church, we have traditionally referred to that “gathering area” where occasionally one can see the Baptistry, as the Narthex. Many traditional liturgies have occurred in the Narthex, and in that regard, has a historicity and a difference from a “cloak room.”

Fellowship Hall: Once again, more recently we have seen this term slip into Anglican Churches. Apart from the reality of Parish Halls having a history of engaging the entire community — more than “fellowship” takes place: education, meetings, etc. A Parish Hall is usually somehow attached to the church building, and if it is a separate building then it is usually called a Parish House. A “Parish House” by the way is not a Rectory or Vicarage — where the Rector or Vicar lives. There may be within a Parish House a Parish Hall, a Kitchen, and a Library, for example. A hall in the basement of the church is called an undercroft.

Pastor Fred: A very, very recent reality is referring to a priest in Anglicanism as “Pastor and first name.” Priests are simply more than Pastors which is why we do not do as certain traditions in referring to their “one Office Ordained Ministry” as ‘Pastor.’” This refers to a particular function and is a bit like calling an ordained person “Preacher Fred.” They do more than preach. In the American Church we had a period when one could tell (in the old days) “Low Church” and “High Church.” Low Churchmen called their priests “Mister Jones” — formally “The Reverend Mister Jones” and the High Churchmen called their priest “Father Jones.”

Every now and then one might find that someone would say “Reverend Jones” or even “The Reverend Jones” but even Emily Post pointed out that this was incorrect. Example: The Honorable John Jones, is not called “Honorable Jones.” It is very simple: The Reverend John Jones: Father Jones or Mister Jones. Of course, when I was a boy (sorry) we would never presume to call our priest by his first name and NEVER was the Bishop called by his first name unless liturgically praying for “John our Bishop.” Some would argue that Anglicans “borrowed” calling their priests “Father” from the Roman Catholics. I guess, given that principle, when an Anglican priest is called “Pastor Fred” we borrowed that from some other Church, too.

Worship Service: Not too many years ago in Anglicanism we could figure out which Liturgy was being offered in an Anglican Church: Morning Prayer/Matins or Eucharist/Holy Communion/Mass. It was the usual pattern in “Low-Church” parishes to celebrate the Eucharist on the First Sunday of the month (maybe even an 8:00 AM every Sunday) and Morning Prayer the rest of the month. The fifth Sunday was sometimes: “Morning Prayer, Litany, and Ante Communion.” As the Church became more Eucharistically centered since Liturgical Renewal, there are times when the traveling worshiper cannot figure out what is being offered in an Anglican Church — “10 AM Worship Service.” So, what is it? Should I prepare to make my Communion or not? It really isn’t terribly difficult to let people know what they should expect on a Sunday morning.

Worship Leader: I suppose it depends upon one’s definition of “worship” as to whether this works or not. Nonetheless it is a new term in Anglicanism. Our Canons say that the Rector is the Worship Leader, but he may delegate elements of that to Musicians. Singing hymns and other music is “worship” but suffice it to say that traditionally Anglicans have had “Cantors” who usually lead quite a bit of the music in cooperation with other musicians such as the organist, the bell choir, etc.

Board of Elders: Not much to say on this one! We translate the Greek word “Presbuteros” as Presbyter or Priest, but it can also be translated as “Elder.” Therefore, if there is a “priest” in the parish, then how can a lay person be an elder unless we have borrowed that from traditions who do not have Priests/Presbyters? It is good to have Lay Leaders, obviously, but Anglicans have dealt with this matter for centuries — and we already have a system in place.

At another time I will share other terms that are “creeping” in, but in the end, I must say — these are good people, and we are thrilled when people come into Anglicanism and when they discover the wealth that we have. A new enthusiasm, a new joy, a new insight is invigorating to us, but not everything that has been used for generations in terms of time-honored terms needs to be rewritten and changed. However, we must always ask: where did I learn these new terms, and why must they replace the ones that have been used for generations?

***False Teachers - False Teaching***

Having been brought up, trained, and served in the Anglo-Catholic Tradition, whenever I had been questioned about Apostolic Succession, I was more inclined to approach those questions from a tactile position, which resulted in producing Apostolic Succession Charts. Even a passing interest in the Tractarians would cause this subject to arise. Most of my fellow travelers were interested in seeing who laid hands on whom, and some were so concerned about it that they decided to be re-consecrated — sometimes more than once! It is not that I disparage that approach because I think the evaluation of Holy Orders considering matters such as “validity” vs. “invalidity,” and “licit” vs. “illicit” and “regular” vs. “irregular” carries with it an objective and visible line of succession. One may even say as we look at the traditional sacramental evaluation of “form,” “intention,” and “matter,” that our conclusions, while debated by some, can be fruitful.

I was met several years ago with a substantial statement by a Bishop regarding the matter of “being in Communion” or “not being in Communion” from a different perspective. His point, not lost on me, was not the problem of being in Communion or not with a Bishop who conforms to all that I have just stated, but rather from the perspective of whether or not the Bishop is a False Teacher and whether or not he continues to advance the False Teaching.

A very superficial reading of God’s Word gives us a glimpse into what has traditionally been the attitude towards False Teachers and False Teaching. Certainly, the Pastoral Epistles and the Petrine Epistles give us a New Testament glimpse. For Anglicans we have a tendency to latch onto new ways of evaluating heresy or at least heretical teaching by virtue of the communications from Committees and Commissions. For example, when the Primate of Ireland just several decades ago chaired a Commission regarding Holy Orders, we were given the terms: in Communion, impaired Communion, and broken Communion. While logical, in context, they became a part of the new evaluation process. Likewise, although not imbedded in Holy Scripture a few decades later we began to hear many Church matters being mentioned in terms of “First Order” and “Second Order.” As attractive or unattractive as these new forms of assessment may be, in their plainest sense they lack historicity and universality. In fact, they are subjective in nature and it is not uncommon to find a group of well-meaning people disagreeing over where the issue they are proposing falls.

I am noted for saying after years of working on virtually every Liturgical Commission there is, in several Jurisdictions, that Liturgizing eccentricities and idiosyncrasies does not fall into the “Lex orandi - lex credendi” canon of understanding! Revising Church Order is not possible in a local and limited way, nor is it true that the number of people who agree with a Teaching other than what has been revealed (see the Vincentian Canon) can be changed because it meets a local need. The danger, once even well-meaning people begin to promote a dramatic and unprecedented change in one area, is that they must now be armed when others adopt their methodology. The “Gamaliel Principle,” for example, cannot be universally applied, nor (obviously) can the Hegelian Dialectic when we are dealing with matters of Doctrine and Discipline. In the end “synthesis” cannot be accomplished if it alters both a root metaphor and dogmatic truth that has formerly been universally held.

The nature of the ecclesiological deficit that we now experience is that people can easily be mesmerized into thinking that that which is reasonable on a social level must be tenable on a Theological and Biblical level. False Teaching, therefore, is easily adopted due to the fact that it is often reasonable and attractive. The Church has traditionally taught that Bishops are to be Guardians of the Faith, and thus may not alter the doctrine and discipline of what has been held universally by the Church. To minimize the impact of subjective decisions made that reduce what has been an integral part of various tenets of the Faith as “not a Salvation issue” is to ignore the ultimate effect. Theology and the Church are what one might call something akin to an eco-system: we can make a change that is not obviously problematic at the moment or even for a generation or two, but eventually the alteration of that eco system will damage the Body with problems that are unpredictable. It can be as dangerous as contending that two alternate “truths” can coexist. That perspective is actually too foolish to pursue intelligently, since it is a socio-political concept rather than a Theological one.

Therefore, I must thank the Bishop who gave me another way to evaluate Order and Orders. I am indebted to Eastern Orthodoxy for addressing the matter of the validity of Orders when heresy is proclaimed, but I must ask us to evaluate what we teach and what we “guard.” Do I profess something of a theological nature that is innovative? Then I am not Traditional. Do I profess something that is not held universally by the Church — and here I recognize the dilemma in saying “the Church.” Then I am not conservative. Do I take what has not been settled and profess it as my own? Then I may be erring on the side of hubris. In other words, am I furthering unresolved matters as if they were revealed Truth. That is, am I a Defender of Revelation or a Defender of Evolution as it relates to Truth. Again, we must face the fact that once we use new measures of evaluation for one matter, we may find others who find that form attractive enough to apply it to all matters. Given the Bishop’s point regarding “False Teachers” and “False Teaching” perhaps we find ourselves “in Communion” with fewer people than we originally thought!

***Forgiving, Forgetting and Insincerity***

One of the key features of the Gospel is forgiveness. The part of the world in which Jesus exercised His public ministry had what could at best be called “limited forgiveness.” Saint Peter demonstrates that phenomenon when asking about how many times we can forgive. A careful reading of parts of the Old Testament and elements of the Quran make it clear that indignation, wrath, and punishment are elements imbedded in the culture. One of the reasons that the Gospel of Jesus Christ was so unsettling to many was because it was so radically different from a daily life where the lack of forgiveness and having a desire for vengeance were common place.

One could argue that the world in which we find ourselves today is becoming increasingly obvious that if we simply look at the distribution of the World Religions around the globe that Christians are increasingly less prominent, but the critical point is the Beatitudes, in particular, and the Gospel which includes grace, are not necessarily central in the lives of those who call themselves Christians. Sadly, by institutionalizing the dynamic words of radical forgiveness given to us by Jesus, we Sacramental Christians can relegate forgiveness to a few minutes at Mass or a little time “in the box.” Non-Sacramental Christians may hand us a tract or convince us of our sin, but there is more, isn’t there? If Jesus died on the Cross for our sins, do we, who represent Him, have an obligation to be more like Him?

All too often we may well encounter someone who asked us to forgive them, which is a good thing, but should we forget? Perhaps there are two possible types of “forgetting.” One type of forgetting is for one to act as if the offence never happened, and that the forgiveness element is operative. The other type is that the forgiveness element is operative, but the act is not mentioned nor is it forgotten, lest we or they once again fall into the same trap. If a behavior, even if unintentionally, has hurt or offended the other, the offender must never forget, even when forgiven, that amendment of life requires a change in behavior. That is, if we are dealing with an individual who is easily hurt and offended, if we have caused them pain, we must remember the level of their sensitivity. Likewise, if we are easily hurt and offended, then we must never forget that not everyone responds the same way I do. Part of the cultural dilemma today is that we assume that everyone thinks and feels the way I do. Forgetting how sensitive another person is and forgetting how sensitive I may be very often involves the need to offer and receive forgiveness. But let us never forget what caused the offence.

So, take a few moments and think about the many times you have been forgiven. Never forget that you have been forgiven and never forget how precious it is to be forgiven. Now think about the number of times you have forgiven another. Never forget how healing your words of forgiveness may have been. There is simply no way to undo some sins committed in life. There is, however, opportunity given by God to look carefully at Jesus to see how he forgave, even to the extent of explaining the ignorance of those who offended Him ultimately, “Father forgive them for they know not what they do.” “Lord, remember me when you come into Your Kingdom,” the penitent thief stated. Jesus remembered Him by offering him hope, and Jesus’ words may well have been the last words the thief heard. Can you name someone whom you need to forgive? Can you name someone whom you hope will someday forgive you? Do not simply sacramentalize it or rationalize it — confess it. And while even after forgiveness there is memory, imagine what it would be like if there could only be memory without forgiveness. Real forgiveness often involves paying the price of looking someone in the eye.

Years ago, I was able to help a woman work through the pain and suffering she had endured as a child, to the extent that she had hated her mother intensely and now knew that she needed to “let go” of her bitterness. Her unforgiving spirit spilled over into her relationships with others, and the very things she hated in her mother, she began to see in herself. Finally, she was ready to forgive, but her mother had died. I remember driving the woman to the cemetery where her mother’s earthly remains had been interred, and there she tearfully proclaimed her forgiveness of her mother and asked God to forgive her for the hardness of her own heart. Let’s not wait that long. Even if the words are difficult, a prayer card is not difficult to mail. **Forgive…but don’t forget to change.**

***Holy, Holy, Holy***

It has been said that we live in a world that has shifted dramatically from people learning to respect people in authority, to now putting all people in authority in the position of having to earn respect. One can assert that there have been, are, and will be people in authority, personally, who have lost respect, but the culture seems to assume that there is no such thing as the respect of an office or position, simply because of a few offenders. What a sad reality since many have had to learn that one does not show disrespect to an ethnic group, a race, or a socio-economic group because of several bad encounters; and yet, much of what we see today at various gatherings is generalized disrespect.

When I was ordained in 1974, gentlemen tipped their hats (only baseball players wore baseball caps in those days) and stood when a priest entered the room. Of course – they did the same for ladies. This was done whether one knew the priest or lady or not. Children did not eat until everyone was seated and grace was said, and no one left the table until they asked to please be excused, if they could not wait until everyone was done. Many meals in houses today look like feeding frenzies, and the tell-tale signs of the previous night’s meal are seen in the forms of fast-food wrappers and half empty fast-food cups on the floor in front of the family “altar” (the television set.)

With a general and overall lack of respect and loss of manners, we should not be surprised that this has been transferred to the Church. Not too many years ago no man would ever think of wearing his baseball hat while in the pews. People would never think of talking inside the church (since others were praying), and behind the Altar Rail gentlemen put on their cassocks before entering the “Holy of Holies” and ladies donned a mantilla.

At face value, one might conclude that these are minor points; after all, the goal is to get people into the church – not create circumstances (as some say “making man-made rules”) that might offend worshippers (I think they are called “religious consumers” now.) But these church behaviors flow out of the desire to be in the Presence of the Holy. We can be as casual as we wish in the streets, but does God deserve our respect? Must He conform to the ways in which our culture has become less respectful with fewer manners?

The way of approaching the Holy – the Presence of God – is well documented in the Bible. Admittedly, most people do not take off their shoes as they enter the Holy areas, but can we participate in helping maintain an environment in church, where we pay all honor and respect to God: the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit, and can we learn to show more respect, with manners, to the people for whom He was willing to die? Maybe some people “don’t deserve respect,” but apparently Jesus overlooked that at Calvary. For a summary of that, simply read 1 John 4:20.

Participating in the Holy has a direct relationship with good manners and showing respect to one another, — but if it is not taught....

***How Do You Know How Much You’re Worth?***

Many years ago, I had the privilege of working with what was then called “Juvenile Delinquents.” Today we now have syndromes and disorders. These were boys who were sent to us by the Court system as an alternative to being in the State Corrections system.

The founder, a Saintly man, Bishop Robert H. Mize, founded the institution, then called “the St. Francis Boys’ Homes,” with a treatment mode that he simply called “Therapy in Christ.” These Homes had every strata of society, with boys who had committed every type of crime imaginable.

One boy had been dropped off at our Unit by parents who cried the entire time that they helped him move in; they were lovely people. Their son was a bitter young man, and my one-on-one counseling with him was nonproductive. In Group counseling he was mute. One day in individual counseling, he blurted out “my parents hated me.” I attempted to reconcile what he said with the image I had seen when he entered the Unit with his parents. After several minutes of non-aggressive probing (I was a Rogerian in those days) he said, “Why did they leave me?” I, of course, pointed out that they had not “left” him, and that they prevented him from being incarcerated in a State Institution by bringing him to St. Francis Homes. He said, “I’m not talkin’ about them.” Now I was baffled. The reality was that he had been adopted by the lovely couple whom he called “Mom” and “Dad.” He had spent years being furious with the parents he did not remember, whom he saw as bringing him into the world and then abandoning him. Sadly, he had taken out his anger of abandonment on the world into which he was born and onto the parents who had attempted to rescue him from that world.

After being unsuccessful in utilizing every method I had learned in the numerous courses in undergraduate and graduate psychology, I blurted out, “Hey kid, do you know how much money your adoptive parents paid for you?” Suddenly I had his attention. He said, “How much?” With a degree of frustration, I told him about attorney’s fees, and all of the expenses related to an adoption, and I gave him an estimated “bottom line” figure. He said with a smile I will never forget, “You mean I’m worth that much?”

He became a model resident and was released within the year.

Sometimes we vent onto the wrong people when we are filled with pain, and it can become misdirected anger. But Jesus understands. He has adopted us as His children, and He was willing to pay the price on Good Friday for His adopted children. The next time you look at a Crucifix you may wish to remember the boy in this story, and with him you may wish to say to Jesus, **“You mean I’m worth that much?”**

***I did it MY way***

Simply saying that phrase probably causes a number of people to say “Frank Sinatra!” It’s true — he is undoubtedly the one best remembered for singing the song. Few remember that Canadian Teeny Bopper, Paul Anka, wrote the words and even fewer remember that two Frenchmen had written the tune years before. We are a “sound byte” generation and over the years, Clergy have taken illustrations from the culture and its songs and used them in sermons. In 1969, I remember several sermons on Peggy Lee’s plaintive cry in her song, “Is that all there is?” Of course, you could write your own meditation on that song, and the question still haunts you even if the tune doesn’t. For those who are a little bit OCD — sorry for sticking these tunes into your brain as you read this!

Some have said that when Frank Sinatra sang “I did it my way” that it was a bit like a commentary on his life. I leave that to others to evaluate, but I was confronted with a type of dilemma several years ago when a man told me he wanted me to sing at his funeral. Guess what he wanted me to sing? For those who know me, you know that I have a musical background and that I enjoy singing, but I had a problem. Being a Traditional Anglican means that we don’t do eulogies and we don’t do secular music at Requiem Masses. I am aware of the fact that in the current secular culture we are seeing less of what the Church has taught for two millennia. That is, a Requiem Mass is not a “Celebration of Life” unless we mean, “A Celebration of Jesus’ Life in the life of the departed person.” The Requiem Mass, Burial Office, Funeral Liturgy are all about Jesus, and it is about the inclusion of the departed in the Kingdom, where Jesus has triumphed over death. Along the way, we mere mortals have fallen down because “I did it my way.”

The good news is that when the man died his family relieved me of the burden of having to sing the song. Traditionally we have “Wakes” or “Vigils” the night before a Funeral where people gather, tell stories, and reminisce. This is very good. We also have funeral receptions after the Requiem or the Cemetery Interment, and once again this is a great time for slide shows, pictures, eulogies, and stories. After all, the funeral is not meant to exclude the departed, nor is it meant to exclude the mourners: it’s meant to focus on the Words of Jesus and what He has done for us so that death is not the final reality. St. Paul has a great deal to say about these, and as we look carefully at the Readings at the Burial Office or Requiem — we see what the traditional emphasis is: “DO IT HIS WAY.”

It has been postulated that at times of stress and crisis, even the well-educated and well-trained return to earlier forms of behavior. I suppose I occasionally see this in dogs, for instance, who instinctually growl, snap, and bite when confronted with a crisis — “Let sleeping dogs lie.” We human beings can be like that. In moments of crisis, frustration, and stress we can return to earlier patterns of behavior where we begin to yell, scream, swear, call people names, etc. I once asked a congregation at a parish how they might feel if I could have a public showing in video form of each one of them at a point in their life when they were at their worst: words, actions, behavior, and so on. Obviously, this could be devastating, but it was when we have been at our absolute worst that Jesus was willing to die for our sins. He did not die for us because we sang well, or because we wrote a song, or because we donated a great deal of money. It is easier to die for someone who is a friend and is loving than it is to die for an enemy who is hateful.

Forgiveness and repentance are counter-cultural because we are so busy living the cultural theme of “I did it my way” that we forget that we are supposed to “do it His way.” His way does not include speaking ill of others, or of holding grudges, or of lashing out. All of that behavior can be forgiven, but we must ask. “IF we confess our sins, God, who is faithful and just will forgive us our sins and cleanse us from all unrighteousness.” — IF. — We need to take the first step — that’s “His way.”

I must confess, that as a teenager, I had prayed that all Christian Churches could once again be Eucharistically centered, and I have lived to see that. BUT now I have been praying that all Churches would offer the Sacrament of Penance and reemphasize the necessity of being penitent before receiving the Blessed Sacrament. “His way” is that we MUST be reconciled and we must be forgiven. St. Paul warns us against receiving the Blessed Sacrament unworthily lest we bring condemnation unto ourselves. Maybe that’s why a “Celebration of Life” is so popular today. People can come and go, live and die without ever having been reconciled with God and with their neighbors. In fact, they can even justify themselves for not forgiving God or someone who has been in their life. Why — because they are so busy doing whatever they do “MY WAY” and not “HIS WAY.”

As the old saying goes: “There are two ways of doing things — My way or the wrong way.” Well, how about HIS WAY? Do we ever plot our course and make our plans without including God’s Word and God’s Revelation? Do we even claim a religious cover — “after all I’m doing it for the church!”

I have been blessed for six decades by what I call “Jo’isms.” These are amazing and direct points made by my wife over our 57+ years together. An example: she had never seen what might be called “Low Church” until she was much older, and said to me. “Now I know what Low Church is. It’s where they elevate the offering plates higher than the Host and Chalice.” But on one occasion she said to me as I was rushing out the door many years ago to do something “for the church,” “Are you doing this because it’s what you want to do, or are you doing this because it’s what God wants you to do?” Amazingly direct and an important lesson.

As we look at our lives, let’s see what we do because it’s “MY WAY” and let’s look and see what we are doing “HIS WAY.” Imagine what Heaven would be like if we entered singing the Frank Sinatra song, or the Peggy Lee song, and how it would be if in Heaven, we really did it “MY WAY.” I think, perhaps we would need to look carefully to see if we were someplace other than Heaven!

***I Have No Right to Complain***

Have you noticed how many times per week we are given an opinion poll? Apparently, our opinions are now objective truths that need to be shared — or at least we are being mesmerized into thinking that the world is on the edge of their seats waiting for our thoughts. Part of this odd phenomenon is the reality of complaining becoming an art form. We can now complain to more people than ever before. We can now publish our complaints with the hope that people will encourage us to complain some more. But where do we find in the Bible any encouragement to have opinions and complaints that are contrary to the example given us in the life of Jesus?

As many of you know, I fell off a ladder several years ago. I blacked out and fell about ten feet and I awakened in an ambulance. I was told that I had three broken ribs on my spine, with one that was bleeding, and a broken rib in the front. I suffered a concussion that was bleeding on the brain. Both areas of bleeding stopped in a couple of hours. I am being healed, and I suppose I could complain about what I cannot do yet, but for what purpose? If I were to complain, it would be to exclude God from the remarkable healing He is doing. I can walk. I can think. I can celebrate Mass. I can hug my wife and children and grandchildren. There is heat in my house. I have a bed. But most of all, I have the love of God shining through my wife and family and people who are concerned. I am sure that there will be those who will focus on the fact that an almost 76-year-old should not be on a ten-foot extension ladder, and while they may be correct, their opinion is not healing me, although I obviously will become increasingly cautious about my activities. But how many times have I been on a ladder and not fallen? How many times have I barely missed being in some type of accident? How many times has God protected me as I have traveled into difficult areas and traveled around the world? Shouldn’t I be spending more time thanking God for how many times I have been delivered? *I have no right to complain*.

As I have felt a great deal of pain in the areas where the broken ribs are, I have wondered more specifically about the elements of the scourging that Jesus endured, and then upon being scourged how far He had to carry the Cross. I have been either attending or officiating at the Stations of the Cross for many, many decades, and sometimes I spent more time worrying about the Procession, the music, the “correct” form and the right vesture than I have about pondering the pain of being scourged, being beaten, carrying the cross, trying to take a deep breath — *I have no right to complain*. Jesus in three years of public ministry endured infinitely more than I have in 50 years of public ministry and He continues to endure the pain of those who in this world have turned their backs on Him. All too often we have sought consolation from God, and then received it, only weeks later to forget. If someone forgets me, if they speak ill of me, if they don’t send me a Christmas card anymore, if they are upset with me for something I may have done unintentionally, what right do I have to complain? Jesus has taken all of the pain upon Himself, and every once-in-a-while we are allowed to have a brief encounter with His pain so that we will never forget what He has done for us. *I have no right to complain.*

***I QUIT!!!***

When Lent approaches I would imagine that most of us are pondering what we will be doing and/or not doing:

* Meatless Wednesdays and Fridays
* No eating between meals
* Two and one-half meals per day with meat at only one meal (except Wednesday and Friday when there is no meat)
* No alcohol
* In other words — the usual basic Lenten regimen or rule that Holy Mother Church has followed for centuries.
* So is our Lenten observance simply related to “what goes into the mouth?” Or have we pondered what comes out of the mouth as Holy Scripture tells us?
* We need to quit:
  + Harboring ill will
  + Holding grudges
  + Being condescending and arrogant
  + Needing always to be “right” while everyone else is wrong
  + Speaking ill of others
  + Repeating “fake news” as if it were verifiable
  + Gossip
  + Slandering others
  + Demonstrating body language that conveys disdain

All of this — as starting points, will help us make our Confessions, which if we call ourselves “traditional, conservative, orthodox” we will all be doing.

The question is “why?” How can we expect others to be more forgiving of us if we are not willing to swallow hard, and start afresh with many relationships? So, let’s pause and think about who and what we are upset about. Is our upset state helping us be a better person? Is it a good advertisement for being a Christian? (“Join my church and you can be just like me.”) Once we can name those people and those situations, how can we let go of our judgments and allow God to be God?

I occasionally say to people that they need to take a moment and pretend that they are entering a room where everyone whom they dislike is present. Another group then enters of people who dislike us. Then I ask that they do a count of those who are present. Now picture Jesus entering the room. He greets them all with a loving smile because He was willing to die on the Cross for everyone who is present including us. Obviously, the question is: “If Jesus has forgiven me — why can’t I forgive others?”

In the end, when we prepare for Lent and as we prepare to make our Confessions we need to say “I quit!” I quit carrying resentments and bitterness with me. Giving up foods and fasting usually only benefits us, spiritually speaking, but saying “I quit” sinful behaviors benefits many including myself. Imagine what it would be like, on Judgment Day, to discover that each one of our angers, resentments, bitterness, and grudges all had a weight, and we carried them with us, and when we saw Jesus and took a step forward, we discovered that the weight was too heavy for us to move. It’s time to quit and to drop those weights. In an age, that is often focused on “weight loss” God has already given us an extraordinary “weight loss program” — Confession, Contrition, Absolution, and Amendment of Life.

***"I'm Bored"***

Boredom has been elevated to a new justification for not doing something. For example, some people do not want to visit residents of Nursing Homes (except at holidays or when they belong to a singing group) because it's boring. Some children do not want to visit relatives because it's boring. They do not want to go to church, because it's boring. It is not as if boredom has never existed, it is just that far too many parents allow this protest from their children to determine the outcome.

Frankly, staring at a screen for hours for many of us is boring.  Adults can find attending children's events to be boring.  Adults having to go see yet another movie that has no real effect on life can be boring.  But adults do many boring things out of love.  Parents need to understand that they do not need to win their children's approval to be a good parent, nor should they be held captive by children's uninformed opinions.

I find sitting in a waiting room at the Doctor's office to be boring — but I know why I am there. Boredom is simply a part of life, but it is not a decision-making event. In the end, many people who are bored can be quite boring to others — it's just that the others have learned how to operate out of love and respect.

I wonder if God finds us to be boring? Sometimes love, respect, and being present to others simply needs to be taught.

***“Is Christianity alive in Russia?”***

Happy Feast of St. Sergius. As some of you know I have had the privilege of being in Russia to meet with the Patriarch and Metropolitan. The vibrancy of the Russian Orthodox Church is breathtaking, and for Americans it requires removing all thoughts of the USSR and the Kremlin along with the Communist leaders of the time, in order to see what is happening in the Church.

No matter what one may think of any elements of the secular regime, the reality is that those churches which had been desecrated and made into libraries, museums, and barns are now open for Divine Liturgy and they are packed with worshippers. The level of the piety is amazing and kiosks are to be found in the Kremlin, in the streets and at the Malls where religious items are displayed not only openly but with enthusiasm.

As I walked down a street one day, people came up to me simply asking for a blessing — right there on the street — no other requests. To see how Christianity had been “underground” in the USSR and now is a very visible and active expression of faith is very inspiring. Churches are being built in numerous places, and they are filled. What happened? The life of St. Sergius is well worth reading, and also reading about underground Christianity in the Soviet Era is a testimony to how God ministers to those who are oppressed and martyred for their Faith.

There is no apology in Russia today for wearing a cross, for talking about God or for making the Sign of the Cross in public places. Even when it appears that religious freedom is taken from us, God is still in charge. For those who enjoy religious freedom — the freedom of religion and not freedom from religion, history in other places may well help us understand our own.

***It Ain’t Over ‘til the Fat King Sings***

I recently listened to a news commentator opine that this is a “weird week” because it begins with Christmas and ends with New Year’s Eve. It had occurred to me that this could well be the current “reality” — in fact, Commercial Christmas has apparently won. The Christmas Season begins sometime in October and November, with decorations up the day after Thanksgiving (always subject to change) and after saying “Happy New Year” at Midnight, Christmas is over. The decorations come down, Christmas movies are no longer broadcast, Christmas songs on the radio disappear — and we’re off to the races for what comes next — these days it’s now February 14 —what we used to call Saint Valentine’s Day, but the Saint is now deleted and forgotten, and it’s simply “Valentine’s Day.”

I really cannot blame the culture, because much of it is economically driven, and I understand the need to plan, prepare, and purchase (the three “p’s” of the economy culture) but what happened to the Wise Men — aka the Three Kings? Did they somehow sneak in on Christmas Day and make a quick exit? The name of the day of the arrival of the Wisemen, as we know is “Epiphany” and generally speaking it is now used as a secular term somewhat synonymous with “great idea” or “brilliant insight.”

So, we can easily see when commercial/secular Christmas begins and we can now see when commercial/secular Christmas ends, but why do so many Christians buy into that? I have never thought it appropriate for the culture to tell Jewish people how and when to celebrate Hanukkah, nor to tell Muslim people how and when to celebrate Ramadan, so I wonder why Christians allow the celebration of the Birth of Jesus to be altered and rearranged by non-Christians, nominal Christians, and others.

The burden of proof must always, classically speaking, be placed on people who wish to change what has been — what has existed, and inasmuch as the Twelve Days of Christmas predates the current secular celebration season, the operative questions are not “Why do you people put up your decorations so late and why do you leave them up for so long,” but rather, “Why have you changed how the vast majority of Christians have been celebrating the Feast of the Nativity Season (Christmas)?” Once again, one can justify decorating early given the complexities of the number of decorations and the work schedules of many people, but what compels people to take down their decoration while it is still Christmas? Why have we simply conformed to what the secular culture has produced? Wouldn’t we be a witness to the world by simply keeping up our celebration decorations during the entire Twelve Days of Christmas at least?

We recognize that the Holy Scriptures do not define with precision the number of Magi (Wisemen) nor their gifts nor how long it took for them to make their journey to see the Christ child, but the vast majority of Christian’s throughout the world have traditionally celebrated January 6 liturgically as that day, when the Wise Men arrived bearing gifts and adoring the Word become Flesh — Jesus our Immanuel. I have often wondered what it would be like if signs were made and put on houses which now no longer have decorations on January 6 saying “Sorry. It’s over.” For us we can say, **“It ain’t over ‘til the fat King sings!”**

I would like to challenge all Christians to reject the commercial/secular Season and return to the Christian Season. It is actually not difficult at all. Simply leave the decorations up, and on the Feast of the Epiphany (after having gone to Mass) simply gather and sing an Epiphany hymn such as the modern one, “We Three Kings of Orient are…” written in 1857 by an Anglican Priest. Be a witness. Let people know that Jesus is the light of the world, and do not allow a culture that is barely Christian, if at all, to tell Christians how to celebrate the most remarkable event (until the Resurrection and Ascension!) — the Word becoming flesh and dwelling among us. **It ain’t over ‘til the fat King sings.**

***It had an Interesting Bouquet***

I am now at a point where I am afraid to give anyone my email address – especially businesses! Almost no matter where one goes or what one does there is a survey. Soon I am certain, that we will receive a survey asking us to rate the surveys. I have witnessed, along with others, the shift from Liturgies that were (and are in many places still!) directed towards God, and now are directed towards the people. Do they like the music? Do they like the sermons? Part of the dilemma with this consumer style of Christianity is that Clergy all too often assume that the feedback is essential, to such an extent that they are willing to adjust centuries old forms in order to satisfy the “audience.” Any day now I expect a priest to conclude the Mass with “You’ve been a really great audience. Thanks!”

One morning I wondered what it would be like if churches adopted the survey mode, and on Monday emailed to all of their “customers” questions that were related to their “worship experience.”

A Survey from COOL DIP (Church of our Lord of the Diocese of the Inner Peninsula)

We wish to thank you for attending our Worship Service/Mass/Eucharist/Lord’s Supper/Agape (please select the least offensive term) yesterday. Although we have no interest in contacting you in person, we are certain that you will appreciate our interest in quality control and customer service. Please answer each question. We will randomly select our “worshipper of the month” from the completed surveys. Please type in the Code below to begin. Only a select few have this code.

**G N O S T I C**

Please rate with (1) being “Did not meet my expectations” to (5) being “I was affirmed.”

1. Were there an adequate number of parking spots reserved for “Our Special Guests?”

2. Were you greeted appropriately by our diversity greeting committee and escorted to the door without inappropriate touching?

3. Were you immediately greeted at our “WE LOVE VISITORS” center in a way that made you comfortable?

4. Were you told how important your presence was to us?

5. Did you find the pews to be comfortable?

6. Were you offended by the offering plate?

7. Did the people around you chastely greet you at the “Kiss of Peace” and did they give you their email address, tweet information, and other critical bits of information?

8. When you were escorted to the Altar/Communion Table/Fellowship Table (pick the least offensive term) did you select the grape juice line or the wine line?

9. If you selected the wine line, did you find our selection of Altar/Communion/Fellowship wine (pick the least offensive term) to have an interesting bouquet?

10. Was the sermon sufficiently short enough to allow you to do your text messages on our campus-wide WiFi?

11.Were you able to see the Liturgy/Holy Communion/Mass/Eucharist/Lord’s Supper/Worship Service on our large screens and was the definition sharp enough?

12. Were you escorted appropriately to the “The Meal after the Meal” location at the Parish Hall/Fellowship Hall/Undercroft/Parish House/ Billy Bob and Betty Boop Memorial Hall?

13. Did you find a sufficient amount of vegan and gluten-free dishes at the Brunch/Fellowship Meal/Coffee Hour?

Now that you have completed this survey, we wish to thank you.

You are number \*\*\*\*\*. Please note that we are a partner with “FOWHNC” (Fellowship of what’s happening now Churches) and your answers, while totally confidential, will be added to your visitor’s account.

**Thank you for visiting us, and on behalf of GtF, JC, and the HS – we welcome you**

***It IS a Sin to Miss Mass***

1. “I had company in from out of town, and I just could not come to church.”
2. “I had to go to my nephew’s graduation party and couldn’t get to Mass.”
3. “I was tending to my sick infant and could not leave the house.”
4. “I went to a wedding on Saturday, and I figured that would count.”

Consider those four statements. Are any of them valid reasons for not attending Mass on a Sunday (or, might I boldly add, a Holy Day)? Only one of them (taken at face value, with no other information) presents a condition whereby one can miss Mass on a Sunday and not commit a mortal sin. Yes, you heard me correctly…a mortal sin – a death-dealing and grievous sin that breaks God’s heart and that begins to alienate us from Him.

Missing Mass on Sundays is, for many, a favorite pastime. For others it is just something that “happens” from time to time, perhaps without grave intention or full understanding of what is going on, and herein lies the difference between mortal (death-dealing, in other words) and venial (soul-damaging) sin. For a sin to be considered Mortal, it must be committed with these three conditions:

1. It is of sufficient matter (that is, it really IS a sin).
2. It is done willingly (not against one’s will).
3. The person KNOWS that it is a sin.

Knowingly and willingly missing Mass on a Sunday is an offence against the second Commandment – “thou shalt keep holy the Lord’s Day,” for the celebration of the Holy Sacrifice of the Mass is the way in which Christians have kept the Lord’s Day holy since the earliest days of the Church. This certainly satisfies condition number 1 – breaking one of the Ten Commandments certainly qualifies as a sin!

We should add to these conditions the caveat “without sufficient reason,” for there are indeed times when one is truly prevented from getting to church – illness, for instance, or caring for someone who is ill and requires constant attention. Housebreaking a puppy does not qualify, nor does going to a social or civic function. Only the worship of Almighty God satisfies the requirement to worship Almighty God!

There might be some who would say “I sometimes like to worship God on my own at home.” Well, that is just fine, and God does expect us to do that all throughout the week, but the Sunday requirement for nearly two thousand years has been Mass attendance – being with the assembled body of faithful Christians wherever one finds oneself. One need remember that, there is “no such thing as a solitary Christian,” and that Christians are a corporate and societal people – we only function as the Church when we function together. Therefore, it is not only yourself that you are hurting when you miss Mass, but you are also depleting your beloved brothers and sisters in the Body of Christ, and causing an unneeded tear in the fabric of God’s Church.

Go to Mass on Sunday. Every Sunday. Your Lord Jesus Christ suffered on the Cross and died for your sins. Untold hundreds of thousands of Christian martyrs gave their lives for the Faith – many of them so that you might have the opportunity to worship today and to receive the Faith whole and undefiled.

Do not grieve the heart of our Blessed Lord. Do not make a mockery of the blood of the martyrs.

Gooo to Mass.

***It’s Beginning to Look a Lot Like…***

I can remember when I saw my first artificial Christmas tree. It came into my boyhood home when I was about ten years old. It looked like someone had raided the Aluminum Foil Company, cut strips of foil, and then wrapped the strips around pieces of metal coat hangers. Not to stand by itself, the next addition was a turning lighted wheel with various primary colors so that one could stand back and see something that was shaped like a tree, but obviously was not a tree, with regulated, ever-changing colors. There it stood in all its glory — an Aluminum Christmas Tree. Apart from the fact that my mind was having difficulty with that concept, there was the added reality that when I went to bed on Christmas Eve, after having gone to Midnight Mass, that when I awakened Santa Claus would have put up everything decoration wise that would have existed in the early 1950’s.

Obviously, most people had newly cut Christmas trees whose needles could only handle the Twelve Days of Christmas, so that there was never any question about the beginning and ending of Christmas: Christmas through Epiphany. Of course, before we jumped into the future, our trees went to the Epiphany bonfire where we could moan with others about Christmas being over. In Western Pennsylvania, most people would add a day so that they could celebrate “Russian Christmas.” We didn’t necessarily understand why our Russian Orthodox friends did that, but we liked it. Our Jewish friends would regale us with stories about Hanukkah Harry who put up their Hanukkah bushes and left them toys.

I will not state the obvious — it’s beginning to look a lot like Christmas partly depends on which Christmas Movie Channel you watch or if you take out the turkey carcass Thursday night and bring in the tree! I will also not criticize those who start early, in anticipation of the birth of Christ. I have spent a great deal of my life either hearing “The Last Gospel” or saying it, at the end of Mass before the Procession out. A daily reminder of the Incarnation by reciting the prologue of the Gospel of St. John is a good thing! However, just as so many “big box churches” seem to jump from "Palmless" Sunday to Easter, with egg dying on Good Friday, and Egg Hunts on Holy Saturday, so it is that many Christians seem to ignore the Annunciation (The Archangel Gabriel and the Blessed Mother), the Visitation (The Blessed Mother visiting St. Elizabeth, the mother of St. John the Baptist) and the rigorous trip on a donkey from Nazareth to Bethlehem.

The question, however, is given that we can now decorate our houses with unheard of decorations - how can anyone be expected to make that happen Christmas Eve before the children awaken at dawn on Christmas morning. To look at it in another way, in the usual birth pattern of the day, now that most babies are born in the hospital, does Dad stay up and furnish and decorate the bedroom designated as the nursery the night before the baby and mother come home? Or, does Mom really feel like furnishing and decorating during her last month of pregnancy? The complexity of life dictates that we make preparations well in advance. However, I do not know any mothers who have baby parties before the day the child is born, nor do I know of any mothers who enjoy people taking a peek of the baby on the day of birth, and then leaving rapidly before the relatives who are coming from the East even make it to the celebration of the birth of the child.

In the Church, we have Advent for a reason, and in spite of the fact that fifty years ago there were virtually no churches that had Advent Wreaths in their Naves, Chancels, or Sanctuaries - it is an excellent way to anticipate and do the count down, provided that we do not let people think that the “Twelve Days of Christmas” is a count down from St. Lucy’s Day, December 13!

We need to make spiritual preparations that are somewhat a akin to house cleaning and preparing the nursery for the arrival of the child. It is not the lengthy preparation period leading up to a one-day event that is of concern. It is that (even some Christians) think that Christmas is an event rather than a Season. Christmas has become a bit like a fast-food restaurant - “eat and run.” Most people who go to fast food restaurants do not spend days there savoring their chicken strips and French fries. BUT we Christians have built into our calendars the fact that our Feast Days begin the Season, whether it be an Octave (eight days) or a Season such as Christmas (twelve days.)

The real question, therefore, is not “why do you start so early” but rather “why do you end so soon.” January 1 (Holy Name of Jesus/Circumcision) is not “take the tree to the curb day.” It is one of the Holy Days that allows Christians to say “Happy Holidays” from Christmas Day, St. Stephen’s Day, Holy Innocents Day - all the way to Epiphany when the Wise Men arrive. I wonder what it would be like if we started hanging signs a few days after Christmas saying “It’s over - you’re too late” so that we could have some sort of greeting for the Magi when they “arrive!”

Therefore, “It’s beginning to look a lot like Christmas” is an appropriate song for most of the Twelve Days. If people continue to decorate on Boxing Day/St. Stephen’s Day (12/26) it’s not inappropriate at all. One of the things I have enjoyed so much in my fifteen trips to the Holy Land is celebrating “Christmas” (The Feast of the Nativity) in Bethlehem on three different days. With various Calendars in use, do we really think that people in ancient and historic places operate on the basis what an American culture offers as THE way to celebrate?

Maybe we need to take a deep breath and admit that where we live, the way in which we celebrate Christmas has changed dramatically from the days it was abolished by some New Englanders, to the various decades since then. Well, it appears that green trees are “back in” and for extra money we can even pretend that they are real, but what needs **to be “real” is our Faith**. Why did people who never go to church - not even Christmas - still call it “Christ Mass.” Where do they think the word comes from? And why do modern Christmas movies substitute holiday events on Christmas Eve without any reference to people going to their church. If we have wanted the Feast of the Nativity of our Lord and Savior, Jesus Christ to be celebrated, have we unwittingly bought into a culture for whom Jesus is simply an historical figure - (maybe He existed)- and Christmas is simply a Winter event?

When people say “I am not celebrating Christmas this year” do they seriously think that they can control the reality of God coming into this world as a defenseless baby. Maybe that would be a good clue for us today. “What have you done for Baby Jesus?” And “What have you gotten Him for His Birthday?” In the end He did all of this for us. What can we do so that in another generation, Christmas will simply be like another “day off” unrelated to why it ever was, not unlike Memorial Day and Veterans Day when we fire up the charcoal grill without ever remembering the price that was paid so that we could be free.

Remember, Jesus paid a price so that we could be free. The least we can do is celebrate the Birthday of our Savior.

***It’s More than Peter O’Toole and Richard Burton***

So often when people look at historical events they do so through the lens of a movie. Again, so often, when we have seen several movies about the same subject, we can see how interpretation can even alter the facts. So here it is:

* Thomas a Becket is a Saint
* He was an Archbishop of Canterbury
* He had to choose between loyalty to his friend, King Henry II and loyalty to his Savior Jesus Christ
* He was martyred at Vespers (Evensong) in 1170 and was named a saint in just a matter of a few years – 1173

During the time of another King Henry the popularity of the shrine erected to honor St. Thomas Becket continued to be significant and it was desecrated and destroyed in 1538.

History is filled with conflict between loyalty to State or Church. Is it possible that our love for the State can grow to such an extent that we believe that the State speaks for the Church? Is the Church simply an organization (an “it”) or is “She” the Body of Christ, the Bride of Christ, Mother Church? Is it possible that Robert Bellah has given us an opportunity to reconsider how Civil Religion can replace the Religion of Christ, leaving us with a generic “religion” that attempts to please the State but does not please God? And in the end, would this render all religions being the same as long as they are polite? Would the conclusion be that there are, therefore, in civil religion may ways to - whatever happens after we die? And if we did not want to be with Jesus in this world, why would we want to spend eternity with him?

Maybe today is a good day to reread all that we can about St. Thomas a Becket. At what point do Christians today, even in a free society, need to speak more boldly of their Faith in the only One who has come into the world who could save our sins and open the Kingdom of Heaven.

**It’s more than Peter O’TOOLE and Richard Burton.**

***“It’s not what I do - it’s what I am.”***

“I was born to a different Dad.” My wife and I are blessed to have three amazing children, all of whom have been brought up in the Faith, obviously. And while they hold to the Faith, they each also have an incredible sense of humor. Years ago, our older two would tease our youngest child with funny thoughts, but one day our youngest daughter looked at her older sister and brother and said, “You know that I have a different father than you have.” They were not yet accustomed to her putting in such an opening shot, and so as they pondered what she had said, she went on to say, “You see you were born to Mr. and Mrs. Ackerman. I was born to Father and Mrs. Ackerman.” They were dumbfounded. She was correct. She was born after I was ordained as a Deacon and then as a priest. For some this is just a cute and whimsical statement she made, but all three understood. “Dad is a priest. It is not what he ‘does’ - it’s what he is.” They understood what the Church has taught for two millennia: priesthood is not “functional;” it is “ontological.” That is, a priest can’t simply stop being a priest even when he is “retired” or doesn’t function in his priestly vocation. Recently someone looked at a picture of the cake served at my ordination: Tu es Sacerdos in aeternum. “You are a priest forever.”

I am currently writing an article that primarily addresses “who can be a priest,” and so I will limit my few words in this pondering to “what is a priest?” Before one can even begin to discuss with any integrity “who can be a priest” one must note that it is impossible to answer that question without stating what a priest is. This is particularly important because a major stumbling block within some Communions and Denominations is the issue of function versus ontology. If I believed the more modern perspective, historically speaking, that priesthood is simply a function, then I would think that just about anyone could be ordained as a priest. I am reminded of Archbishop Geoffrey Fisher who tells us regarding our Faith, that “We have no doctrine of our own. We only possess the Catholic doctrine of the Catholic Church enshrined in the Catholic creeds, and those creeds we hold without addition or diminution.” As he wrote this in 1951, as the Archbishop of Canterbury, he would in just a brief period of time be placing a Crown on the head of the new Monarch, Elizabeth II. We do not have our own priesthood, nor do we have the authority to change the priesthood. The priest represents Christ in a particular way in terms of the relationship with the Church as the Bride of Christ. I will say more about this in the article I am currently writing.

If we believe, in our Tradition, that we embrace the truth of the Vincentian Canon, which articulates the threefold test of Catholicity “What has been believed everywhere, always, and by all,” then we must apply that to every proposed change to the Faith not on the basis of pure logic, nor on the basis of rapidly changing socio-political opinions that are evolving and are subjective in nature, but rather on the basis of theological principle. As it relates to the priesthood, it is a gift given not to be changed but to be embraced. And when that gift is received there is a permanent change in the recipient.

I thank our children for knowing and believing that, and in spite of the fact that there are other points of view, for most of us we simply embrace what has been handed down to us. “Beloved, when I gave all diligence to write unto you of the common salvation, it was needful for me to write unto you, and exhort you that ye should earnestly contend for the faith which was once delivered unto the saints.” St. Jude 1:3

***Jesus Reigns, Mary Hails***

One of my greatest privileges is being a Guardian at the Shrine of Our Lady of Walsingham in England (near Norwich). One year I was greatly honored to be the Preacher at the National Pilgrimage (Bank holiday – in late May). As we prepared for the Procession from the Shrine Church to the Abbey, it began to rain. One of the Sisters from one of the Religious Orders at the Shrine, after having made certain that I was appropriately vested, was concerned that the rain would be a problem for me (and for the silk vestments) and placed a large umbrella over me as we processed. As the rain continued, I said, “Sister, does this remind you of the hymn, “Jesus shall reign?” Without missing a beat, she said, “Yes, Bishop, but remember ‘Mary Hails.'” This was not the first time that I was trumped by a Nun!

All too often we have forgotten the Kingdom of Christ. In the Lord’s Prayer we pray for that Kingdom, and in His Passion, Jesus reminds us that His Kingdom is not of this world. Sadly, we forget that we are not only subjects but also children of the King. By virtue of our Baptism, we are heirs of His Kingdom, but as members of the Church Militant (here on earth) we are also His subjects – bound, by faith, to follow Him.

Unfortunately, we often have acceded to the bondage of this world, which offers no hope, while ignoring the fact that we are, in fact, part of a Kingdom that offers us more hope than we can imagine.

I can still, in my mind’s eye, hear the voice of the Sister as we processed to the grounds at the Walsingham Abbey, and it was as if I could hear the voices of the numerous pilgrims who had walked the “Walsingham Way” for centuries before. I often think that Americans are far more intrigued with Royalty than the English are, but my prayer has been and will continue to be that Americans will become more enamored with the Kingship of Jesus, who lives and reigns forever and ever. **Jesus Reigns – Mary Hails.**

***Keep on Movin' Rev'rend***

Having been brought up in an environment where the Clergy were seen as an integral part of the community, especially in times of need, I’m amazed at how this seems to be a rapidly changing reality.  I was trained, as were the police, the highway patrol, firemen, etc., that when a priest sees an accident, he is to stop in order to assist.  This may mean merely standing aside and praying. It may mean an encouraging word.  It may mean comforting a family member, it may mean anointing the sick, and it may mean the Last Rites - including a Confession.

My last four encounters since moving to where I now live have been: "keep on mov'in Rev'rend," "Get away from the accident scene - immediately," "That is a violation of HIPAA," and "we don't need no help." My concern is, where do the spiritual needs of a victim, of a traumatized family member, or a distraught person play into the contemporary culture where Clergy are all too marginalized and profiled - being cast into a negative light by the actions of a few?

As I train young seminarians, priests, and deacons today, I wonder what I should teach them about cooperating with those with whom they were formerly team mates? I used to teach clergy how to cooperate with other people in the fields of helping people in distress. Are clergy still "partners in ministry" with the police, firefighters, and EMT's or are we "in the way?" Simply volunteering to be a chaplain does not necessarily make us partners with those helping professions.

Countless people die today without the spiritual consolation that could have been provided. Maybe we simply live in a culture where the word is, "Keep on movin' Rev'rend" or is it "Keep on movin' Jesus." I contrast that with my recent meetings in Moscow in Russia where crosses are being erected everywhere, churches are being reopened, religious articles are sold at malls, and priests are constantly being asked by people on the streets, public officials, and students for a blessing. I had to stop whatever I was doing - quite joyfully - in order to give the blessing.

This experience in Russia reminded me of my happy years in a small town in Western Pennsylvania where I was asked to bless new businesses, anoint people in need of healing on street corners and hear confessions in taverns. I wonder what would have happened if the current circumstances of our culture had been employed in the Parable of the Good Samaritan! "Keep on movin."

***Letting Go and Letting God***

Recently I was asked by someone if I had trouble “letting go.” It’s an intriguing question, and when I left the employ of U.S.Steel decades ago to go elsewhere, my mind rarely went back to making steel. The question really is, “Given the fact that priests have responsibilities for the ‘cure of souls’ is it easy to turn that off when the priest leaves?”

It has been said that people spend the first part of their life acquiring and the second part of their life giving away. When I walk into certain “Second hand stores” I generally see the adage living out, “One man’s trash is another man’s treasure.” So, what does this have to do with pastoral ministry?

At 75 years old I have “let go” of more responsibilities in the Church than I can even begin to list. My last ten years have been spent, in that regard, recognizing a liberating reality: “If you die tomorrow, you do know that God will find someone else to do what you are doing.” Not only is that a liberating thought, but it is true. Oftentimes when people look at us and ask, “Are you having trouble letting go” they really are saying, “If I were in your position, I would have a miserable time letting go of what you are letting go of.” Projection is often a normal way of doing self-assessment, because we start out with “how I am feeling” and then assume that everyone else responds the way we do. Listening carefully to “projection statements” will often allow us to learn more about the speaker than we could imagine.

In all of the many responsibilities I have handed over, there are several principles:

+Once you have no more responsibility in this role - it’s not your responsibility. You did what you were asked to do. “Let go - Let God.”

+When your replacement takes over — he needs your prayers and support — not your critique and criticism and judgment

+It is necessary and possible to love people from a distance, and the best way to do that is acknowledging first that they have always been God’s children and that for a season God had you being available to them on His behalf.

+When you leave — there will be a power vacuum and a scrambling for control. That’s sad, but it’s not your problem, and micromanagement has its own basis in stages of psychological development. Sadly, this is not uncommon in the Church.

+Being the “Ghost of Clergy Past” is not a gift. Remember, no matter how well you did in your role, and no matter how much you did, some people will have a need to tell others all of your faults and all that you did to offend them. The difficulty is that you will never have a jury “postmortem” and you were called to serve God, and your “defense” will be taken to the grave, because you know more than you can ever tell. It is better to be judged guilty in this world for what we could not divulge than it is to be guilty in the next for constantly defending ourselves.

So why are any of these matters an issue? Whether Clergy or Laity, we must always remember that another person’s bad behavior is not a justification for our own bad behavior. That is the way of the world, and as the saying goes, “When you blow out another person’s candle it does not make your candle burn brighter.” It also matters because there is a very important principle that separates the Clergy from the laity: Spiritual Authority.

Clergy are entrusted with the Cure of Souls. I can remember in 1989 moving from Pennsylvania to Texas having left a parish that I loved deeply and going to a parish where I knew very few so far. I turned to my wife and said, “My tenure as rector of St. Mary’s ended two days ago and my responsibilities do not begin for another week. This is the first time since I was ordained that I do not have direct responsibility for a large number of people.” Every day for thirteen years at St. Mary’s, I bore (joyfully) the responsibility of souls. And soon I would have the responsibility of more souls. But for almost two weeks I did not have a primary responsibility for the cure of souls, beyond being a father and a husband. These issues were not about “letting go”; these issues were about being accountable to God for those whom He had entrusted to me.

Very recently I have “let go” of three more responsibilities, and until the last hour of that day when my “term” ended I was responsible to God for what He had called me to do. That meant until the last moment being an advocate, an emergency respondent, a Sacramental presence, a Defender and a Spiritual Father to a particular group. This is why it is so very difficult to answer the question, “Are you retired?” My usual response is: “That’s what the Church Pension Fund and the Social Security Administration says.” Clergy cannot retire - at least not in the usual sense of the word. For many Clergy, once we are relieved of our obligation for the Cure of Souls we have a sense of relief, and in our polity that means “Now the Bishop takes it from here.” The Church is not a secular institution and we Clergy, in our understanding, were significantly changed at Ordination (ontological) so that means that while we may no longer have certain responsibilities related to the promises we made regarding WHERE we serve, we are never off the hook in terms of HOW we serve.

Therefore, letting go is really quite easy, because we know that people are God’s responsibility and I can recall recently regarding a former responsibility, looking at the clock on my last official day and feeling a great sense of relief. But a sense of relief does not mean not loving the people or the place where one has served. **It’s not like resigning from a job and turning in the keys, as is done in the secular world, but rather it means looking to Jesus and thanking Him for the joy of having served in a particular place and in a particular role, and then giving thanks for those who have now received that responsibility from God.**

But beware: if you or anyone else treats the Church as if she were primarily a business, never be surprised when there is conflict. Good business practices are translatable, provided that they are always secondary or tertiary to Two Thousand years of Christian Faith where all behavior and practices are held up against the Gospel - and in all matters, the Gospel must win.

***Live Liturgy and Live Theatre***

***Come Back Home***

Most of us have been able to live through a major pandemic, and many of us are now back to some normal patterns of behavior — but not all of us. In fact, once we returned to a more normal pattern, we have noticed that not everything that we remember has resumed, especially those groups which were already just “breaking even.” In order to accommodate and to comply during the Pandemic, we saw immediately two major declines, among others: Church attendance and Live Theatre attendance. For those who were committed to both, it meant finding live-streamed Liturgies and, if not live-streamed in the “fine arts” part of our being, engaging with television even more than before, and new ways of accessing entertainment on our computers. People often do not consider what that meant for those whose income and sense of vocation as it relates to theatre were effected.

Apart from the individual loss was the loss of the places where they offered their talents on the stage, or built the sets, or handled the sound and lights, or worked in the box office. Many of those theaters simply closed, and in many instances, have never reopened. The community was dispersed in many cases, and many people who have loved live theatre have found new ways to see theatre — not live, but recorded. One might be able to say that the consumers — in the end, get what was desired — entertainment — but did they? The only interactions before and after watching recordings of theatre on a screen might be with the refrigerator or the pantry! The sense of community is gone, and the interaction with the cast and crew who hang on every word of the audience to determine if they have fulfilled their vocational offering is gone. In a utilitarian way, the consumer/audience can report that they had a definable time of entertainment as they watched a screen in their houses, but that was it. Looking at the names of the cast and crew at the end of the movie is not the same as visiting with them after the performance. It is sad to report that not all attendance has resumed to its pre-Pandemic level in live theatre venues, and even more sad to report that some of those venues have closed, never to be reopened. Live theatre is a bit like Liturgy: it builds community, it allows people to use their gifts and talents, and it builds life-long relationships. As the word “Liturgy” translates, it is “the work of the people.” I suppose if some theaters could, they would have a sign out front that says, “Come Back Home.”

We see some of the same principles at work in the Church. During the Pandemic, the live-streaming of Liturgy became somewhat normal, and it has been a great blessing to those who are “place bound” due to their health issues, and also sometimes due to their work schedules and imposed Sunday morning responsibilities. But like theater on the screen instead of on the stage, Liturgy on the screen and not in the Nave and Sanctuary simply is not the same. Apart from the fact that we cannot receive Holy Communion from a screen, the sense of community is removed. The “cast and crew” of the church receives no feed-back, and there is no interaction before and after the Liturgy. People with musical, liturgical, and social gifts and ministries were greatly inhibited during the Pandemic, and sad to say, not all of the people have returned to church and a number of churches have actually closed — never to reopen. The parishioners have been dispersed, and their precious sense of community has disappeared. The inability to return to the place where Sunday after Sunday, Liturgy after Liturgy was the high point of their week is now severely altered. The “screen” helped during the Pandemic, but when our churches could be filled again, some of those churches were no longer there. In a utilitarian way one might say “Liturgy is Liturgy,” “Church is Church,” but for many of the Faithful they had done everything they could to maintain their Sacred Community, only to discover that it could not return. In many ways, churches could have a sign out front that says, “Come Back Home.”

One may conclude that life is simply a matter of acceptance of the many changes that are thrown our way, but we cannot count on others to do what we need to do, if we are physically able to do it” — Live Liturgy and Live Theater, and we can be a part of making certain that there is a future for both. **Come Back Home.**

***Living in a Snowglobe***

Not too many years ago (2013) when the Christmas Movie Season began to escalate, a movie was released regarding a woman who is struck by a snow globe and awakens to discover that she now lives in that snow globe: perfect houses, perfect snow, perfect people — and all enclosed in the globe! In the past few years, a term has arisen called “snow-flake” which tends to refer to more narcissistic personality types who tend to be easily offended and are somewhat convinced that life is all about themselves. One comedian even recently announced that he could no longer do comedy at College Campuses because the audience thought all of the jokes were about them and everything that was said was offensive. They had constructed their own little world (snow globes) with self-related definitions, and since they were really interested in what was happening in their own life, they assumed that everyone must be equally interested.

One of the luxuries which many children have today is that they have their own room. For most of history children did not have their own room, and they had to share a room with any number of siblings. Even the very small closets of older houses demonstrate that the designer never imagined that someone might have more than one or two changes of clothes - and they even needed to share the closet with others! Today one of the great joys for children is being able to “set up” their room; cleaning it is often another matter! They get to decide where they place their treasures and gifts and acquisitions, and they really do not want anyone in that precious space. In fact, even in a chaotic mess they know if someone was in their room. Most of them have a dream. They have a dream that one day they might have more than one room - maybe even a house, with a loving spouse, perhaps, and maybe even a child or two. That room is a dream room, where dreams exist, tears are shed, plans are made, and only certain people have admittance.

Fast forward - decades later, and that same child is now very old, living in one room, knowing if someone has moved their tissue box or tv remote, hoping that someone might call, come for a visit, or reminisce about old dreams and the people no longer there who were once a part of their dream come true. There is, however, not any real dream about the future rooms or house, unless they are blessed to know Jesus and to remember His promises.

In between, today, for many people there is now a globe where my needs must be met, where I can be upset at will, and where people should know what I want. Far too many people stay inside their globe and discover that in time they see the cloudiness of the glass, the flaws of the figures, the scratches on the houses, and the yellowing of the artificial snow. In the end, the “snowflakes” aren’t real, nor is what is inside the globe. Isolation from the world and from others does not resolve the problems of the globe. Enjoyment is not finally having everything that we want, rather it is wanting everything that we have - loving what has been given to us and accepting the fact that the only perfection to be found is in the Mansion prepared for us by Jesus. In Heaven we will not need to worry about the arrangement of the room or the color of the walls or the behavior of others. In Heaven we will not need to critique who’s there, nor will we need to complain about who moved my Kleenex box.

Maybe life would take on more meaning for snow globe dwellers and “snowflakes”, if they would realize that God really does care about them. More than a few “snowflakes” are needed to build a snowman, and more than a few snow men are needed to build a church. Somehow when people build a snowman together, they must look into the eyes of those who build with them. In those eyes they will see the same fears, the same dreams, and the same hopes they have within themselves when they are trapped in their own snow globes. Then they can discover that the world is not about me, but rather it is about us in Him.

Manners, Social Grace, Politeness and Other Lost Arts

Recently I observed two men at two separate events who caught my attention. One man walked into the church wearing a baseball cap and left his hat on throughout much of the Mass. At the other event I witnessed a man walking into the restaurant wearing a baseball cap, and he wore it throughout the meal. Never mind the fact that he walked into the restaurant before the woman with him, and then plopped himself down into a chair, allowing the woman to fend for herself. Let’s turn back the clock.

At minimum most people are taught to say “please” and “thank you.” In the past, upon receiving a gift, people said “thank you” to the gift giver, but then within the week, a thank you note was sent as a follow up. Gentlemen stood when a woman entered the room, and then sat down when she sat down. The same was true when the Clergy entered a room. When a gentleman knocked on the door, he removed his hat when the door was answered and he entered the room holding his hat until his hat and coat were taken by the person whom he was visiting. Gentlemen held the door for ladies and they tipped their caps as a sign of respect. By and large these several social graces have disappeared, among numerous others. Sadly, there is also an excuse for poor social graces, “Ever since feminism emerged, women don’t want me to hold the door or help them with their chair.” “Wha’cha see is wha’cha get.” Unfortunately, that is probably true.

In the 1950’s, it was not uncommon in Elementary Schools to have classes on social graces, including the appropriate way to communicate. Unconnected telephones were placed in the classroom and students were taught the social graces connected to making and receiving telephone calls. When we made a call, we said “hello” and we identified ourselves. We then asked if we were interrupting anything and if this was a convenient time to talk. If it was a convenient time, then we proceeded by stating the purpose of our call. We never were to interrupt the other person while they were talking. We were told always to conclude the call graciously before we said “good-bye. It was also commonly understood that calls should not be made before 9:00 A.M. nor after 5:00 P.M. unless it was a social call or emergency and the other person had indicated the appropriateness of calling. These points, of course, are somewhat obvious in terms of demonstrating some level of appropriate manners and social grace, but many telephone communications today are devoid of showing respect for the other person. In all things, we were taught, a telephone conversation is not a substitute for a face to face communication or meeting. The telephone was a convenience - not a replacement for rapport building and nuanced words with affirming “facial expressions” that can convey at times, more than words.

Letter writing was an art. Hand written letters were highly appropriate between friends, and in many instances, letters were kept in a scrapbook or a special drawer. These letters contained complete thoughts and, oftentimes, endearing phrases which encouraged the recipient.

Typed letters, on the other hand, were generally confined to business interactions, and while there was the allowance for a “carbon copy” (cc) the recipient always knew who would be seeing the letter. If the recipient wished to share the letter with others, then good manners dictated that the recipient asked the author for permission.

Articles in magazines and books, unless they were fiction, were well written and highly documented with footnotes and a bibliography. They were not a collection of unsubstantiated opinions. The purpose of devices, such as a “Foreword,” in the book was to indicate that someone who was well respected had read and endorsed the book or article. If something simply were in print, without any of those elements, then they often had little or no credibility, and they certainly could not be used or quoted in a serious work being done by students. Wikipedia would not have considered to be a reliable source.

The distinction between men and women was designed to show respect. Women were called “ladies” and men were to be called “gentlemen. No one was called “you guys.”

With the introduction first of email, then social media, and then texting, many of the respectful boundaries that were set suddenly were removed. Emails were sent with the expectation of a rapid response, people were encouraged to post their opinions and instant messages were sent with the expectation of an instant response. All of these are now sent at any hour of the day, seven days a week with an emphasis placed on the convenience of the sender rather than the convenience of the recipient. Unfortunately, with the new expectations came the tacit understanding that if you fail to respond to my email, post or text within the time I expect, you must be upset with me or you may be ignoring me. There are even people today who become somewhat depressed when they have been “unfriended” on a Facebook page! Sadly, today people can block the people with whom they do not wish to communicate. This may mean that the sender does not know that someone is upset with them and that they are blocked. That is the recipient’s job to discover, which promotes a new manifestation of passive-aggressive behavior.

Unfortunately, the culture seems to be winning in terms of removing all boundaries of communication protocols and the social grace that should accompany wholesome communication. Moreover, those who impulsively feel a need to express a feeling or a thought can do so without a moment of restraint. In many ways, the new “no boundaries” communication prevents disciplined thinking from occurring, whereby people formerly had to organize their thoughts in a cohesive fashion. Today it is often a “stream of consciousness.”

This new form of communication is often reflected in the new and emerging nondenominational churches. People enter the “vestibule,” get their Starbucks coffee, pick up their bottled water and without discovering a Liturgical focal point, sit in the auditorium. The people are greeted with “Good morning,” words are flashed up on screens with power point presentations and the action is directed towards the people in the seats. No Creeds, no Councils, no history, no boundaries. Wear baseball caps throughout if you wish.

Historical, Liturgical Christianity now appears to be irrelevant because the culture has judged it to be so. For Traditional Christians, we enter a Narthex quietly, renewing our baptismal vows as we dip our fingers into Baptismal water and make the sign of the Cross reminding us Who we are to meet. We enter the Nave with hat in hand, genuflect before the King of Kings in His Sacramental presence, kneel at our pews in silence as we communicate with Jesus, and then wait with anticipation. We stand as the Sanctuary Party enters, we exchange ancient greetings with the priest, and we sit and listen carefully to be instructed (Epistle.) We stand out of reverence to hear the Words that Jesus Spoke (Gospel) and we reflect on the words that God has given to the Preacher to explain the mysteries of our 2,000+ year Faith, handed down from Jesus to the Apostles to us. We recite in the Creed what the Church has always believed and taught — unstained by the world. We pray for ourselves and for each other. We take responsibility for our sins, and we offer to God that which is His by right. In conformity with the Church described in the Acts of the Apostles, we graciously exchange greetings that eventually lead us back to the Last Supper where we are nourished by the Body and Blood of Jesus.

In every element of the Liturgical event the emphasis is on God. The emphasis is placed on what God has done for us. Everything is directed towards God, and in what He has given us through Word and Sacrament, we have no need to be entertained. In the end we thank God for these gifts and we are sent out into the world to share what we have received. Before leaving, however, we once again kneel in silence prepared to re-enter a noisy world and then we carry on conversations with fellow worshippers as others remain in the church to continue to pray. No parishioner “satisfaction cards” are filled out so that Sunday morning can better suit the Christian consumer by receiving their input. We are not so concerned about how we feel as we are about how God feels about us.

This style is all very counter cultural today, but at one time it was an essential component in terms of manners, respect, social grace and politeness. We showed absolute reverence in the presence of God in His House, great respect for those around us, and more concern about the feelings of others than our own feelings. We were not called to be critics - we were called to be worshippers.

Is it possible that the more we have succumbed to the seduction of instantaneous expectations in communication, abruptness in manner, and removing all socially graceful boundaries, that we have lost God in the process? Are we not grateful that our expectations and demands of others in terms of communication are not God’s expectations and demands of us? That we respond to His call immediately, that we react immediately to His expectations, and that we check in often to see if we have missed His call; or even worse - that we looked at our “caller ID,” saw that God was calling and we refused to answer.

**Gracious communication - is it a lost art - or simply a reflection of a people more interested in themselves than in the One who created them to communicate with Him?**

***Maybe it's Time for a Tune Up***

Having been trained in the area of psychometrics, I must confess that I often view elements of life (including ecclesiastical life) as if I were reading an MMPI or reviewing the responses of a Rorschach.   My dear friend and mentor, Bishop Parsons, used to tell me that if we could look into a person's spiritual life we would understand more about a person than the MMPI or Rorschach could produce. As usual - I believe he was correct.

For me, however, now living in an area where driving is an aggressive sport, I have had an opportunity to ponder behavior on the Highway of Life.  The natural observation or "outward and visible sign" includes, turn signals, passing on the right, creating one's own exit off the highway, tailing the car in front of you, speeding, texting while driving, ignoring work zones, and speeding up to prevent that "pesky car" from passing.

It has been suggested that we live in a highly narcissistic culture. One of the characteristics of both narcissists and sociopaths (not always mutually exclusive categories) is the statement, "It is very important and, indeed, mandatory that you follow all of the rules, as long as you recognize that none of them apply to me."

Therefore, in some instances on the highway there is no remorse for what we do.  What complicates it is that these behaviors are often part of the passive-aggressive behavior pattern.  "When I talk to you in the store or at church, I will dazzle you with my charm. "Why bless your heart." But when I am on the highway 'get outa my way, dude.'" The question is - which is the real "me?" Am I the one who creates my own rules for myself on the highway or am I the one who greets people in stores and in churches with kindness? Or are we both?

Do we change lanes in our life without warning those we love? Do we aggressively get around others so that we can be first? Do we think we are much brighter than everyone else - so we create our own rules? When the traffic of our life is backed up do we "exit" - run away? Do we determine what the speed of life is supposed to be and push and intimidate others who cannot read our minds? Is our life so important that communicating how and when we want to communicate is totally unrelated to what is around us? Do people on the highways of our life who are trying to improve our life become functions or objects to be ignored? Do we need to show our "superiority" by indicating how stupid everyone else is? But if they were like me......

Maybe it's time for a tune up!

***Michaelmas: Is There a REAL Saint Michael?***

Often times, those engaged in historical research are able to reach accurate conclusions regarding accretions, the integrity of the event, and historicity. That’s the good news. The bad news is, that in reporting all of that can also result in deleting practices that were legitimate and helpful. For example, during a “declassification of the saints” — Saint Christopher was removed. This was an unpopular move since many people had some very nice jewelry and badges and, gosh, had even named their sons “Christopher.” This led one friend decades ago when the “declassification and suppression” occurred to tell people that he was the priest at Mr. Christopher’s! No matter what your perspective may be, isn’t it a good thing to pray for people when they travel? Do we suddenly drop all prayers that were shaped to be in relationship to St. Christopher and simply say to those boarding an airplane, “Have a nice flight”? Or do we send off our 16-year-old drivers with the words, “You have no idea how happy you have made our insurance agent - drive safely.” Where is God in all of this? And, so St. Christopher is dropped and prayers for safe travels eventually “hit the dust!”

Now we come to Saint Michael the Archangel. He poses a problem for “sola scriptura” people because there he is in the Bible. War has broken out in Heaven. In the end, the point is that St. Michael presents to us the reality of spiritual warfare, and as “Bible believin’ Christians” we must deal with the implications of Biblical words, phrases, teachings, and parables devoted to sin, evil, spiritual warfare and also heavenly images of what “worship” in Heaven is like. (Sorry to some - it’s the “Last Supper” not the “Last Sermon” so there’s no preaching in Heaven - just Solemn High Mass.)

But do we simply want to make St. Michael a prisoner of the Bible, a prisoner of a stained-glass window, or a prisoner of a carved representation or Ikon? I hope not. So, whether a minority of Christians worldwide care not to talk about saints, the majority of worldwide Christians do, and St. Michael (and All Angels) are at least remembered every year by man on September 29. There are even those in other parts of the English-speaking world who call their academic years or events “Michaelmas” just as they also say “Christmas.” Although I prefer other ways of stating these two feasts, I am indebted to people who insisted on noting that the feast is punctuated and defined with a Mass. It’s a bit like the song “The Twelve Days of Christmas” - even though it can be tedious it may be the only thing that reminds people that December 25 begins the Feast rather than culminating with wrapping paper strewn everywhere and Christmas trees placed at the curb.

As a young Anglo Catholic, I recall after Low Mass, reciting with the priests what is often called the “Leonine Devotions” — named after the Bishop of Rome. Imbedded in those devotions is the Prayer of St. Michael - and guess what - it addresses evil. Apart from the historical explanation for its inclusion after Low Mass, there is the reality that some people apparently figured out that there can be sin abounding when greeting people at the door after Mass, in the parking lot and at Coffee Hour. (Just when you were feeling really happy about being at Mass and receiving the Blessed Sacrament, Mr./Mrs. Jones says…! This, by the way is not called “The Last Gospel” in spite of how important Mr. or Mrs. Jones may think their insights are!

And so, we go out into a sinful world, and sinful but forgiven, Christians who are carrying within themselves the Presence of Christ. But rumor has it that by bedtime Sunday night there has often been a day of chaos and problems, and simply leaving after the Dismissal at Mass does not guarantee a Lord’s Day being filled with joy. As the saying goes, \_ \_ \_ \_ happens! That is “Life Happens.” Jesus really wants us to understand how much He loves us, and for many Christians there seems to be two extremes in discussing Evil: “There is no Devil, no evil, and no demons” versus, “The demons are directly fighting Jesus and there are demons all around us.” Some people forget that the issue for demons is angels! Traditionally we have had a very developed understanding of angels, to such an extent that at the Altar before the Sanctus, we know that there are too many created orders in Heaven to name so we use the shortcut: Therefore, with Angels and Archangels and with all the COMPANY of Heaven... Two Thousand years of Christian life, jump started by God’s Word means that our entire history as Christians has dealt with good versus evil. Although there is so much to be said about this, the reality is that we need St. Michael. The Prayer of St. Michael to which I have alluded is an important prayer because it addresses evil. I am reluctant to write it out since some people believe that the official Language of Heaven is Latin, Greek or Elizabethan English, so I leave the task of finding the prayer to you.

That leaves us with what to do in the midst of evil and spiritual warfare. Always proclaim the Holy Name of Jesus. Always rebuke the Devil (Get thee behind me Satan) and always call for the Angels and Archangels. Remember that the word “angel” simply means “messenger” and you and I know Whose message they bring. Now let’s look at ourselves. What kind of a messenger am I? Do I share messages given by God? Have I elevated my messages to the status of “God’s word” and have I prayed sufficiently before I have acted or spoken? What do I need to do to be a better messenger? No one should convey messages as a Christian unless he or she have been willing to submit themselves to God’s Holy Word and participated in His Holy Sacraments, including Confession. Otherwise, we short change those to whom we have given a message.

And while we’re at it - let’s look at the name of the Archangel. Of late I have heard people using shortcuts for their churches, (CST) etc. which I find to be very distracting since it sometimes means eliminating the Lord’s name. Or, calling a church “Peter and Andrew.” Is that a fish restaurant? The same is true for St. Michael: **“Who is like EL?” That is, who is like (unto) God!”** Mentioned three times in the Book of Daniel, the Epistle of Jude and The Revelation of Saint John the Divine, I think he deserves better that “Mike” or “St. Mike.” After all, when nicknaming him we eliminate the “God” part “El.” There are those who justify “Xmas” as utilizing the “X - chi” as the first letter in “Christos” but why miss out on a chance to acknowledge who St. Michael serves, and why miss out on a chance to acknowledge a Saint, and why miss out on a chance to use the recognition of Jesus as the Messiah? Not unusual - even good people conforming to the culture.

**HSMAAD!**

**Happy Saint Michael and All Angels Day!!!**

***My Best Friend Died***

In 1989 when we moved from Pennsylvania to Texas, there was one thing we had never encountered — schools not being closed on Good Friday. We were also surprised at how many Churches did not even offer worship opportunities for Maundy Thursday and Good Friday!! We were from an environment where many stores were either closed that day or were at least closed between Noon and 3:00 P.M. "Easter Break" as we called it was designed so that people could go to church during Holy Week - not the beach. We encountered two problems: the necessity at having the Liturgy of Good Friday at a time other than when one normally would: namely when He was on the Cross and died, and having to postpone the time for the Liturgy to when He had already been taken down from the Cross! The entire night after the Maundy Thursday Mass until the Proper Liturgy of Good Friday: (the Solemn Collects, the Veneration of the Cross, the Passion, the Mass of the Pre-Sanctified, people spent one hour with Jesus: "Will you not WATCH with me for one hour." (Thus, the term "Watch" for the time spent at the Altar of Repose (the Garden of Gethsemane).

Our youngest daughter, who was in Middle School, was particularly upset. Like many Christian families, in addition to no school on Good Friday there was no television or movies or shopping that was done that day - particularly between Noon and 3 P.M. What would she do? She informed the school that her best friend had died, and she would not be in that Friday. When she returned on Monday, with her beautiful smile she looked at the person in the school office and said, "My best friend is alive again!" Now that she is a teacher — guess what she does? Alleluia, Christ is Risen.

***My First Wife***

Several years ago, I was blessed to speak to a gathering of former Episcopalians who had entered another Jurisdiction. For several days in between my Addresses, I listened carefully to what was being discussed among the participants. Very little theology — very little academic discussion — very little discussion about evangelization and nothing about feeding the hungry and housing the homeless. Much of their energy was spent talking about the many offenses of their former affiliation.

Numerous articles were cited as to why they had made the right decision to leave. Countless blog sites were visible on their lap tops. There was almost a preoccupation with reading virtually everything that was being written on these blog sites, social media, and web sites about everything negative that was going on in their former affiliation. On one hand it seemed as if they were trying to justify their reasons for leaving by showing how bad everything had become. In other ways, it almost seemed as if they were hoping that everything their former affiliation was engaged in would fail. The worse the news - the greater their delight. More energy was spent daily in their looking back than moving forward. I felt as if I were walking across the Red Sea with half the people looking back instead of looking ahead now that they were free!

I told the group that if a married couple came to see me for counseling, and the wife stated that the reason they came to see me is that she, the second wife, was getting sick of hearing about her husband's first wife. "If he paid as much attention to me as he does to everything his first wife is doing, it would improve our marriage." I would say they had a problem. The second wife was sick of hearing about the first wife. If they want a happy marriage, they cannot live their lives discussing the abuses, the unfaithfulness, and the behaviors of the first wife. I would probably also recommend not only therapy but also the Sacrament of Holy Unction, so that he could be healed!

Were there any good moments in the first marriage? Why would a man wish his first wife ill no matter how bizarre her behavior had become? Was every moment of their marriage miserable? Is this what Christ would have us do? If resentment, anger, and preoccupation persist, in the lives of those who have "walked away" perhaps they need not to deny that abuse or pain existed, but rather simply to put more energy into where God has called them. We only have so much energy per day; why waste it on looking back?

**My priest used to be a good priest**

**Happy Clergy Appreciation Month! (And “Clergy Family Month”)**

Every October, when I realize that it’s now “Clergy Appreciation Month” I take time out to pray for the bishops, priests, and deacons who have helped to shape my life. This appreciation, I might add, includes my earliest memories of a kindly Swedish Minister (today we say “Evangelical Free Church”) who lived in our neighborhood by Jenny Lind Street. In those days we never knew the first names of our Clergy, but out of respect for his Swedish Heritage he was called Prast Hanson. He and his precious wife set a tone, and although there were four Swedish churches in our neighborhood, he distinguished himself as a man of God who truly was a pastor to the people, although being a pastor wasn’t his only gift. He was also a gifted preacher and a gentle evangelist.

When I pray for the Clergy, I think about all that they often must endure, especially in situations where they cannot even defend themselves, either because their accusers do not speak with them or because they cannot betray a confidence. It can be a very lonely life, and anyone seeking ordination must be prepared for having his heart broken...often. It often occurs when the clergy “open up” with people about their thoughts or feelings only to discover later that their words were used against them. As a result, many clergy who have been broken “crawl into a shell” making them appear to be aloof. This, of course, does not mean that clergy have not been guilty of many things...things that I shall not put in print, but what about the conscientious Clergy who simply want to make a difference and yet feel as if they are being evaluated? Here I must mention Clergy wives: It is possible that I have ministered more with Clergy Wives and Clergy Families than I have even ministered to bishops, priests, and deacons individually. As one clergy wife told me when I visited her, “Welcome to my goldfish bowl.” If I could rename this month, it would be “Clergy Families Month.” You deserve our love, respect and prayers. You have heard harsh things said about yourselves and your Husband/Dad, and yet you continue to be faithful.

I remember consoling a priest years ago who had been very cruelly treated. I discovered a short paper written and placed in a book which was a type of “Lament book”. I will try to reconstruct it, understanding that I have not seen it for about 40 years!

MY PRIEST USED TO BE A GOOD PRIEST:

I was so excited when our new priest arrived.

* He was well dressed
* He was an amazing preacher
* He was an incredible pastor
* He dazzled as a youth worker, and he
* Was the joy of Nursing Homes.

But, then, one day, he crossed me - how dare him - and he changed.

* Now he looks like a slob
* His sermons are long and pointless
* He neglects his flock
* He spends too much time with the young people and
* Doesn’t visit our shut-ins enough

I can’t remember all of it, but that is the gist of it. But it teaches laity a lesson and it teaches clergy a lesson. All of us are imperfect and all of us minister with imperfect people. How then can we expect perfection from the imperfect?

As the old saying goes, “I looked everywhere for the perfect church and finally I found it, but ever since I’ve been there it’s not perfect anymore.”

* Clergy: love your people.
* Clergy Wives: There ARE people who understand, and that includes your bishop and his wife.
* Clergy children: Trust me on this… your bishop is your pastor and he really cares.
* Laity: We bishops keep looking for the perfect priest for your parish, but unfortunately, they were brought up in a parish that may not have been perfect.

But in the end…all of us…clergy and lay…are usually doing the best we can, and daily we ask God’s grace that we not judge each other since we know that there is only One Judge.

**So happy Clergy Appreciation Month. — And even if you don’t get a present or a card, you are not forgotten or appreciated.**

***My Son, My Son***

Years ago, when our children were still in elementary and middle school, I was in Pittsburgh, PA taking the Eucharist to a shut in who was a member of our parish. Since this was the era before cell phones, I simply called the Rectory from the woman’s apartment in order to “check in” at home. A parishioner answered the phone and said, “Don’t worry, everything is going to be okay, and I have your daughters with me.” These sentences, of course, always cause the mind to wonder what the next sentence will be. The parishioner went on to say that our son was among those in the classroom who had been overcome by carbon monoxide, and that the victims were taken to the hospital and my wife was on her way to meet the ambulances. Again, the mind so very often recalls seeing numerous scenes on television, and as a priest, I had been in the middle of such scenes.

I left the apartment and drove the 20+ miles that suddenly seemed like an eternity. I was able to access the local radio station only to hear the announcer say, “They are dropping like flies at the middle school.” The trip suddenly seemed longer and as I drove and cried and prayed, as if it were a Litany I prayed, “My son, my son, my only son – Lord, please save him.” I understood the cry of King David as he cried out for his son, Absalom, and, indeed, my mind went to the phrases in the New Testament, “This is my beloved son, with whom I am well pleased.” The Father knew the pain of the Son.

As I arrived at the hospital with my reversible stole (purple on one side and white on the other: white for the Sacrament of Life and purple for Supplication), I was grateful to have the Blessed Sacrament with me – one host left from the visit of the parishioner, and, as always, my oil stock with the Oil for the Sick, the Television cameras caught me and later on the news reported, “Fr. Ackerman is arriving at the hospital to anoint those who have been overcome by carbon monoxide.” Later I would see the expression on my face – one that reflected fear and faith working in tension with each other. As I rushed into the hospital parents grabbed me asking me to pray for their children, which I did as I worked my way to the ICU where those who were most overcome were being treated. There was our son, with my dear wife sitting next to him.

By God’s most gracious favor he recovered well, but in the midst of it I spent hours with others who were struck by the fragility of life.

In many ways, it was a bonding experience for parents and students, as they met, as it were, at the foot of the cross. As I read our son’s birthday greetings just days ago on his 45th birthday, I noted how the vast majority of those greetings were from fellow students from that town – friends who bonded even more significantly those 35 years ago as they “dropped like flies.”

Tragedy can divide or unite people. Those of faith are united, for they know that in the midst of adversity they will find their solace in the Savior of the world. Those who believe that they can resolve their fears on their own, all too often can fall into the lonely pit of despair.

I cried that day for my son, and I entered into the affirming love of the Father, who had entrusted to me a son whose pain became my own, and whose victory over potential death drew me closer with gratitude to the One who had given to me that gift of life.

**OMG, MTG @ ST. D, Re: WWJD, LOL**

Are you becoming as tired of "initializing" as I am? There are no more "St. Dunstan's Church" - it is now STD. So, the above translation is: "Oh my God, Meeting at St. Dunstan's Church regarding "What would Jesus do? Laugh out Loud."

If it were simply a matter of abbreviation, that would be one thing, but when have you seen a short video game? It is as if the Church must "dumb down" as the field of technology advances. Are we trying to short-cut who we are? Do you introduce yourself as M & M J S? Or is it still alright to be Mr. and Mrs. John Smith? Initialing is somewhat "gnostic" because unless you have the "special knowledge" that is required to decode the message, you are left wondering what the message is really about.

Some churches today seem to be "embarrassed" by their denominational name. In one Communion, for example, it is assumed that everyone will know which Communion their churches are, since they may well think that they are the "one true Church." (Is there someone who wants to be a part of the one untrue Church?) In the Church of England, as one walks into the lanes and villages, the word "Anglican" is not always used - since EVERYONE knows what they are, and many "non-Denominational Churches" in this country are, in fact, affiliated with some group, but do not advertise it, lest someone be troubled because of a denominational perception. In another city in which I lived the largest church in town was, in fact, a Mennonite Church, but it was not posted on any of its literature. Who wants to eat Scrapple!

Certainly, we live in an age where many people within a particular "denomination" may well be troubled by their national affiliation, but what exactly are they? Independent - and if so - from what or whom? Not connected to anyone else? Purer than others? The reality is that not everyone lives in a world of abbreviations, and it is not essential for the Church to be a series of initials in order to reach people in need. We still have Jesus Christ and the Apostles, not "JC and the guys." God gave us the privilege of "naming," but I am not convinced that we have been given the mandate to reduce the Holy to initials.

I C, +KLA, SSC, DD. ACT, SKCM, QVIII

***“One Of You Will Betray Me.” “Is it I Lord?”***

In the course of our lives, being betrayed is probably an inevitability. Many times, it is due to ego. Some personality types simply need to be right all of the time, or need to be in charge all of the time, or need to feel important all of the time. A sad reality of life is that we can’t always be right, we can’t always be in charge and we can’t always receive the affirmation that we want. Sadly, that means that all too often the one or ones who stand in the way become the enemy.

Among the Twelve Apostles we saw examples of what I have just written: Needing to be right, needing to be in charge, needing to be a part of the inner circle. The mother of James and John tried to get a prominent seat for her sons. There was jealousy over Peter, James, and John being called to special events, and Saint Peter trying to set up booths on the Mount of the Transfiguration contrary to what Jesus wanted. St. Peter was told just days before the Transfiguration event that he was the “Rock,” and so when he asserted himself at the Transfiguration, doing what he thought he was supposed to do, he was greatly mistaken and was chastised by Jesus. He failed to ask Jesus first. Obviously, infighting and misunderstandings were a real part of the Apostolic College; and why wouldn’t that be the case? Who did Satan attempt to enter? He attempted to enter every one of the Apostles by instilling pride and egocentric needs, and he often did so by whispering words to produce jealousy. The Bible tells us that Satan entered Judas, and Jesus at the Transfiguration rebukes Peter by saying, “Get thee behind me, Satan.” Jesus heard the words of Satan in what Peter had to say. In short what we see in the Apostles is a hot bed of spiritual warfare. St. Paul had to address the matter of spiritual warfare in the most appropriate way - by putting on the whole Armor of God. (See Ephesians 6:14-17.)

Fighting the Devil by using secular means does not work. The Bible makes a clear distinction between worldly warfare and spiritual warfare, and even the most devout people can be subject to the wiles of the enemy. Without saying more, I simply wish to say that I have been a Confessor to an Order of Nuns and to an Order of Monks. In the holy confines of their enclosure there was peace and yet there was spiritual warfare, often including jealousy and resentments. No matter where we are Satan wishes to infect us and cause disunity. And the closer we walk with Jesus, more doubt, anger, frustration and fear appear. We are a bit like St. Peter walking on water. He participated in a miracle, and the moment he began to doubt, he began to sink. Part of his problem was that he suddenly believed that he was on his own, rather than being sustained by Jesus. He began to sink, because the moment he took his eyes off Jesus, he was suddenly painfully on his own.

However, a shift took place in the Apostolic College. Some of them became convinced of their own self-importance, and even resented it when they heard that people other than the twelve of them were engaged in miraculous matters. They began to think of themselves in an exclusive manner. Some of them enjoyed being the “gate keepers” for Jesus as people came running to them to gain access, “Sir we wish to see Jesus.” Some of them began to think of themselves as Jesus’ protectors, “God forbid,” is what they uttered when Jesus told them what would lie ahead. They went on to say that they would never allow that to happen to Jesus. Then the time came. The Triumphant Entry of “Palm Sunday” and then, Thursday brought all of the issues of their own hearts together: their fears, their doubts, their egos and the proverbial questions: “What’s in it for me” and “But what about me?” How could it be that when Jesus looked at them and told them that one of them would betray Him that the response could be, “Is it I, Lord” unless they recognized the potential of betrayal in their very own hearts. Judas was THE one. But what was in the hearts of the others that could not allow them to say, “That’s impossible!” Why is it so often that we take our eyes off the Visions of God and then set our own goals and fight anyone who blocks us? Do we sometimes, when we take our eyes off Jesus then establish our own goals, even if they are not necessarily goals established by Jesus? But because our goals appear to be good goals, do they “feel” like they’re right? I like to call this “Debbie Boone theology,” from the song “You Light up my Life” - “It can’t be wrong if it FEELS so right.” Why must feelings be elevated above the call of Jesus to keep our eyes on Him? It would appear that the Apostles had even developed their own stories, their own plans, and their own outcomes, based on the encounters we read about in the Bible. They were establishing their own realities at times, instead of acting on HIS. They created their own realities of what would lie ahead with Jesus, and therefore, they were “caught” when Jesus told them that one of them would betray Him. They knew that He could look directly into their hearts. He had proven that, and now they knew that He knew... their innermost “feelings.” When we judge, when we condemn, when we create our own realities, they are all too often a result of feelings and our egocentric needs. The culture even applauds these efforts as truth: “I always trust my gut.” What if one’s gut has misinformation? When Simon Peter lied when he was asked if he were one of the Apostles, was it to save his skin? Was his response a prayerful response, or had Satan entered Simon Peter also. Wasn’t his denial a type of betrayal?

Take some time out today and ask yourself a few questions:

* Have I ever betrayed someone else on the basis my feelings by having created my own reality?
* Have I ever taken my eyes off Jesus and suddenly had Satan enter me?
* Have I ever become so discouraged that I have said “I quit” without asking God if that was His command?
* Have I taken the methods that I have used in conflict in my life and used those methods in the church or in my family?
* Is conflict with other people a significant part of my history?
* Have I ever been so angry with someone that I decided to play God and judge them with my standards?
* Have I ever elevated my ideas and plans and thoughts to a level where at the end of my judgments I parenthetically add “The Word of the Lord” expecting everyone to say “Thanks be to God.”
* Have I taken the path of least resistance in conflict and like the Apostles simply fled hoping that it would all work out alright?
* Have I allowed myself to be drawn into someone’s feelings and assumed that their feelings were necessarily true?

All of these questions relate to “Apostle behaviors” that we see in the New Testament, and therefore, led to the Apostles responding to Jesus when He announced betrayal, “Is it I, Lord.” You can see that each one of us has the potential to betray, and each one of us can also be forgiven IF WE ASK. “If we confess our sins, God who is faithful and just will forgive us our sins and cleanse us from all unrighteousness.” When Jesus visited the Apostles after His Resurrection while they were fishing, the same man who denied knowing Jesus three times, was asked by Jesus if he loved Jesus - three times. Did Jesus forgive Peter, and if so, why? Wasn’t Peter WRONG and INAPPROPRIATE? Forgiveness involves compassion, and Jesus loved Peter having even made him the “CEO” of the Apostolic College. When St. Peter acted like an average misguided human being, was that the measure of his ministry?

The Beatitudes are correctives for our sinful egocentric behavior (Matthew 5: 2-12.)

“Blessed are you when men revile you and persecute you and utter all kinds of evil against you falsely on my account. Rejoice and be glad, for your reward is great in Heaven, for so man persecuted the prophets who were before you.”

When we are betrayed, we always need to remember that Jesus stands with us understanding more than we can imagine. He was not crucified on the basis of truth. Apart from fulfilling Scripture, He was betrayed by even some of those whom He trusted, and the charges were based on misinformation, fear, jealousy and others who resented Him being in charge. Today as every day, we ask Jesus to be in charge of our lives. Satan cannot tolerate forgiveness. He can, however, use unforgiveness to his advantage.

***Power Hunger - the Appetite that is never satisfied***

“She/He is Power Hungry!” Simply watching any network news at any time of the day indicates that hunger for power continues to manifest itself. In political circles it is obvious that with so many people power hungry that not everyone is going to be fed. People define in their minds the power that they seek and then they proceed to push for it. So often the very people who are lusting after power will deny that this is the case, and a sophisticated form of passive aggressive behavior coupled with rationalizations emerges. There have even been several remakes of a movie where the theatrical understudy continues to undermine the lead, and what follows are a series of struggles and failures. Sadly, power hunger is an appetite that is never satisfied. It is a bit like the proverbial statement that once an animal tastes blood their predatory behavior is unleashed.

I want to say that this never happens in the Church. I really want to say that, but I can’t. Whenever there is conflict in the Church most of the time a power struggle can be identified: Clergy versus Vestries, Bishops versus Diocesan leadership the list goes on. We now are seeing a proliferation of “golden parachutes” where for a period of time after the departure of the leader, the parish/institution continues to pay. Sadly, as I write this, I have either participated in or witnessed far more struggles for power among leaders who call themselves Christians than I would have imagined. Occasionally it is because there needed to be a change in leadership, but all too often it is because of a collection of strong-willed people. It is a bit like being able to recite the Ten Commandments and tenaciously judging others who break them without looking carefully at the Beatitudes to see how to implement the Ten Commandments. Terms like “mediation,” and “buy outs,” are now being used in the church having formerly only been seen in the business world.

Another tragic element in the power hunger revolution is to discover how some people very privately have determined who they must move out of power in order for them to move into power. They begin by determining who must be removed, and then they begin the process of selectively discrediting the one who is blocking their power hunger move. Sadly in the Church we can hear people even used religious phrases (“The Lord has put it on my heart…” “I need to tell you what the Lord has shown me…”) Both statements are very good, and both statements are often very operative, but in the power hunger move, people even begin to attribute to God words that come out of destructive intentions that are not Godly.

I know that much of what I have written is harsh, but tragically most of my ministry has been spent listening to Clergy, Clergy Wives, Clergy Children, Lay Leaders, and the families of Lay Leaders who have shared their experiences. Simply seeing how many Clergy children fall away from the Church is breathtaking. In most situations they are not angry with what God has done or not done, but rather their anger and hurt are with those who call themselves Christians wondering why they act as they do. I want to tell you that this is not common, but once again, I cannot say that. My first real job in ministry was before I went to Seminary and it meant working with adolescent males who were sent to us by the court system. The number of clergy sons whom we received was breath taking, and inevitably they told their stories about their unhappiness with the “institutional church” and how deeply hurt they had been by seeing power struggles.

The issue at hand is, what can I do when I see people begin to lust for power and control? First, we must pray. Secondly, we must remember that God is a God of Order not of disorder, and when many Christian people engage in worldly patterns of behavior in the Church we must return to the Holy Scriptures and reconsider how the early Christians lived together.

To put it differently, the Bible has put before us patterns for “conflict resolution” that we must use as our models. The Church must not succumb to using secular business models that have not stood the test of time. Not all business models are transferable and the Church simply is not a democracy. The only vote that counts is God’s. He speaks — we act. The only power that matters in the Church is the Power of God. God gives Authority to His Church and He authorizes clergy specifically in the three-fold ministry and laity, by virtue of Baptism, to represent Him. Power hunger does not represent God. Pushing people out of our way as we race for recognition and more power does not honor God. The more God “empowers” us to represent Him the more humility we must assume. When the Apostles struggled for power, Jesus constantly reminded them that they could not expect the rewards of the world. “Rewards” in the Church and in religious institutions must always be different from the “rewards” of the world. Power bases run counter to what Jesus has taught us, and passive aggressive behavior is not a more “religious and polite” way of getting what I want for myself.

In the end, many a good priest or good lay leader has simply walked away from power struggles and we have lost some fine leaders in the process. In the end we are reminded of the remarkable distinction between “Churchianity” and “Christianity.” I have also, sadly, sat with deeply spiritual leaders: clergy and lay who after being a victim of a power struggle have simply walked away from their vocations. The person(s) lusting after power think they have won, but they may never understand the spiritual casualties that have occurred in order for them to have their transitory “victory.”

Many who read this may wonder why I have finally spoken about this. Those who know me well have heard me speak to these issues over the years, and so while I am still clear of thought and not falling off a ladder, I simply needed to advocate for those whom I have seen and continue to see who are either victims of those who lust after power or are victims of their lust for power. Often when I have counseled Clergy the conflict very often is over the power versus authority issue. All too often when we exercise a power mode we demonstrate arrogance and condescension - types of emotional bullying.

Lent is a very good time for us to look deep inside ourselves and to turn over to God all of our motives. Lent is also a very good time for us to seek God’s forgiveness for the times we have gossiped about others, repeated information without checking out its validity and slandered others simply because they got in our way; or not defended someone when false information was presented to us. Lent is a very good time for us to go to those whom we have offended and asked for forgiveness. Responsibility is a heavy burden to bear, and the only power that can lighten that load is the Power of the Holy Spirit the only power for which we must hunger.

***PRIDE***

It can easily be demonstrated that Pride is the root of all evil. At the Fall, Adam and Eve were tempted by Satan to an act of disobedience that promised them equality with the all-knowing God. It was the temptation to overrule God’s plan for His own creation. It was an unlawful attempt to elevate the created to the same level of the Creator, and to pretend to be what the created could never be – equal with God, wise enough to pass judgment with no authority and become the masters of their own destiny, rather than faithful and obedient to God’s plan. Armed with false knowledge, the created is filled with self-importance, demands praise for himself, and gives faint credit, if at all, to the Author of true knowledge.

In modern terms, a great deal more emphasis is now placed on what Man has accomplished rather than what God has accomplished through Man. Knowledge was formerly tested by the ages, emanating from the Word of God and His mighty acts throughout all Creation and articulated in the Councils and in the Creeds. The publication of a book was a great accomplishment, and it required careful research and corroboration. In fact, the footnotes and bibliography were critical to the credibility of the book. Good thoughts with insufficient documentation would result in a rejected text or an “F” on a term paper. However, today people can create any reality they wish: they can create a Wikipedia Page, a Web-site, and use social media as platforms for misinformation.

In a past generation this misinformation, in print, was generally confined to preposterous tabloids that were available by the check-out counter in the grocery store. Today people can post that misinformation on social media, and even create an article or site a reference that is based on opinion, and in some instances, paranoid thinking. I have recently learned that JFK was killed by the Mafia, Elvis is living in Hawaii, Aliens live in New Mexico, and Jesus was married to Mary Magdalene. Since it is all in print and on social media, and Web Sites have been created to further these assertions, I guess it must be true - or is it? The existence of nonsense has always occurred, but the age in which we live today allows people with limited knowledge to use misinformation as if it were highly documented facts. This leads to pride — when we gather superficial information and then present it to others as if it were fact. This leads to judgment and condescension - expressions of pride, whereby our misinformation is used by us to show how uninformed everyone else is. It also means that my feelings and my opinions are always accurate, because they are mine, but yours are not accurate because I do not agree with you.

When foundational “facts” are erroneous, no amount of credible information laid on top of error will transform the erroneous foundation. In the end, we can recall what adults told us when we were children: there is a reason why we have two ears and one mouth; we should listen more and talk less. Finally, we live in an age that is very light on the critical thinking side and very heavy on the critical judgment side. As difficult as it may seem to some, our vocation in life as God’s creation is not to criticize and judge everything and every person. We need to recall that The Holy Scriptures are very clear about judgment: Only God can judge, and the way we judge others is the way we shall be judged. As bright as people may think they are, God has not asked us to serve Him in an advisory capacity — even if that was what Adam and Eve were led to be believe by Satan.