

The Bishop's Address
One Hundred Thirty-first Regular Synod
Rend Lake, Illinois
October 24-25, 2008

MY BROTHERS AND SISTERS IN CHRIST, ON THIS OCCASION OF THE ONE HUNDRED THIRTY-FIRST REGULAR SYNOD OF THE DIOCESE OF SPRINGFIELD, I HAVE THE HONOR OF ADDRESSING YOU AS YOUR BISHOP IN THE SEVENTEENTH YEAR OF THIS EPISCOPACY IN THE NAME OF THE FATHER, AND OF THE SON AND OF THE HOLY SPIRIT. *Amen.*

On behalf of the Canon Missioner, clergy, and laity of the Hale Deanery Team Ministry, I welcome you to this Regular Synod of the Diocese of Springfield.

The theme of this Synod is “Rejoice in the Lord Always...” As Christians, we are privy to a whole host of sound doctrine and teaching all of which is grounded in Holy Writ. Our theme this year is taken from the fourth verse of the fourth Chapter of the Epistle of St. Paul to the Philippians. Embracing the template of St. Augustine of Hippo’s rule of life, by God’s grace, we expect to be empowered by God the Holy Spirit to “Trust the past to God’s mercy, the present to God’s love and the future to God’s providence.” In so doing, indeed, being capable of “(rejoicing) in the Lord always” not only becomes an obtainable reality, it is the standard for those who believe they are created in God’s image, redeemed by the blood of Jesus Christ and sanctified by the indwelling of the Holy Spirit.

We rejoice, too, that joining us at this Synod, are seven (7) special guests. Though you will have an opportunity to greet them later in one capacity or another, I want to introduce each of them to you now. I would ask them to stand as I call their names.

The Rev. K. Brewster Hastings, Rector of St. Anne’s Episcopal Church, Abington, Pennsylvania, in the Diocese of Pennsylvania, joins us again this year to serve as our Chaplain.

This continues the initiative of last year and it is designed to assist us in “keeping the main thing the main thing.” In addition to being the preacher at Evensong tonight and the Eucharist tomorrow morning, he will address this Synod in a few minutes and then again before we adjourn tomorrow. We look forward to hearing his thoughts and insights regarding what God calls us to be and to do.

Here representing our esteemed neighbors to the northwest is the Bishop of Quincy, the Rt. Rev. Keith Ackerman who is accompanied by his wife, Joanne. The Rev. Canon Ed den Blaauwen, Rector of Christ Church, Moline, and Canon Missioner of the Diocese of Quincy, is here as well.

Representing the Anglican Communion Network and Bishop Bob Duncan are the Rev. Canon Daryl Fenton and the Rev. Ron McKeon. Canon Fenton is the Chief Operating Officer of the ACN, and Father McKeon is the Chief Financial Officer.

And representing Bishop Warren Freiheit and the Central and Southern Synod of the Evangelical Lutheran Church of America is the Rev. Dr. Richard Hertenstein. Living in Anna, Illinois, he is the Dean of their Southern Conference.

We sincerely thank each of them for joining us. Their presence honors us and is an encouragement to us in our common service to Christ, His Gospel and His Kingdom.

It is now my privilege to recognize those who have joined us in ordained ministry or whose ministry status has changed since our last synod. Please stand as I call your name.

The Rev. Robert M. Lewis, was ordained priest on the Feast of the Epiphany, January 6th, 2008, and canonically received from the Diocese of Central Florida. He now serves as Vicar of All Saints' Church, Morton.

The Rev. Sheryl L. Black was ordained Deacon on the Feast of the Presentation, February 2nd, 2008, and is serving in the Hale Deanery Team Ministry. We look forward to her priesthood ordination scheduled for All Saints Day, November 1st, 2008, just eight (8) days hence.

The Rev. Timothy A. Goodman was ordained priest on the Feast of the Visitation, May 31st, 2008. He continues to serve in the Hale Deanery Team Ministry.

The Rev. Charles J. Reischman was recently received canonically from the Diocese of Colorado and is serving as the Rector of St. John's, Decatur. Clergy particularly -- please note that his Celebration of New Ministry is scheduled for Wednesday, November 5, at 6:30 P.M. That's Wednesday, November 5, at 6:30 P.M.

And, the Rev. Canon George E. Pence has been canonically transferred from the Diocese of Quincy and continues to assist at St. Andrew's, Edwardsville.

The Diocese of Springfield is blessed to have these laborers for the Gospel of Christ among us, and we are thankful to God for their ministries.

During this past year, the following Letters Dimissory were issued by me:
The Rev. Werner H. Raasch to the Diocese of Milwaukee; and the Rev. Norman M. Erb-White to the Diocese of Pittsburgh.

In addition, the Rev. David E. Taylor, former Rector of St. Andrew's Church, Carbondale, has renounced his orders and is preparing to be ordained in the Orthodox Church in America.

We are confident God will continue to bless their work and witness in the months and years ahead.

It now is my solemn task to declare a moment of silence as we remember the clergy who have died since our last Synod. They are:

The Rev. Edward D. Grimes, Retired Priest of the Diocese of Springfield, former Priest Associate of Christ Church, Springfield, former Diocesan Supply Priest, Chaplain for the Order of St. Luke, and former Diocesan Chaplain for Springfield area hospitals.

And, as perhaps you know, the Rev. Canon Anthony C. Viton, Retired Priest of the Diocese of Springfield, died a week ago tomorrow. His funeral was this past Wednesday. He was the former Vicar of Trinity Church, Mt. Vernon, former Rector of St. John the Baptist, Mt. Carmel, former Vicar of St. John's, Albion, and member of the Society of the Holy Cross.

We thank God for them and for their ministries. We grieve with their families knowing our whole is diminished by their deaths.

-- (SILENCE) --

Let us pray. May their souls rest in peace, O Lord, and may all who grieve know Your most gracious consolation, through Jesus Christ our Lord. *Amen.*

The primary purpose of this address is to report to you on the state of the Church. I'm confident it's not news to you that the crisis continues and contrary to what you may have read, the worst is NOT over. Indeed, the evidence strongly suggests, "We 'ain't seen nothin' yet!" Why? Because, the Archbishop of Canterbury confirmed at the Lambert Conference only a few months ago what the Windsor Report recommended in 2004 as the way forward. Specifically, there must be a moratorium on the ordination of non-celibate homosexuals, a moratorium on the blessing of same sex relationships and a moratorium on uninvited, cross-provincial ministry interventions; and, additionally, an Anglican Covenant needs to be developed and adopted. The problem is a goodly number of The Episcopal Church Bishops have already declared that they will not observe the moratoria and they do not support the development of a Covenant. It is clear

that nothing which might impede the current, sexual agenda is acceptable to the leadership of The Episcopal Church. Unless something dramatically changes, the crisis will not simply continue, it will increase; and with the ingredients for the disintegration of our beloved Church remaining in place, she will continue to erode at an appalling rate.

The situation we are experiencing reminds me of the family who was listening to their police scanner one evening when they heard that there was a car going the wrong way on I-55. Their concern was heightened because they knew another family member was returning from Chicago and on I-55 at that very hour. So they called her cell phone and said, "Hey, Barbara, be careful. We just heard there's someone on I-55 going the wrong way." And she said, "Someone? There're hundreds of them!"

That scenario would be funnier if it weren't so tragic from several perspectives. Likewise, the situation we are experiencing in The Episcopal Church and the Anglican Communion might be humorous if it weren't so damnable. The point is someone is going the wrong way, and we all tend to think it's everyone else. Those who see themselves as orthodox believe Holy Scripture and the teaching of the Church have fundamental authority think those who see themselves as progressive are going the wrong way. Those who see themselves as progressive believe they are being responsible by shaping the faith to make it relevant to the concerns of the culture think those who see themselves as orthodox are going the wrong way. Now consider this: Whereas driving the wrong way on an interstate may very well lead to temporal injury and death, going the wrong way theologically and spiritually may very well lead to eternal separation from God or, in traditional language, damnation.

How all this will play out is uncertain. What is certain is that the Evil One, Satan, is having a "field day." We, again, have bought into his "playbook," and we are dancing to his tune.

So, what to do? The very first thing we all need to do is to recognize that we have fallen far short of what God expects of us who are born again in the waters of Baptism and are fed by the sacramental Body and Blood of Jesus, Himself. Next, we need to confess our sins against God and our neighbors and implore the Holy Spirit to change our hearts so we value others as God values them, view every situation as God views it, and act as God directs rather than what we might think the situation demands.

Perhaps what is most important is that we simply do not lose faith. That isn't necessarily easy. The discipline of keeping focused on what it means to be faithful as a Christian even as we strive to be faithful Christians is difficult. Rather than abandoning the faith, we invite the Holy Spirit to build it in us, strengthening us to discern God's will and then to do it.

Though it is always risky to be confident about that which is temporal, we may have great confidence in that which is eternal -- and be clear, ecclesial (or Church) structures are temporal while *ecclesia* (the Church), itself, is eternal.

I am convinced it is paramount, if we would truly be the Church -- that redeemed fellowship known as the Body of Christ, we continue the kind of initiatives our Diocese undertook in the late nineties called Vision 2000. With the assistance of Fr. Alan Hansen and Acts 29, that Vision evolved a couple of years ago into what we called the "Bones Program." Referencing the Prophet Ezekiel, it challenged us and our ministries by asking the question: "Can these Bones live?" Its major thrust was and is to "(Reclaim) the Vitality of the Early Church." With the good assistance and support of Fr. Desmond Francis and the diocesan Department of Evangelism and Spiritual Enrichment through the two (2) workshops entitled "Evangelism Outside the Box," a workshop entitled "Becoming a Contagious Church," and a workshop entitled "Making Christian Disciples;" and Fr. Tim Goodman and the Department of General Mission Strategy through the Small Church Ministries Conference; and Mr. Joe Hooten and the Department of Youth through Happening, New Beginnings, Church Camp, Work Week and YouthQuake (to name only three Departmental enterprises), we are planting precious seeds which have and will continue to produce rich fruit.

All our ministry intentions, of course, are to assist others to know what it means to be a faithful Christian so that "(rejoicing) in the Lord always (in everything)" becomes an obtainable reality in a culture where we have taller buildings but shorter tempers, wider Freeways but narrower viewpoints; where we spend more but have less; where we buy more but enjoy less; where we have more conveniences but less time, and more degrees but less sense. Our challenge is the same as it has been for two thousand years: How can we effectively be in the world but not of the world? The answer is: Only in Christ Jesus. May God always work in us that which is well pleasing in His sight.

NOW UNTO GOD THE FATHER, GOD THE SON AND GOD THE HOLY SPIRIT BE ASCRIBED AS IS MOST JUSTLY DUE, ALL MIGHT, POWER, MAJESTY, DOMINION AND GLORY NOW AND FOREVER. *Amen.*