

Address to Synod 2016

*"I have heard of your faith in the Lord Jesus
and your love toward all the saints,
and for this reason I do not cease to give thanks for you
as I remember you in my prayers.
I pray that the God of our Lord Jesus Christ, the Father of all glory
may give you a spirit of wisdom and revelation as you come to know him,
So that with the eyes of your hearts enlightened
you may know the hope to which he has called you,
what are the riches of his glorious inheritance among the saints."*

(Ephesian 1:15-18)

I can think of no better place to begin than in continuity with Bishop Bob's prayer for our diocese as he closed his charge yesterday evening. This prayer, found at the opening of the Letter to the Ephesians and traditionally credited to St. Paul is a prayer of thankfulness, encouragement and yearning for those who received it, to continue to grow into all that God calls them to do and be so that they might know the 'riches of his glorious inheritance among the saints.' It is also my prayer for all of you and for us together as we begin our journey of shared ministry for the sake of Christ.

*I have heard of your faith in the Lord Jesus and your love toward all the saints, and for this reason I do not cease to give thanks for you.....*I first give thanks for you as you have so wonderfully welcomed me into this diocese showing your love for this particular 'saint'. From the day of my election I have been overwhelmed by the cards, e-mails, texts and notes of encouragement and thanksgiving along with the joyfulness of my welcome service on April 16th - all have touched me deeply. Your welcome of me speaks well for your welcome of others who come into our midst seeking to find the family of God.

I have heard of your faith as I have started to hear stories about the history of the diocese, stories of particular parishes and to weekly read in the diocesan digest of the many activities and commitments in ministry. I have heard of your passionate response to the needs of refugee families; shared part of the prayer conference in which 145 people gathered to learn more about Celtic prayer; seen notices of coming events that reach out to those in need or build the life of the community with fun and fundraising; and I have begun to share with parishes in worship. Over the coming months I look

forward to deepening my knowledge of your life and faith as I visit each deanery to meet with the clergy and laity, hear the stories of your communities, and discover where the deepest joys and challenges live for you.

I pray that the God of our Lord Jesus Christ, the Father of all glory may give you a spirit of wisdom and revelation as you come to know him. As we face the future we will each need that spirit of wisdom and revelation. It is no surprise to anyone in this room that the church – here and everywhere – is facing challenges. Changes in demographics, social expectations, communications and worldviews have caught us unprepared for the rapidity of the changes. In my episcopal ministry I have frequently met bewildered congregations wondering – What happened? Why has attendance declined so steeply? Why do people not want to come to church? Where are the children and youth? Just tell us what to do!!

There is no quick fix. We do need a spirit of wisdom and revelation. My prayer is that God will provide that wisdom ‘as we come to know him’ ...as we pay attention to our own spiritual lives – as we pray, study scripture and meet Christ in worship and service. If we do not know God as shown to us in Jesus for ourselves – we have nothing to share and sharing is the mandate from Christ – “Go and make disciples of all nations!” (Matthew 28:16-20) A key commitment I therefore ask all of us is that we deepen our own discipleship so that we do know Christ and can, through the intimacy of our knowledge, share Christ with passionate joy. **I ask each person in this room – lay, deacon, priest & bishop – to commit to one new way of deepening your knowledge of Christ in this year!** - *Join a bible study; find a spiritual director; participate in an Education for Ministry group; go on retreat; covenant with a friend to pray and read scripture together, become a biblical story-teller; engage in theological course....read the whole Bible!*

One of my greatest joys is to sit down and have a conversation about life and faith with someone who has questions. Parker Palmer, a teacher and mentor I deeply admire, describes the task of teaching not as an expert pouring knowledge as if filling bottles but as a gathering together around a subject that you wish to explore. The teacher brings alongside the resources and information to assist that exploration and sets the boundaries needed to focus the discussion. Learning arises from the shared exploration and reflections. I love to sit down and talk about our faith. As a teacher I can bring resources of biblical & theological information – not all the answers. Learning happens when we, together, explore what faith means for us now – here – in this time and place – listening to the wisdom of the past and present,

sharing our own experience and discoveries and trusting the presence of God's Spirit to lead and guide us. I especially appreciate these opportunities with young people – they ask the best questions. and they will not accept anything but authenticity and frank discussion! They keep me honest about my own questions.

We will do that in the coming months –talk about our faith in small groups in parishes; in deanery gatherings and in diocesan councils. And in doing that we will discover again and again deepening of our faith and ability to articulate the faith that is within us for others.

So that with the eyes of your hearts enlightened you may know the hope to which he has called you, what are the riches of his glorious inheritance among the saints. We live in a time where people simultaneously seek self-sufficiency & independence while longing for community – strong individualism competes with our need for each other to have a place in community where we are accountable, loved, and cared for. The hope to which Christ has called us gives us both. We are loved for who we are in all our gifts, strengths & weaknesses – AND called to be part of the body of Christ where we have a place – where we belong – where our participation in the body matters and our gifts can be honoured and contribute to the well-being of the whole community. This is true of us as individuals and as parishes.

As individuals we are part of the body of Christ in a parish in mutual commitment. As parishes you are part of the body of Christ known through the diocese – where each parish is a unique part of the whole – and each part needs the others! As a diocese we are part of the Ecclesiastical Province of Ontario and of the whole Anglican Church of Canada our place in these is part of a dynamic whole. Our Anglican Church of Canada – our 'beloved church' – to quote our Primate – is a part of the Anglican Communion – that family of Anglican Churches committed to walking together in Christ and as Anglicans we are part of God's one, holy, catholic and apostolic church throughout the world. One of the privileges I deeply enjoy is the opportunity to engage with our wider family in the House of Bishops provincially and nationally, in ecumenical dialogue with Roman Catholics and in coming months with the new Task Group for the Anglican Communion. I look forward to opportunities to share our diocese with the wider church and to share them with you. I am so pleased that Huron already has a Companion Diocese relationship with Amazonia through which we can see that wider body of Christ and am delighted that Rev. Marcos and Lourdes are with us today.

I look forward to together strengthening the ways in which we support one another – individually, as parishes and as a diocese. St. Paul also wrote, *As it is, there are many members, yet one body. The eye cannot say to the hand, 'I have no need of you', nor again the head to the feet, 'I have no need of you.* (1 Corinthians 12:20-21) I know there is a tendency in any organization or institution to dislike the 'next level up' in authority! I trust that we will work together remembering that each part of our diocese is there to serve the other parts. The bishops and diocesan staff; clergy; lay leaders; parishioners – are all team members seeking the ultimate good of God's kingdom. We need each other and we must support and trust one another. I have already discovered the deep commitment of the staff to the life and work of the clergy and parishes and have caught glimpses of the passion and commitment of clergy and laity for their parishes. One constant surprise and delight for me in episcopal ministry is the creativity of laity, clergy working together with their bishop. Through the gifts each brings to the table I delight in the possibilities we discover together especially when we formerly saw only difficulties and obstacle. The wind of the Spirit blows where it will and can and will surprise and delight us if we are waiting and ready.

This mutual support of one another is also particularly and especially true of our walking together with our indigenous brothers and sisters in Christ – as we work on ways to fulfill the calls to the church of the Truth & Reconciliation Commission - educating ourselves about the history of our involvement in the pain of the past; educating ourselves and clergy, in particular, serving in indigenous communities about indigenous and spirituality and working closely with LAIC around ways to support healing & reconciliation, language, and spiritual life. Our commitment as an Anglican Church of Canada to 'walk together' will call us all to building trust in new ways.

So with Bishop Bob I pray for you and as you to pray for the body of Christ - for sister & brothers in your parish, deanery, diocese, indigenous partners and the world! As I begin my ministry among you with St. Paul's prayer I ask your prayers for me – for strength and stamina in the coming months, for a heart to listen deeply, and wisdom in working with you to find the ways to strengthen our witness in and through the Diocese of Huron.

Come, Holy Spirit and fill the hearts of the faithful!