

SYNOD ADDRESS
for the Diocese of the Holy Cross
Thursday, January 16, 2020
at the G-4 Synods in Dunwoody, Georgia
The Rt. Rev. Paul C. Hewett, SSC

Today we thank our host parish, St. Barnabas, Dunwoody, for all they have done to make our Joint Synods possible. And we thank the hard working team of organizers, who make the arrangements appear effortless. And we thank our brother clergy from the Polish National Catholic Church and our guest, Dr. Robert Elsner, from Erskine Theological Seminary in Due West, South Carolina. And a sincere thanks to everyone here who is expending the time, treasure and talent to attend this holy Synod.

Grace be unto you, and peace, from God our Father, and from the Lord Jesus Christ.

St. Paul wrote to the Corinthians about running a race. “Know ye not that they which run in a race run all, but one receiveth the prize? So run, that ye may obtain.” (I Cor. 9:24) And in Mark’s Gospel there is that very frequent use of the word *immediately*, giving a fisherman’s sense of urgency and immediacy to what our Lord is saying and doing.

When St. Paul wrote to the Galatians, the metaphor is not running a race, but walking in the Spirit. “This I say then, ‘Walk in the Spirit, and ye shall not fulfill the lust of the flesh.’” (Gal. 5:16) Walking is about three miles an hour. Someone once wrote a book called *the Three Mile an Hour God*. Sometimes to catch up to the Lord we have to slow down. Jesus Himself was never rushed, never fevered, in his activity. At all times we see Him poised and collected, walking absolutely and completely in the Spirit.

So sometimes we run, sometimes we walk. Our speed depends on our circumstances, and the conditions around us, and sometimes on our own fitness, or to what extent we are cooperating with God’s grace. In the past two and a half years our Diocese, and all the G-4 jurisdictions, have been walking, and sometimes running, with the aim of doing both in the Holy Spirit.

How far have we gotten? Some of the positive points of progress for all of us in the G-4 are:

1. We have regular conversations with the other G-4 jurisdictions, with monthly bishops' teleconferences, and frequent communications with the clergy and laity of other jurisdictions, through clergy exchanges, pulpit swaps, covering for one another's holidays, licensing clergy from other jurisdictions, sponsorship of military chaplaincies, summer youth conferences, quiet days and retreats, the G-4 Church Planting Committee (initiated by the ACA/APA), shared Sunday School curricula (initiated by the APA), and a shared Anglican Church Women meeting at the Joint Synods. All these contacts are increasing over time.
2. There has been remarkable progress in our official dialogue with the PNCC. Membership in the Union of Scranton is a point of common convergence for us all. In time, we are likely to find

jurisdictions not in the G-4 lining up with us in the Union of Scranton, like ships lining up in docks in a harbor, close enough to put gang planks across our various bows.

3. We can report that as G-4 jurisdictions live more closely together, we develop the necessary understandings of one another's corporate culture, gifts, and deficits. We are learning how to live together, and we have done so peacefully and productively now for a number of years. Our levels of trust and communication have deepened over the years, laying the groundwork for the decisions that lie ahead.

4. Fr. Bader and Archbishop Haverland and I have had some informal discussions... brainstorming sessions... about our becoming a non-geographic diocese within the ACC. G-4 would then become G-3. Here, at our Synod, we have been looking at whether to make these discussions formal — that is, to have more participation, and formal agendas and published minutes. If we decide not to have formal discussions we can continue our informal conversations, not only with the ACC, but with the ACA and the APA. I think that our bringing this matter up gives a green light to others to engage in similar explorations.

5. In fact, such explorations are already afoot. The ACA and ACC west coast dioceses have set a good example of interdiocesan cooperation and collaboration. Other dioceses will be planning coterminous synods and other joint efforts.

6 We are now doing the slow, patient, behind-the-scenes work of studying one another's canons, and one another's structures, domestic and overseas, for analysis of the best "fits." We are growing in our resolve to work together, to extend the Kingdom, and to cure souls.

7. We are awakening more to Kingdom thinking as foundational to jurisdictional thinking. What best serves not just my diocese or my jurisdiction, but what best helps the Kingdom to expand, and foster the cure of souls? As Christ the King knocks on the doors of our hearts and communities, what gives Him the best and widest door to enter? How are we being called to reconfigure our lives in the Church, to be new wineskins for new wine?

When St. Paul was praying for the spread of the Gospel, he did not pray for larger congregations or more money, although those are good things to pray for. He prayed for opportunity. "Continue in prayer, and watch in the same with thanksgiving; withal praying also for us, that God would open unto us a door of utterance, to speak the mystery of Christ, for which I am also in bonds." (Col. 4:2-3) Pray for us, that God will give us a good opportunity to speak about Christ. St. Paul also prayed for courage. Pray that "I might speak boldly, as I ought to speak." (Eph. 6:20) And he prayed for clarity. "Pray that I may speak in such a way as to make the Gospel clear." (Col. 4:4) Opportunity, courage and clarity.

God, who is rich in mercy, is answering our prayers. He is continuing to open doors in our relations with the Polish National Catholic Church. Our fellowship with them and with others in the Union of Scranton will be a framework that expands to include Christians who want to live the consensus of the first millennium of the undivided Church. Conciliar Catholics — those of us

who want to live in the mind of the Fathers and with the Councils of the undivided Church, are discovering one another globally.

Last September in Rome, at the 24th International Congress of the Society for the Law of the Eastern Churches, the Romanian delegation let us know that they would like a serious dialogue with orthodox Anglicans and with our G-4 jurisdictions. So later this year I plan to go to Bucharest and meet with professors and bishops in the Romanian Orthodox Church.

At that same Congress in Rome, our good friend from Athens, Bishop Kyrillos, was able to spend part of every day with us, to reinforce our rapport. Others threading the needle with the Greeks are our partners in the Union of Scranton, the PNCC and the Nordic Catholic Church. We plan to weave our respective threads into larger cords and bonds of affection and dialogue with the Orthodox. Fr. Tom Monnat has been doing this in the Philadelphia metropolis, where he is now a member of the Orthodox Brotherhood, which I attended with him in Phoenixville, Pennsylvania, last November. As Dean of the Anglican Fellowship of the Delaware Valley, Fr. Monnat is keeping alive a vision of what could someday be the Anglican Diocese of the Delaware Valley. One of the recent fruits of his labors, and those of Fr. Peter Geromel and Fr. Eddie Rix, was the ordination to the Priesthood of Fr. Ben Howard, serving as the Curate at the Church of the Transfiguration in Phoenixville.

Speaking of aspirants for Holy Orders, we now have Mr. Raymond Davison getting ready to graduate from St. Vladimir's Seminary, and preparing to serve in an APA parish in Melbourne, Florida. And there is Mr. Travis Pearson in Columbia, preparing for ordination.

We currently have two priests serving in APA parishes, Canon Robert Bader here in Dunwoody, and Fr. Geordy Geddings in Alto, Georgia. Our Diocese has four priests from other jurisdictions helping us. One of them, Fr. Jeff Johnson, is helping to fill the shoes of the late Fr. Gordon Thomas Shannonhouse of blessed memory, who went to the Lord last June 4, from Eastville, Virginia. The reciprocity we now enjoy with one another is a great boon to our unity.

Last March the G-4 clergy of the southeast had their second annual Retreat at the Cistercian monastery in Conyers, Georgia, conducted by Fr. Jonathan Ostman. This was well attended and well led. Fr. Ostman presented us with George Herbert's poems, set to music by Vaughan Williams as the Five Mystical Songs. Meditating on these is not so much walking as running, running into what the Fathers call the active life, the life of ever deepening prayer, the life made active in the Holy Spirit, the Life of Christ Himself, through whom we live out the instant freshness of the Gospel.

I will not steal Fr. Gene's thunder regarding the St. Michael's Conference, except to say here that it serves as our finest matrix for marriage among our young clergy and laity. It is impossible to attend these conferences and not grow in knowledge and understanding of what love is, the love of God poured out upon us through His Son, in the Holy Spirit, and shared among us in the fellowship and communion of the Church.

It is good to have Dr. Robert Elsner with us, from the Erskine Theological Seminary in Due West, South Carolina. This ETS wants to start a DAS, a Diploma in Anglican Studies, six courses added to the M.Div. now on offer. A number of G-4 clergy are alumnae of ETS, including our own Bp. Timothy Farmer. As Dr. Elsner will tell us shortly, his faculty are meeting soon to give some content and shape to this initiative. As we walk in the Spirit and run the race as faithful Anglicans, there are ever increasing numbers who enter upon the Canterbury Trail and join us in the great re-alignment. Not infrequently those who come to us from evangelical, reform or holiness traditions become more ardent Anglo-Catholics than those born into it.

With this reference to Anglo-Catholics let us as always reference and reverence and love our blessed Mother, Mary the Temple of the Holy Spirit, Ark of the New Covenant, Woman Clothed with the Sun, Help of Christians, whom we affectionately call Our Lady, she who kneads the loaf, “hlaef-knedige, hlaefdige,” lady. Her priceless intercession is helping to form Christ in us, the Bread of Life, and rally all priests who would be faithful to her Son. As the saints have always said, the two foci for renewal in the Church are our Lady, slayer of heresy and icon of the Church, and our Lord, in the holy Eucharist.

Never has the role of our Lady been more clearly silhouetted against a dark, barbarian sky. Everywhere now, globally, we see the fulfillment of Isaiah, chapter 3, verse 12. I’ll let you look it up. Isaiah 3:12. It’s part of the Word of God. As is all of 1st Corinthians, chapter 11, and 1st Timothy, chapter two. The satantic parody of the Mother of God, the Bride of Christ, is the whore of Babylon, revealed now throughout the world in ever more violent and virulent spasms and paroxysms in the swamps of corridors of power in national capitals like Washington, D.C. and London, and on our university campuses and public schools, and throughout the media elites. Our Lord’s Mother is helping to raise up cohorts not only of priests, but of women, who champion all that is closest to her Son’s Heart, tirelessly witnessing to a culture of life and a civilization of love and a biblical anthropology that prioritizes the wife and mother as central and foundational in society. Insofar as these divine impulses are spurned and rejected, we are entering the early phases of the last days.

In all our life together in our Lord, whether we walk or run, drive or fly, fast or feast, sit, stand or kneel, wake or sleep, let us always ask Him for His blessing, not only to bless what we are doing, but to ask for the courage to do what He is blessing. To Him, with the Father and the Holy Spirit, be honor and glory unto endless ages of ages. Amen.

