

ADDRESS

for the Synod of the Diocese of the Holy Cross
meeting in Athens, Georgia,
in tandem with the Provincial Synod of the Anglican Catholic Church,
on September 23, 2021
by the Rt. Rev. Paul C. Hewett

We owe a debt of gratitude to the Anglican Catholic Church for the gracious invitation to have a share in their Provincial Synod, and to our hosts, St. Stephen's Pro-Cathedral, and to Debbie Weaver, our gifted organizer, and to all who serve in our Diocese, to all our delegates and guests, to all who sacrificed of time and treasure to attend this holy Synod.

A special welcome goes out to our guests and to those who are here for the first time, and a grateful recognition of our most recently ordinand, Fr. Travis Pearson, who is now attending Chaplain's School for the Army, and to three priests recently instituted as full time rectors, Father Zachary Braddock, at the Cathedral, Father Geordan Geddings at St. Peter's, Cypress and and Father Ben Howard, at Transfiguration, Phoenixville, with a fourth on deck, Father Thomas Harbold, at Christ Church, Southern Pines.

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

One of St. Luke's favorite themes in the Gospel is that, in Jesus Christ, God has visited and redeemed his people. Every day in Morning Prayer, in the Benedictus, we say, "Blessed be the Lord God of Israel; for he hath visited and redeemed his people." (Luke 1:68) Continuing this theme Luke records Jesus weeping over Jerusalem and saying, "If thou hadst known, even thou, in this thy day, the things which belong to thy peace! but now they are hid from thine eyes. (Luke 19:42).

October 6, 2017 was a historic moment for us, when four bishops signed the Concordat that made us the G-4. In terms of Luke's Gospel, this was a day of visitation, spun off from the great Day of Visitation, the Incarnation. What we consummated that October 6, with the G-4 signing a *communio in sacris* covenant with one another, was a marriage of our four jurisdictions...a marriage that completely connects us theologically, sacramentally, morally and pastorally. There can be no greater ecclesial unity than *communio in sacris*.

Now it is time for the married couple to build the house, to move to the structural and administrative side of things. Building the house brings us to another historic moment. In terms of Luke's Gospel, this too is a day of visitation, also spun off from the great Day of Visitation, the Incarnation.

What we are doing now, in joining the Anglican Catholic Church (ACC) as a diocese, is beginning to build the house in which we will all live. As reconnaissance, we are stepping out first, walking point, which is our default maneuver. From October 2017 forward, the arrangements we G-4 jurisdictions propose with one another are structural and organizational. The ACC has invited us to join them as a jurisdiction, as a diocese within the ACC, and the historic moment for doing this is now.

This historic moment will not come again. And we do not have a lot of time. If it is hard to meet face to face in 2021, it may be harder next year, and the year after that. The lights are again going out all around us, as Winston Churchill said of the 1930's, and what we can do today, we may not be able to do down the road. America is being dismantled. Everything we hold dear is up for grabs. Another plague, or other disaster, may be coming. We may see more lockdowns and restrictions on travel, curtailment of free speech and censorship, more government control, loss of tax exemption for non-profit corporations, and imprisonment. Satan is attacking the Church from all sides, and is getting ready to play his final hand.

Let us keep the momentum going for our unity. We said we want to be all under one roof; let us now take the steps that will get us there. If each jurisdiction waits till the others are perfect before "building the house," then nothing will ever get done. The explicit and solemnly promised goal of the G-4 is to become G-1, in the near, not distant, future. As Benjamin Franklin once said, if we do not all hang together, we will most surely all hang separately, as the culture collapses around us, and turns against us. As your bishop, I believe a "yes" vote on this matter is of such significance from God's point of view, that I have invested in this effort all my moral and political capital.

In 1979, two years after signing the Affirmation of St. Louis, and one year after the Denver Consecrations, we allowed an enormous historic moment to slip through our fingers because we did not stay together. We were on the offensive in those days; we had set the Episcopal Church back on its heels. They were off balance with us. I think if we had stayed together we could have quickly gathered in a quarter million Episcopalians. By now we would have eclipsed the Episcopal Church in size. Instead, with divisions that broke out, we settled for less than 50,000, some of whom went to Rome and Orthodoxy. We missed our day of visitation, the day when the Lord could have fully redeemed our situation, and swiftly propelled us forward. We would spend exactly forty years in a wilderness, just like the Israelites before us. They, and we, could have entered our respective promised lands in less than two years. Jesus wept for us as He did for Jerusalem.

Joshua and Caleb, Moses bold and faithful aides-de-camp, two of the twelve spies sent to reconnoiter Canaan, came back with a positive report. "Let us go up at once and possess (the land)" (Num. 13:30) The others in the search party were negative, and carried the day, and God's people spent forty years in the wilderness, so that no one in the original generation of the Exodus would see the promised land. God of course used this for greater good. He can write

straight with crooked lines. He did with us as He did with the Israelites. He tested us in the wilderness. He taught and humbled and trained and prepared us, and purified our motives. He made us supple in His hands. We are entering our promised land very lean and thinned out, humbled, chastened, and eager to serve God in the vocation He has laid out for us. One way we know the significance of our vocation is the ferocity with which we have been attacked over the years. The devil doesn't waste time on a two-bit hill of beans. He works overtime on us because he sees how important our vocation is in the Body of Christ.

Our joining the ACC today will help set in motion the plans the G-4 bishops are discussing for finishing the job. Each bishop is preparing an essay, or memo, on how he would expedite this, and complete the construction of the house. What the essays are showing, as they come in, and are beginning to be discussed, is that with thorough-going *kenosis* we can put the whole thing together in time for our 2024 round of provincial synods. God is visiting us with fresh and brilliant proposals, and redeeming our situation. After today, putting all of the G-4 together can go quickly. We should take as our watchword for this one of the most commonly used words in Mark's Gospel: *immediately*, alternately translated in old English as *straightway*.

Today, as God continues to visit us and continue His redemptive work, I hope and pray that G-4 becomes G-3. But it may soon be up to G-4 again, because last June, the G-4 bishops met with Bishop Ryan Reed to discuss options for the Diocese of Fort Worth. He wants to meet with us again to continue the discussion. And our relationships with the Province of Christ the King will be warming up more in the coming year. Our Diocese can help to further these developments as a sheepdog nipping at everyone's heels, to get the sheep into one fold. Being relatively small in size makes us more maneuverable and effective. In a convoy, a PT boat, a patrol-torpedo boat, about 70 feet long, is small, fast and highly maneuverable, so that it can dart quickly in and around any part of the convoy as a scout, for reconnaissance, and for defense against enemy submarines and other shipping.

We have a task-force in the G-4 called Continuing Forward, for church planting and parish renewal. The ACA website carries this. The latest proposal is for the 2023 Joint Synods to have church planting and renewal as the theme, perhaps stated as "Now is the time for the ancient faith." One of the task-force members said, poignantly, "we're not bunting anymore. We're swinging for the fences." Now is the time for the ancient faith, a motto for everything we do. Our experience at the Cathedral in Columbia, and in any number of places, is to see an amazing and steady increase of young families on the Canterbury Trail, coming into our ranks, looking for the historic Liturgy and the consensus of the undivided Church of the first millennium.

These new families are filling our pews and driving down our median age. Many of them are home schooling their children, and starting home school co-ops, and now, slowly but surely, throughout the G-4, starting parish schools and academies. All of us have seen very significant numbers of young men going into the Priesthood.

On the ecumenical front, Father Tom Monnat reports that we are actively engaged with the Orthodox clergy and the Orthodox Brotherhood in the Philadelphia area, with the goal of developing stronger ties and mutual support. The Society for the Law of the Eastern Churches plans to meet in Bucharest, Romania, in September, 2022. Our Romanian hosts want the Anglican delegation to spend an extra week with them, to set the stage for an official dialogue with orthodox Anglicans.

The fourth G-4 Official Dialogue with the Polish National Catholic Church (PNCC) meets in ten days in Manchester, New Hampshire. Those in the Dialogue have agreed on the three things necessary to re-establish and strengthen our old pre 1977 ties with the PNCC: (i) that each recognizes the other as the legitimate heir of its former jurisdiction, we being the heirs of the Episcopal Church, and they, of the Union of Utrecht, (ii) that each recognizes foundational documents of the other, we, of their *Road to Unity*, and they, of our *Affirmation of St. Louis*, and (iii) that each seeks to recognize the Orders of the other. This is a significant achievement, ready for continued discussion and analysis, and then a period of reception by all the bishops and dioceses involved.

Later in our session today we will hear from the Anglican Church Women about their meeting yesterday. Our Anglican Church Men also met yesterday, and many of them, having come among us from other church bodies, tell of their experiences with living the Church Year, the Communion of Saints, going to Confession, Plainsong and Anglican Chant, homeschooling and short Annual Parish Meetings. The Holy Spirit is constantly shaping all our lives to reveal the two foci for lasting renewal in the Church: devotion to our Lord in the Eucharist, and devotion to His Mother, and ours. She is the dawn of our salvation, and He is salvation incarnate, evermore visiting and redeeming His people.