



Anglican Network in Canada

THE LENTEN PASTORAL LETTER
of
THE RIGHT REVEREND DONALD F HARVEY
BISHOP and MODERATOR
THE ANGLICAN NETWORK IN CANADA

Ash Wednesday – 2011

My dear Sisters and Brothers in Christ:

Many of you are aware that, after our launch as a Church several years ago, I continued my practice of writing a Lenten Pastoral Letter and requesting that it be read in all congregations, preferably on the Sunday before Ash Wednesday.

While this may have served its purpose in an earlier era, I have found that with the proliferation of computers and their many variations, that most of you were able to read it on-line before it was read to you in church. I also noted that many of our congregations are in the mode of preaching a series of sermons and having to interrupt the flow with a letter from me often was troublesome.

So this year, as if to prove that even “old dogs” can be taught new tricks, I am changing the process and have dropped the request that it be read orally. Instead, this now will appear on our web site where it can be read at your leisure, although I also feel it would be helpful if parishes would make copies for distribution as well. As hard as it is for us to believe, not everyone has a computer and we really need to be making provision for people in that category.

The reason I like to continue this custom that many dioceses have dropped, is that it helps me as your Diocesan Bishop share some thoughts with you at a time in the liturgical year when we tend to be in a more reflective mood. Although Lent (as a season of discipline, self denial and fasting) virtually has ceased to exist as many of my generation recall it, I still think that this six weeks reminds us of Christ's own time of preparation in the wilderness, and as we are reminded of it, we should begin to think seriously about our own calling as well.

Almost everyone who reads these words already will have made a sacrifice in order that you too could follow in the steps of the Master. Just as he set his face towards Jerusalem, knowing what the cost would be, most of us had to make a decision that put property and friendships at risk, and we know that for many, the full price has yet to be paid. It has been a lonely struggle, but one that has its own rewards, manifested in so many ways.

But that is not the path I feel we should be meditating upon this Lent. While we give thanks for having been led in this manner, and the witness we have been able to make to so many

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ANGLICAN CHURCH
IN NORTH AMERICA

other people, our main objective should be to concentrate on where He now is going to lead us as we set our own faces to an uncertain future.

All we have gone through cannot be so that we will create a structure identical to the one we left. True, that church had many sterling qualities and I hope we always will incorporate them into our own mission. But there has to be a goal we seek as we try to create the church He now wants us to be. Somehow, we have to catch the same zeal we read about in the Acts of the Apostles, when the new young church *"turned the world upside down"*.

I really am talking about and pleading for Renewal. It is not the "renewal" we associate with Bible Study, although that is part of it. Nor is it the "renewal" we get from revival meetings, charismatic outpourings, and the celebration of the Sacraments, although these too are very much a part of it. It is the renewal that takes place when we learn to *"rend our hearts and not our garments and return to the Lord our God"*.

Again this year, I encourage you to turn to the Book of Common Prayer and read again the Penitential Service for use on Ash Wednesday (page 611). As familiar as you are with these words, pray them slowly and use them to grasp why we still need to retain these forty days as something very special, without which our relationship with Jesus never can be what it should.

I find one of the positive things about Lent is that it gives us a measurable amount of time to witness growth in our own lives and in that of our congregations. Throughout the whole six week period let us concentrate on prayer – both corporately and especially individually as step by step we follow the Way of the Cross and the price paid to redeem us.

Just a few days ago I came across a folder containing Lenten Messages from my own bishops over a fifty year period. Almost without exception, each one was a call to prayer. And that, dear friends, is what I am hoping this will be as well.

In 1972, my bishop finished his letter with the following prayer that I had long forgotten. I can do no better than to conclude this message to all of you than to quote it here:

"Our God and heavenly Father, never let me think that I have knowledge enough to need no teaching; wisdom enough to need no correction; talents enough to need no grace; goodness enough to need no progress; humility enough to need no repentance; devotion enough to need no quickening; strength sufficient without thy Holy Spirit; lest standing still, I fall back forevermore! AMEN."

Your Bishop and Friend,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Donald". The signature is written in a cursive, flowing style with a large initial "D".