

It is my pleasure to welcome all of you to this Inaugural Synod of the Missionary Diocese of All Saints: A Diocese in Formation of the Anglican Church in North America. We began by celebrating the Sacred Mysteries of Christ's Body and Blood. Sharing the Holy Eucharist is, among many other spiritual realities, an outward and visible sign of our unity in Christ. It is a unity brought about and growing stronger by the operation of the Holy Spirit in our hearts and lives.

On Saturday, August 22, 2009 I was consecrated as the First Bishop in the American Succession of the Anglican Church in North America. On that day, our Missionary Diocese was born. I had a vision and an expectation as to how this new-born child would grow and come to maturity. My postpartum prayers, if you will, for our Diocese and my leadership were unfortunately more about seeking God's affirmation for my vision than they were about seeking God's will and God's vision. You see, I have always been willing to serve God...especially in an advisory capacity. Then it happened. I received a not so subtle word from the Lord. He told me that I could wear the purple shirt, but that He would cast the vision and that He would build this Diocese in His time and in His way.

Who among us could have predicted that Charismatic, Evangelical and Anglo-Catholic Christians would come together as one? The

unpredictable growth and development of our Diocese has come about because faithful men and women understand in a paraphrase of Pastor Rick Warren, “It’s not about me!”

I refer to Saint Nicholas Anglican Church in Kissimmee, Florida as my “Flagship Parish.” They were the first congregation to seek membership in the Missionary Diocese. I was pleased but not surprised by their decision to do so. Father Boland and I have been friends for many years working side-by-side in the Lord’s vineyard. Thank you, my friend, for your pioneering spirit. Your affiliation encouraged many others.

The next part of God’s plan was both pleasing and surprising to me. Under the leadership of Bishop Rich Lipka, the former Diocese of Delmarva of the Communion of Christ the Redeemer entered the MDAS as a group becoming the Delmarva Convocation. Bishop Lipka now serves as our Suffragan Bishop and is a member of the Anglican Church in North America College of Bishops. I cannot adequately express my thanks to him for all of his help and support as I try to become the kind of Bishop God called me to be.

One of the first visitations I made was to the home of Bishop Don and Pat Miles and Saint Stephen Anglican Church in Louisville, Kentucky. From the first time we met, Lois and I knew we had found a brother and

sister in Christ. Bishop Miles was admitted to the MDAS as a Retired Bishop and continues to serve the people of Saint Stephen Church.

Last June, the Missionary Society of Saint John together with Bishop Fred Fick became yet another Convocation of the Missionary Diocese of All Saints. Bishop Fick serves as Father General of the Society and the MSJ is a welcome addition to our Diocese. Wherever we may be lacking I know we can depend on Bishop Fick and our MSJ Convocation to teach us how to be the kind of Missionary Diocese God has called us to be.

Bishops Kenneth Myers and Rick Painter added to our number by bringing parishes of the former Communion of Christ the Redeemer into this faith and fellowship.

The child is now just twenty months old. Our Missionary Diocese has thirty-one congregations, our newest being Faith in Christ Anglican Church in Lake City, Florida. There are several more currently in the discernment or application process. Isn't it amazing how much can be accomplished when we let God be God?

As I have travelled about our Diocese I have seen clergy working for little or no stipend. I have witnessed the generosity of lay people who give sacrificially. I have worshipped with groups large and small in rented churches, shared facilities, store fronts and home chapels. I have experienced the diversity of our Diocese. We come from a variety of racial and ethnic groups. We are united by the One true and living God who has called us to stand firm for the faith once delivered. I am so very blessed to be your Bishop. I thank God for each of you and for all of you.

Earlier, I likened the beginning of our Diocese to the birth of a child. One of the first responsibilities new parents have is to give their child a name. It is something most parents take quite seriously. Names often reflect the parents hope for the future character of the child. We are the **Missionary** Diocese of All Saints.

I cannot over-emphasize the importance of our call to Mission. There are four billion people in the world who do not know the saving love and power of Jesus Christ. Scripture says about Him, "There is no other name under heaven given among men, by which we must be saved." (Acts 4:12) And Jesus said of Himself, "I am the way and the truth and the life; no one comes to the Father but by me." (John 14:6)

The Mission of the Church and therefore the Mission of our Diocese is just as critical for those who inhabit the pews of our churches for an hour on Sunday morning as it is for those who have never known the Lord.

Dr. Gerald B. Kieschnick, President of The Lutheran Church-Missouri Synod spoke of this in 2002. He said, “The mission of the church is also critical for those who do know and have accepted the love of Christ as an outlet for the peace, joy, and assurance of life we have in Christ. Without this outlet, Christians are more like the stagnant waters of the Dead Sea, in which everything dies, that the living waters of the Sea of Galilee or the Jordon River, from and through which living waters flow. The early followers of Jesus put it simply: “We cannot help speaking about what we have seen and heard.” (Acts 4:20)

We are called to be a Diocese with **One Mission**. Jesus said, “Go and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, teaching them to obey everything I have commanded you.” (Matthew 28:19-20) Disciple...Baptize...Teach. This is Job One.

We are called to be a Diocese proclaiming **One Message**. “God was in Christ reconciling the world to himself, not counting their trespasses

against them and (watch this) entrusting to **us** the message of reconciliation.” (2 Corinthians 5:19) We have the greatest message in the world!

We are called to live and act as **One People**. “One Lord, one faith, one baptism, one God and Father of all, who is above all and through all and in all.” (Ephesians 4:5-6) We have a long way to go, but as Saint Paul wrote, “Only let your manner of life be worthy of the gospel of Christ, so that whether I come and see you or am absent, I may hear that you stand firm in one spirit, with one mind striving side by side for the faith of the gospel.” (Philippians 1:27)

What are the challenges facing our Missionary Diocese as we approach the “terrible twos?”

- Your Bishop is not fond of large and expensive diocesan structures. It is my experience that the most effective mission and programs are accomplished at the parish level. It will, therefore, be necessary for clergy and laity to volunteer their services to our Diocese based on their experience and areas of expertise. Many have already done so and I am grateful. If you see something our Diocese should be doing or should be doing better, perhaps God is calling you to be part of the solution.

- Old habits die hard. We who have come out of The Episcopal Church have been in an adversarial mode for decades. We must now realize that the time for peace has come. We and those of you who have come out of other jurisdictions need to adjust. We are several Convocations, but we are **one** Diocese. We are all subject to the Constitution and Canons, rules and procedures of the Missionary Diocese of All Saints and the Anglican Church in North America. We are not congregationalists. We think and we act as one.
- One of the greatest challenges we face is to confront any ungodly spirit of competition. As your Bishop, I have never sought to proselytize those in other jurisdictions, including those in other dioceses of the Anglican Church in North America. Congregations and clergy who have applied for membership in our MDAS have done so of their own choice.
- The next point is not as minor as it may appear on the surface. If your parish or your Convocation has a website would you please make sure that it includes the MDAS **and** the ACNA logo, together with links to both. We are a part of a new thing God is doing in North America and we must not hide our light under a bushel.

I have decided to wait one more year before we make application for full diocesan status within the ACNA. I believe this is the correct decision. We need more time to grow financially, but more importantly we need more time to grow spiritually. We need this next year to firm up our structure and ways of doing things. We need more experience working with the Canons we will hopefully approve tomorrow.

Finally this:

- Will you be in fervent prayer for this Diocese, her Bishop and the Anglican Church in North America?
- Will you offer your time, talent and treasure so that your Diocese will lift high the Cross of Christ?
- Will you dare to dream dreams and work to make those dreams become reality?
- Will you commit yourself to personal witness and evangelism?

May God pour forth His many blessings as together we move forward in faith.

