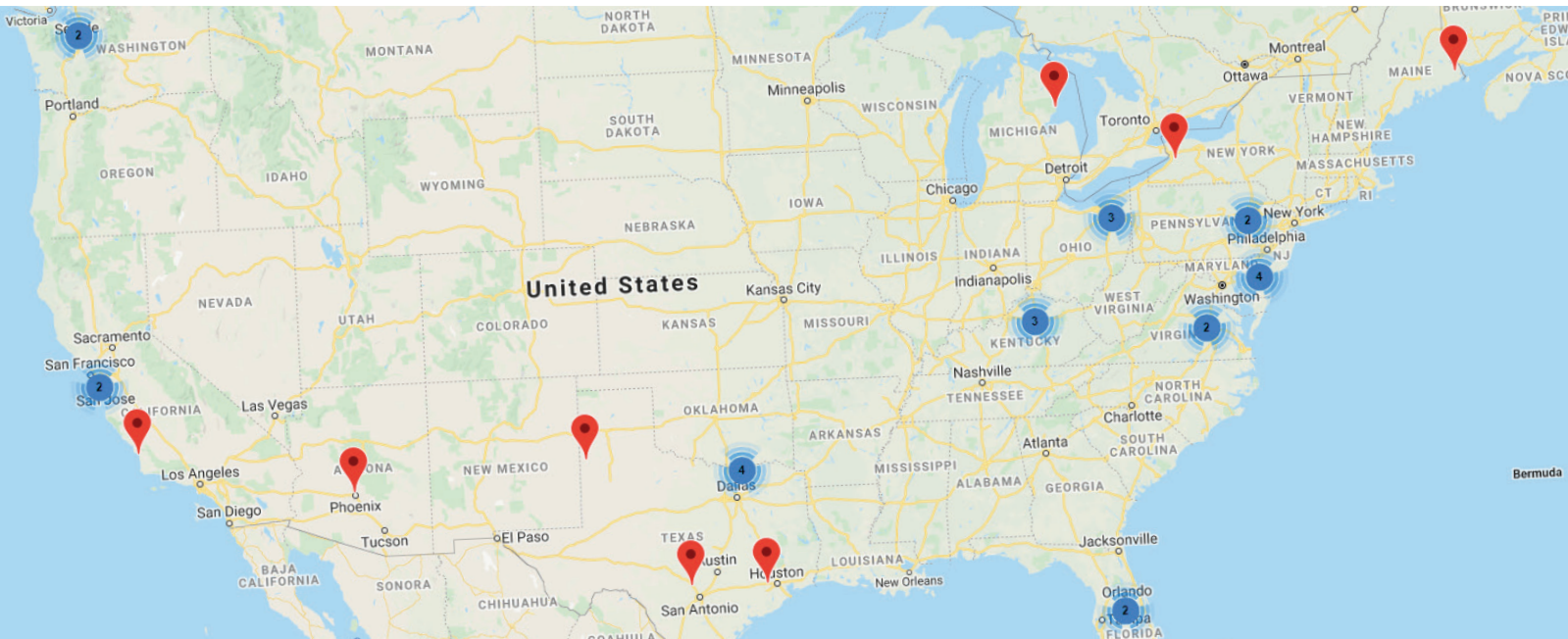


THE LINE

Newsletter of the Convocation Of The West
OF THE MISSIONARY DIOCESE OF ALL SAINTS



Missionary Diocese of All Saints' Synod Part II

By Vicar-General Fr. Michael Penfield

October 17, 2020

Life in the time of Covid is nothing if not challenging. But it is not unique. I was reading a biography on the life of Bishop Cranmer, and in it, it tells of several times when he fled London and important meetings because of an outbreak of the Plague. So, the fact that the Synod for our Diocese had to be conducted in two parts this year, and that the second part was conducted on Zoom should not surprise or dismay anyone. However, in case you were not able to be a part of this historic Synod, I thought I would bring you up to speed on what has been done.

The first part of our Synod back in March was the election of our Co-adjutor, Bishop Lipka. The second part was in October, and the main thrust of this Synod was amendments to the Constitution and Canons. These amendments were passed in order to put

in place, in anticipation of his ascent to Bishop Ordinary this January 1st, Bishop Lipka's vision for the diocese. His goal is to have a more responsive Diocese, one centered on service and one responsive to the needs of the individual parishes. This is an especially difficult goal given the non-geographic nature of our Diocese.

The first thing that we need to note is that our Diocese has about 35 parishes spread over the entire continental United States. This makes it impossible for our Bishops to visit each church in the Diocese each year, let alone respond quickly to the needs of all the churches. Bishop Ilgenfritz heroically tried to meet the needs of all these parishes, but when his illness sidelined him, it became quite difficult for the remaining bishops to cover all of these churches.

Our Core Value is:

"The Convocation of the West is Missionary, bringing people to Christ and meaningfully engaging in the transformation of the culture around us."



The Vision of the Convocation is:

*"To STRENGTHEN existing churches;
To PLANT new churches; and
To RAISE UP missional leaders."*

Many of our churches and clergy felt isolated, even before Covid, but they feel more so now that Covid has limited almost all visitations. Bishop Lipka was quite concerned about this and wanted a system that was fair and equitable and quick to respond to the needs of His flock. Bishop Lipka's vision was to create three, roughly geographic, convocations. And that is what was achieved with one of the amendments to the Constitution and Canons of MDAS.

The Missionary Diocese of All Saints will now be organized into three geographic Convocations: the Convocation of the East headed by its Vicar General, Fr. Alan Andraea; the Convocation of the Central United States headed by its Vicar General, Fr. Terry Moore; and the Convocation of the West headed by me. All three Vicars General are administrative heads and representatives of the Bishop. The Vicars General are to conduct the business that needs to be done so that each area is much more responsive to the needs, both temporal and spiritual, of their parishes and their people. They are also to help their particular Convocation become more cohesive with each other and with the wider diocese. This will free up the Bishop Ordinary to care for Christ's flock and to visit those churches as needed or desired. And it is hoped and prayed that this new design will make our task of spreading the Gospel of God's love more effective and efficient.

As a further result of this new design, a second amendment changes the way we will conduct our Synods. Instead of yearly national Synods, we will be working off of a three-year cycle. The first two years will be at the local level, meaning each Convocation will conduct their own Synod with the Bishop

Ordinary in attendance. This means that the Vicars General will have to make sure that their Synods do not conflict with one another. Then on the third year, the whole Diocese will meet at one location. This particular Synod will be hosted by one of the three Convocations, and it will rotate so that, over nine years, all three Convocations will have an opportunity to host the national Synod.

As you can see, the changes to our Constitution and Canons have been done because of the Diocesan understanding of the needs and financial constraints of each parish. It is also done in the hope that we will be able to more quickly respond to these needs by having a local Vicar General. Thirdly, it is done so that each of the convocations will become a more cohesive body, working together and with the other convocations to spread the Word of God. Finally, these amendments were made in the hope that each Vicar General will grow to understand the unique blessings and challenges for each geographic area.

Ultimately the goal for these changes will be to serve the Lord by serving our people, our parishes, and our Bishop. We hope to be more effective in spreading the Word of God and bringing people to Christ. And we pray that, with the Holy Spirit guiding us and inspiring us, we will be able to show to the world the saving grace of God's love.

God bless,

The Very Rev. Canon Michael Penfield
Vicar General for the Convocation of the West

In Conclusion, We Begin

By Bishop Winfield Mott

"In conclusion..." Towards the end of a long, dry speech or sermon, these words can lift the spirits of an audience. But otherwise conclusions are often not happy moments. The end of an earthly life, the breakup of a couple, the farewell at a visit of distant family or friends whom you will not see again for a long time, the death of a pet, the resignation of a beloved pastor, the departure of an esteemed co-worker are all conclusions causing many tears to flow.

Many try to find comfort in a denial of the reality. "It's only for a little while." "Time will heal you." But it isn't for a little while. Conclusions are, by definition, final. And time may dull the pain some, but the stark fact is, whatever the future brings, things have changed forever. The shallow among us will see it as a consumer matter. Get a new pet, find a new partner, shop for another church, make new friends in your new location, they tell us. All of these may indeed eventually happen. But when you love, you offer yourself to those whom you love, and when

that concludes, it cannot be replaced like getting a new car can replace the old one that broke down. The new relationships may be positive and good. But they do not replace the ones from before.

The final weeks of our church year (which ends on November 30) focus on conclusions. The Sunday Scriptures tell of end times, and warn of the need to take seriously your relationship with God. They speak of mortality, of the importance of a distinct response to the loving invitation of the Father to enter the Kingdom. We are told there will be a conclusion, for each of us and all of us. There will be the last days, as the Book of Revelation in particular describes in some detail.

It is not a pretty picture. The earth writhes in the throes of immense fires, horrible wars, hunger, thirst, plague and destruction, like a combination of the worst predictions about climate change combined with nuclear holocaust. The denial

mechanism being what it is, some see themselves raptured to fly the friendly skies above all this. Scripture does not offer much support for this notion. It is entirely more probable that you and I will come to our earthly conclusion individually, and certainly firmly on earth. Little previews of the end times happen from time to time; particularly vicious and widespread wars, enormous fires covering hundreds of square miles, troublesome pandemics, powerful hurricanes, terrible famines. Many are quick to believe the end times have arrived. But Jesus cautions us that these events come and go, simply miniature prototypes. No one knows the timetable on this, he comments. We are foolish to waste our time on such speculations.

Nevertheless, the time will come, and it will be a time of suffering and judgement. Since it is more likely our own conclusion will precede this, it is valid to prepare for that eventuality even more than for Armageddon.

Advent, the expectation of a new beginning, a new birth, a new life, begins immediately in the church year upon the conclusion of the previous year. The church year is a cycle of seasons, just as the natural cycle of spring, summer, winter and fall proceed. Many of the world's religions follow that natural cycle and see in it a perpetual repetition of the natural dormition in the fall and rebirth in the spring as a statement of how all life works.

Christianity dissents from that theory. It is firmly founded instead in the events of history, centered in the one momentous event of the Crucifixion and Resurrection, done once in time to suffice for all history. We may sing the Grundtvig hymn, "The Happy Christmas Comes Once More." The celebration rolls around annually. But there was only one Incarnation, the actual Christmas, the day of the Nativity in Bethlehem. Thus, our celebrations and observances are cyclical, but our Faith depends on the historical reality of the Savior who "was crucified also for us under Pontius Pilate," fixed in the one time when Pontius Pilate was governing in Palestine.

In those moments, Jesus died on the Cross. Not until three days later, did his life begin again. There are many who think Christianity believes in immortality, that as physical death occurs, the soul springs from the body to continue living, discarding the physical cage of its existence. Yet that is not

what our Creeds say, nor is that the New Testament record of what happened. Jesus died. There is conclusion. "It is finished," he said.

Thus, the Christian process is one of death and resurrection. Understand that this is what happens in baptism. As Jesus died and rose again, so we drown our old life in the baptismal waters and are born again to new life in him. The old life must die for the new life to begin. In physical death, our old body will eventually be resurrected, not discarded. That there will be a radical transformation in the process is quite evident. Yet we nonetheless arrive to join the great host arrayed in white, having died and risen just as our Lord has done, and entirely due to his grace.

This marks the way we look at life. Every time we repent, confess our sin and receive the Lord's absolution, we have undergone the same process of dying to sin and beginning again, with "time for amendment of life." All is forgiven, a fresh start is made. Each time is a step closer to complete theosis when we shall finally no longer need to die to our old self, and the new self can live in fulfillment and seamless unity with Christ.

We mark the conclusion every November. It is a perfect time to reflect, review what needs to be discarded among my bad habits, failures and shortcomings. This is a time to look back and analyze. By happy coincidence, America has designated a day of Thanksgiving to be part of this. While the

founders of the holiday were mostly unaware of the Church Year, they gave us a festival that is an important component of conclusion. Looking back honestly means regrets and repentance. But in God's grace, it also is a time to give thanks for his loving care and for all the love, forgiveness and friendship we have received from others. It is also specifically a time to give thanks for the earth which provides us the means of life and nourishment, as well as great beauty to enjoy.

And then, we begin. Death cannot hold us when we live in Christ. In Advent, we remember the history of the long years of anticipation until the historical moment was ripe. We can relate, as we anticipate the fulness of Christ coming into our lives as we are absorbed into his, his Eucharistic incarnation made anew in us every Sunday, a new day of resurrection, as we await the day to come, the Eighth Day, the Day of the Lord.



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Featured Church of the Month

By Vicar-General Fr. Michael Penfield



At our last Clergy meeting, the clergy suggested two things. First, that each month, we should have an article featuring each of our Parishes, and second, during that month we should pray for that church and any specific need for which they may ask us to pray. It may be for someone or something, but it is something for which the parish wants the Body of Christ to pray. We will also take this opportunity to include, besides the different parishes, those missions with which some of our clergy are involved. This may be a mission of the church or one of our non-parochial priests.

Our goal here is three-fold. The first is to honor Christ's great prayer that we should all be one [John 17:21-23]. The needs and the troubles that affect each of us should be the concern of all of us as the Body of Christ. And the greatest gift (and sometimes the only gift) we can give is our prayers. Each parish and each non-parochial clergyman should feel that they are part of the greater Church, not isolated, and that we care. This gives us an opportunity to act as brothers and sisters, not separate cells.

The second goal is for each of us to get to know each other. We have several new parishes and many non-parochial clergyman that have been made part of the Western Convocation through the new design of the Diocese (see my other article in today's newsletter), and we would like to get to know them and they us. And, this way, we can grow closer and even help one another. Although the distance may be

great, we need to become close.

The third goal is to showcase the great missions that are taking place both in and out of our parishes. We have featured articles on some missions, such as "Warriors on the Way" and their mission to help our veterans suffering from PTSD through the Holy Pilgrimage known as the Camino de Santiago. But there are other missions that very quietly and subtly fulfill our commandment as Christians to serve one another. And, by knowing what is being done, we may be able to participate. We may also be inspired to do what the Lord is calling us to do.

Each month I will announce the next month's featured church and/or mission and its respective clergy. The special intentions, however, will only be sent to the clergy for their parish's intercessory prayers. But for the whole month, we will pray for that church and/or mission and for what they ask prayers.

We are very excited about this new idea, and we shall start in December, praying for Trinity Anglican Church in Mount Vernon, Washington, for their rector, Canon Allan Graves and for their deacons, Deacon Carl Loeb and his wife, Deacon Michael Odell and his wife, and Deacon Michael Lama and his wife.

God bless.