

**Bishop L. E. Brooks' Sermon**  
**Provincial Youth Gathering, Grenada**  
**July 17, 2016**

***Prayer: Spirit of the Living Christ, come upon us in the glory of your risen power; Spirit of the Living Christ, come upon us in all the humility of your wondrous love; Spirit of the Living Christ, come upon us that new life may course within our veins, new love bind us together in one family, a new vision of the kingdom of God spur us on to serve you with fearless passion. Amen.***

My Brothers and Sisters in Christ, I bid you welcome to this Opening Service for PYG III. We thank God for bringing us safely to this lovely island and to this beautiful place of worship. We are pleased to have the Bishops ..., the clergy (local and overseas), the faithful from this and other parishes on Grenada, facilitators, and our brothers and sisters from other parts of the Anglican Communion.

We warmly welcome Her Excellency Dame Cecile Le Grenade – Governor General; Hon. Anthony Boatswain – Minister of Education; Sen. The Hon Pamela Morris – Parliamentary Secretary in the Ministry of Youth, Sports and Religious Affairs; the US Charge affairs and family; and Rev. Canon John Kafwanka – Director of Mission for the Anglican Communion.

Tomorrow God's willing, we will be joined by our Archbishop, John Holder, who will present the keynote address.

Sincere thanks to Bishop Friday for agreeing to the hosting of PYG III in this diocese, The House of Bishops and Provincial Standing Committee for their support, the Provincial Commission on Youth, the Design Committee and the local organising committee for all the work they have done in preparing for this Gathering. Given all the constraints, financial and otherwise, it has not been easy. Nevertheless, we are grateful to God for he is a way maker and he will continue to bless our efforts.

The theme of this opening service of PYG III is: EMPOWERED BY THE SPIRIT.

We hear and read a great deal about power today. The world is full of power. Let us list some of the different kinds of power at our disposal – military, political, economic, industrial, electrical – the world is full of power! How about spiritual power? Do we have spiritual power? It is available but are we plugged into it? The power of the Holy Ghost is unlike any other power. It is

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not a power that is invented, sculpted, or demolished by human hands. It is not a power that can be manipulated for political or social purposes. It is not a power that can be manufactured, canned, bottled and then distributed.

At Pentecost we celebrate the descent of the Holy Spirit upon the early followers of Jesus. People who were once considered to be wimps became warriors. People who were once fearful were given power to go and the good news to all nations.

We recall that at Jesus' baptism, as he came up from the water, the Holy Spirit, in the form of a dove, descended upon him and a voice from heaven was heard, "This is my Son, the Beloved, with whom I am well pleased" (Matthew 3: 17; Mk 1: 11). Jesus was assured of God's love at his baptism, so it was for us at our baptism – we are loved with an everlasting love, a love that is constant. There isn't anything we can do to make God love us more or less than he loves us now.

At baptism, God accepted us as his own. All we can do is to 'accept acceptance' (Paul Tillich). Like as at Jesus' baptism, we, too, were empowered by the living presence of God. We, too, were commissioned for ministry. Let me see a show of hands. All those who are ministers, show your hands. We are all called to ministry. Whatever we do for the building up of the body of Christ – God's Kingdom - is ministry. True, some of us are called or set apart for specific ministry – Bishops, Priests, Deacons. God has "gifted" us. The point St. Paul is making in the Epistle (1Corinthians 12: 4-14) is this. He wants us to understand that the Spirit's activity in the church is manifested through the believers as gifts. These gifts ("Charismata") are the result of God's grace ("Charis"). The gifts of the Spirit are the active, experienced instances of God's grace at work in the church. All believers are given such gifts of the Spirit. (Notice the word "everyone" and "each").

To be gifted by the Spirit is not something that happens to some people and not to others. St. Paul never gives us the impression that he expects some people in the church to be the ones ministering, and that there are others who are simply ministered to because they haven't been given any of the Spirit's

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gifts. Paul's central point about the gifts is made in verse 7 where he notes that these gifts are given for the good of the whole church. This allows room for us to rightly identify as gifts of the Spirit those talents that are informed by, summoned by, energised and activated by the Spirit for the good of the church. We are not talking about being "gifted" individuals who have the talents required to get ahead and earn a good salary or the admiration of others. Paul wants the Corinthians (and us) to adopt a new way of looking at spirituality by seeing these abilities as a means through which God is at work with grace and mercy for the whole community. It is that dynamic which transforms talents into gifts of the Spirit. When, by God's grace and power, talents are reoriented away from us and our interests and when they become vehicles for God's love, they are truly the Spirit's gifts to the church.

As members of the body of Christ, we are not simply individuals who are empowered and gifted by the Holy Spirit. We are interconnected parts of a single body and it is to this image that Paul turns in the Epistle. He says, "For Christ is like a single body with its many limbs and organs, which, many as they are, together make up one body for indeed we were all brought into one body by baptism, in the one spirit ... and that one Holy Spirit was poured out for all of us to drink." Other persons in Paul's culture used the image of the body to strengthen the hierarchy of society. Philosophers and politicians said that human society was like a body, that had to have a head to tell everybody else what to do. Of course, the elite rich got to be the head (or stomach) and the poor needed to keep working as the hands and feet.

Paul overturns this common use of the body image. He questions any assumption that some members of the body are more important than the others. In the Body of Christ, behaviour will not be determined by concern for honour and status, but by what builds up the whole body - by interdependence, by love. The work of the Spirit, correctly understood, will result in a unified body of Christ, not in competition or division, since we all receive life and growth from the same flowing baptismal grace.

PYG 2016 is a tangible expression and reminder of the fact that even though we have come from across the region and other parts of the Anglican

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Communion, we are all part of the body of Christ – people who have been called to be extensions of the incarnation, people who have been commissioned to carry on the mission of Christ. As Anglicans, we are invited and encouraged to live the Five Marks of Mission; namely,

1. To proclaim the Good News of the Kingdom of God
2. To teach, baptize and nurture new believers
3. To respond to human need by loving service
4. To seek to transform unjust structures of society, to challenge violence of every kind and to pursue peace and reconciliation
5. To strive to safeguard the integrity of creation and to sustain and renew the life of the earth.

I am pleased that a considerable amount of time has been allotted during the Gathering to flesh out these Marks of Mission. I hope that delegates will commit to sharing the information with others in their home dioceses and elsewhere. (*Refer to card from the Christian Education Department, NECA*). We are called to live the Faith into which we have been baptised, to live out our Baptismal Covenant. Faith is not something just to be possessed - it is to be shared.

Something powerful happened at our baptism. The spirit of God was bestowed upon us and is very present and at work in the church and the world.

- Where do we find the power to 'hang in there' in this world?
- Where do we find the power to keep going when the going gets tough?
- Where do we find the power to continue to believe in love in a world filled with hate?
- Where do we find the power to work for peace in a world that is addicted to violence?
- Where do we find the power to continue to believe that ultimately God's Kingdom will come and God's will as revealed in Jesus, will be done in all creation?
- Where do we find power to be disciples of Jesus in the world?

The answer: Through the power of God's Holy Spirit.

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The message of Jesus' baptism and yours and mine as well, is that we have power. It is the generous gift of a great and loving God. Let us stay connected.

The Holy Spirit's power is a three-pronged power: Father, Son and Holy Spirit. Christians need the three-pronged source. Have you ever noticed the difference between the three-pronged and the two-pronged power cords? With the slightest jerk, the two-pronged cord will disconnect from the socket. With three prongs, the cord is more firmly secured in the power socket. How do we stay connected to the source? – through prayer, daily study of God's word, worship, and reception of the sacraments. Again, much emphasis will be placed on these during this Gathering. We cannot depend on our bodily heat in living the faith. We need a constant source of power, God's Holy Spirit. We do well to use this prayer:

“O God because without you we are not able to please you, mercifully grant that your Holy Spirit may in all things direct and rule our hearts: Through Jesus Christ our Lord who lives and reigns with you and the Holy Spirit, one God, now and forever. Amen” (BCP Proper 19).

I love this dismissal at the end of worship: “Go forth in peace to love and serve the Lord rejoicing in the power of the Holy Spirit.” That is exactly what we ought to be doing as we go forth into the world – to live and rejoice in the Holy Spirit. If we open ourselves to the power of the Holy Spirit, that Spirit will lead us in places we never thought we would go and empower us to do marvellous things in God's name. This is serious business. Others would then be drawn closer to God through us. (*song: Joy in the Holy Ghost*). May God help us, **Amen.**