

Sermon Closing celebration of the Holy Eucharist Provincial Youth Gathering
111 2016

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What are we taking home

In this sermon I'll seek to share with you some of the ideas, programmes and activities which were presented, discussed and developed during PYG 111 2016. Most of it contains information from various presentations. Our time here was grounded in worship: morning and evening prayer, the celebration of the Holy Eucharist, Bible Study, and reflection.

It is my hope that your time here has brought you to the beginning of a process of transformation in your lives which in the long term will enable you to be faithful disciples and God's agents of transformation in your home parish, village, community and nation.

By virtue of our baptism we are all ministers. Therefore we are all called to participate in Mission and ministry. We were reminded that at our baptism we were made Christians ministers, we received the Holy Spirit and at confirmation we were strengthened by the Holy Spirit to empower us to participate in ministry. We must remember that we cannot carry out ministry through our own strength but through the power of the Holy Spirit. And that there is a joy which the Holy Spirit creates in us and we must not allow anyone or anything to take this away from us.

We were invited to cross over from hate, spite and revenge, to a condition of love. We are to love God with all our heart, all our mind, all our soul and all our strength and to love our neighbor as we love ourselves. And to love one another as Christ has loved us.

This ideal is related to all areas of life. As Anglicans we believe that God wants us to relate our Christian beliefs to every area of our life, to our personal issues, to the issues of our communities, to the issues of the world.

We follow the example of Jesus who in his ministry treated everyone as a child of God. He taught that God cared for the birds and the grass, the environment. All were his creation and were embraced with his love.

Anglicans take this understanding of God's relationship with us very seriously. We are a worldly people. In other words, we treat the whole world as special to God and every human being as a Child of God.

We believe that as God loves his entire world in spite of all its faults. He is connected to all the pieces.

This important understanding of how we relate our faith to the world, to the issues of life is one that can help you as young people to live active and effective Christian lives.

The Five Marks are:

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

To Proclaim the Good News of the Kingdom

If we are going to be good and effective proclaimers of the Good News, we must make sure that there is a large space for forgiveness in our relationships. This will surely be a very good way we can share the Gospel message of Good News of the one who placed forgiveness at the centre of his ministry.

Some of the ways in which we can carry out this mark of mission are:

1. To have community fellowship days.
2. Out reach services
3. The use of the media and available technology
4. Have teaching programmes
5. Use our gifts and talents
6. Engage others to find out their needs
7. Seek to be a more welcoming Church and people

- **To teach, baptize and nurture new believers**

We can help to teach and nurture new believers. We can teach not necessarily in a formal structured way, like in Sunday School, a Confirmation class or Bible a Study, but in informal ways.

We can focus our attention on those who are not involved in any ministry in the Church and those who have no religious affiliation.

Seek to make what we teach at Confirmation classes and Sunday school more effective.

Make use of opportunities given to us to learn more of the Christian faith and to share our own understanding and beliefs with others.

We need to develop ways and means of attracting those between the ages of 26-40 by creating an atmosphere which gives them a sense of belonging and feeling that they are welcomed.

To respond to human need by loving service

We were challenged in terms of our relationships to treat each person as if we truly believe that they like us is a child of God.

Remember the call of the mark of mission to respond to human need by loving service. Sometimes the human need is having someone to hear our story in

confidence. Sometimes the loving service may simply be keeping a confidence of a friend. That Friend may have a spiritual need/concern which they would like to share with you and it is of utmost importance that you keep it in confidence for to do otherwise, may be very devastating to that friend.

Keeping Confidence is fast becoming an endangered practice. You were challenged to stem the tide and help it to survive. As young people you have a lot of things in common. You will discuss as share a lot of things. But learn to respect each other's privacy. Learn to keep confidence.

To seek to transform unjust structures of society, to challenge violence of every kind and to pursue peace and reconciliation

We can do something to the unjust structures of society by showing that it is possible to use our resources and power to help and support others, especially the weak and vulnerable. Some of the areas looked at are: Abortion, sexual orientation, protection from child abuse, the death penalty, Human Trafficking and sex trade, and racial discrimination.

As young Christians who are committed to the way of peace and worship the Prince of Peace, you need to make a contribution to efforts to rescue other young persons from these and from the way of violence.

First of all you need to be convinced that violence as we are experiencing it among our youth cannot produce the type of future that our youth deserve. As Christian youth you must see it as totally against the way of Jesus, the Prince of peace.

Secondly, engage with those young persons who seem prone to the use of violence and crime. Use Facebook etc to share messages of peace. Push peace and denounce violence.

Thirdly use your youth group as a forum where the alternatives to violence programmes like the Conflict Resolution approach to conflict are discussed and put to work.

To strive to safeguard the integrity of creation and sustain and renew the life of the earth

You were invited to become very conscious of your responsibility for the environment, God's creation, and in each of your groups in your parishes, to pay some attention to this.

Set out a plan on how you can make your group, your family and friends and your congregation far more environmentally conscious and responsible. Here you can promote the effects of deforestation, improper garbage disposal, carbon emissions and how these contribute to the destruction of the eco-system.

In addition you can develop exercise groups and encourage people to have more physical activity, which in turn promotes a healthier lifestyle.

Intentional Discipleship

The early disciples of Jesus saw their role as that of journeying with others, mentoring, growing and maturing others into the discipleship of Jesus; the first disciples themselves had been mentored by Jesus.

The purpose of our discipleship is to bring honour to God, to make Jesus and His love be experienced by many – it's not making celebrities of ourselves, etc. Our discipleship is a life long journey - of learning and of being sent out to be Christ's Ambassadors, to be the light and salt of the world, to be signs and embodiment of love and hope for the world, both corporately as a community of believers and as individuals in our daily living and experience – always seeking the empowerment of the Holy Spirit

There are some important ingredients that are both helpful and necessary in our Christian journey as disciples of Jesus, and are captured nicely in a resolution (Resolution 37) of Bishops at The 1948 Lambeth Conference in ('The Church and the Modern World – The Church Militant'):

The Conference urges all Church people to look upon their membership of Christ in Church as the central fact in their lives. They should regard themselves as

individually sharing responsibility for the corporate life and witness of the Church in places where they live. They should discharge this responsibility and give a distinctive witness:

a) by the regularity of their attendance at public worship and especially at the Holy Communion;

b) by the practice of private prayer, Bible reading, and self-discipline;

c) by bringing the teaching and example of Christ into their everyday lives; (live by example in everyday life experience) 4

d) by the boldness of their spoken witness to their faith in Christ;

e) by personal service to Church and community;

f) by the offering of money, according to their means, for the support of the work of the Church, at home and overseas (Stewardship of our resources – love your Lord God with all your heart, your mind, your soul.

Thus there will be in every locality a living centre of Christian faith, witness, and fellowship.

In order to be authentic in discipleship, in our living out our faith in every aspect of life, and in our equipping, we need to hear, learn from and listen to those outside the Christian family, and most urgently we need to listen to the voices of young people, to hear and learn from their experience of the world, the challenges and opportunities they see in being disciples of Jesus in 21st Century.

The Family in Mission

In the process of growth and development of people, especially children, grappling successfully with questions of meaning and significance contributes to developing into a healthy, balanced person and is a fundamentally important component of life; this significantly affects the future well-being of society. How people think about meaning and significance radically influences their values and behaviour. It affects the sort of citizen that they are and will become. It should, therefore, be of interest to everyone concerned with the sort of environment we

are creating, attitudes we are nurturing and messages we are communicating as we go about our daily routines and affairs. (Adapted from an article entitled Doing God in Education by DR. Trevor Cooling, Professor of Canterbury, Christ Church University, England)

The opportunity for building such a communion or fellowship is created by dialogue and learning opportunities between parents and children, in which each gives and receives. By means of love, respect and obedience towards their parents, children participate in the development of a truly human and Christian family. They will be aided in this if parents exercise their authority with respect, love and care, that is, they see their role as parents as part of their discipleship in Christ which enables them to seek the human and Christian well-being of their children, and as a service aimed at helping them acquire a truly responsible freedom. This means that parents are to be open to listening to their children and acknowledge that the learning process is mutual.

Communion and fellowship are enhanced when families instill the value of sacrifice, for communion/fellowship can only be preserved and perfected through a great spirit of sacrifice. It requires a ready and generous openness of each and all to understanding, to forbearance, to pardon, to reconciliation. There is no family that does not know how selfishness, discord, tension and conflict attack and at times seriously wound its own stability: this from time to time results in varied forms of division in family life. But, at the same time, every family is called to have the joyous and renewing experience of "reconciliation," that is, communion/fellowship reestablished, unity restored. Each family is called to acknowledge the need to participate in the sacrament of Reconciliation and in the Holy Eucharist, the Body and Blood of Christ, which offers to the Christian family the grace and the responsibility of overcoming every division and of moving towards the fullness of communion willed by God.

Bishop David Rosedale, Chair of IAFN. September 2014 issue states that there are perhaps three biblical features which give structure to what makes 'family' distinctive. (This an adaptation)

1. 'Dignity'.

Dignity is one of God's gifts to human beings in creation – it gives us the right to be valued solely because we matter to God. Human dignity is a gift of God's grace. Which is to be championed within the biological family and beyond. All the love and care which characterize family life are celebrations of the value which we give to one another as members of the family.

2. 'Belonging'.

The notion of belonging has its roots in the Hebrew Scriptures. The people of Israel belong to God and are held within his loving focus. Belonging is also central to God's redemptive activity in Jesus. He calls us to belong to him and, in him, to each other. Belonging to family and community is a feature of being human, which Jesus celebrates in so many of his healing miracles as he enables those healed to be restored to the communal family from which their illness had separated them. The importance of not being lost from our family is celebrated in the parable of the Prodigal Son and is found in the astonishment of Jairus's family when their little girl is restored to them.

Living together is no easy thing and through neglect, deliberate act or abuse, the interconnectivity which is so essential to being a family is damaged or destroyed. The character of forgiveness – expressed by our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ – is essential to restore the relationships which enable us to belong and which secures our dignity.

3. Forgiveness

Forgiveness enables the future, because within a family, relationships can be recovered, restored and renewed. Yet for a family to flourish, such forgiveness has to be accompanied by a repentance which moves a family and its relationships in a new direction, away from those things which have hurt, damaged or abused. At its best, the family is a redemptive community, where we experience the character of God's forgiveness through the forgiving love of those of whom we are part.

It is generally agreed that most of the challenges we associate with the

youth like drugs, crime, violence, HIV/AIDS, suicide, prostitution, incest, sexual harassment, ill-discipline, gangs can be attributed to a lack of healthy family life and positive male role models in our society.

The Mosaic Law instructed parents in the context of the family on how to nurture their children. (Deuteronomy 6:6-9). In the home parents and children have opportunities and space, to enhance relationships, fellowship, intimacy and engagement. Sitting at a common table and having meals together is an excellent environment for dialogue, imparting values and mutual learning.

I conclude with this song.

Called To Mission – Go Forth in Faith!

Refrain

Called to Mission – Go forth in Faith!

Called to Mission –Go forth in Faith!

Called to Mission- Go forth in Faith!

Anglicans!-Go forth in Faith!

Go make disciples of all people,
Baptising them in the name of God;
The Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit,
Teaching them to obey all I have commanded you.

Refrain

Take up your cross and follow Christ;
Who suffered and died to save the world;
For He is the way, the truth, and the life;
The path that leads to righteousness, hope and peace.

Refrain

Go share with your families, brothers and sisters;

Uncles, Aunties, Friends and Neighbours;
Associates, co-workers, boss and leaders;
The reconciling, transforming grace of Jesus Christ.

Refrain

Let us go bring good news to the poor;
Release to the captives, and sight to the blind;
Let the oppressed know that they are set free;
Through the redemptive love of our Saviour Jesus Christ.
Refrain

Remember we are stewards of creation,
So may we take good care of the earth
Sustaining it for future generations
That they may enjoy a goodly heritage

Refrain

This is a time to celebrate and share,
The wonderful gifts which we possess;
For mission and ministry,
Throughout the Caribbean Community.

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