

**Address to the 108th Convention
of the Diocese of Northern Indiana
October 28, 2007
The Feast of St. Simon and St. Jude
St. Andrew's Episcopal Church
Valparaiso, Indiana**

Grace to you and peace from God our Father and from the Lord Jesus Christ

By accident of calendar – or by divine providence, depending upon your point of view – today we celebrate the Feast of St. Simon and St. Jude, two of Jesus' more obscure disciples: obscure, but particularly appropriate this morning. We know only bits and pieces about either of them. Jude's name appears just three times in the New Testament, once with the additional phrase, "not Iscariot" (John 14:22), to distinguish him from his namesake who betrayed Jesus. It wasn't until the twelfth century that St. Jude received the title of "Patron of Hopeless Causes," and I suspect that many of you have asked for his prayers – especially if you're chairing the parish stewardship committee, or rooting for the Chicago Cubs, or cheering for the underdog on "American Idol".

But I want to focus on the other member of the Simon and Jude duo. The twelve disciples include two Simons – the more famous Simon Peter, and the less famous Simon the Cananaean. Nobody knows much about this second Simon except this: "Cananaean" is an Aramaic word that Luke translates as "the Zealot" (Luke 6:15). Who were the Zealots? In Jesus' day, the Holy Land was occupied territory. The army of the empire of Rome ruled the land, and Jews felt themselves oppressed by these alien invaders. The

Zealots were committed to the violent overthrow of the Roman oppressors, and they were willing to resort to anything (including assassination) to accomplish their purpose.

Remember something else. Another disciple of Jesus was Matthew, who – before he began following Jesus – worked for the Roman government as a tax collector. Jews hated tax collectors. It wasn't simply the normal resentment that people have for IRS agents. No, they considered tax collectors to be traitors. Tax collectors took money from their own people, the Jews, and gave it to the oppressors, the Romans.

So within the same apostolic band you've got Simon the Zealot, the former terrorist, and Matthew the tax collector, the traitor, a person the Zealots would normally target for assassination. Humanly speaking, this shouldn't work. Simon and Matthew were sworn enemies – and Jesus brought them together in the same apostolic college. In this morning's New Testament lesson, St. Paul gives us the principle. He's talking specifically about the relationship between Jews and Gentiles within the church; but what he says applies to St. Simon and St. Matthew, and it applies to the Episcopal Church today. “[Jesus] is our peace; in his flesh he has made both groups into one and has broken down the dividing wall, that is, the hostility between us. . . . He came and proclaimed peace to you who were far off and peace to those who were near; for through him both of us have access in one Spirit to the Father” (Ephesians 2:14,17-18).

At the heart of the Gospel of Jesus Christ is the ministry of reconciliation. Through his life, death, and resurrection, Jesus has reconciled us to the Father; and now he calls us to be ministers of reconciliation with one another (2 Corinthians 5:18-19). If Jesus can deal with Simon and Matthew, he can deal with the Episcopal Church. If Jesus can put the terrorist and the traitor in the same band of disciples, he can handle you and me and 2.3 million Episcopalians and 80 million Anglican Christians around the world. Jesus invites us to come before the throne of grace with miraculous expectations. Hold this principle in mind as we look at our church – first around the world and in our nation, and then in the Diocese of Northern Indiana, and finally in the 37 mission outposts that together make up the diocese.

National and International Concerns

Many of you have already read my reflections on last summer's General Convention, and many others attended the four regional post-General Convention meetings that we offered around the diocese. So I won't go into great detail here. It will be sufficient to say that General Convention, while dealing with hundreds of resolutions (not to mention the election of a new Presiding Bishop), devoted most of its energy to the Episcopal Church's response to the Windsor Report. Given the incredible diversity among deputies and bishops, Convention went as far as it could in crafting that response. We committed ourselves to interdependent life within the Anglican Communion and to a

Communion-wide “listening process”; we expressed regret for “straining the bonds of affection” by our actions at the 2003 General Convention; we agreed to participate in the development of an Anglican Covenant; and we urged bishops and standing committees not to consent to the consecration of bishops “whose manner of life presents a challenge to the wider church and will lead to further strains on communion” (Resolution B033). Remember in all of this that the Windsor Report does not deal directly with the difficult theological and pastoral questions connected with human sexuality. Rather, the report is about how we, as a family of churches, can experience the deepest level of communion possible, given our disagreements.

Did General Convention’s actions represent a complete and wholehearted response to the Windsor Report and its requests? The Archbishop of Canterbury has appointed a special working group to look carefully at General Convention’s actions. I believe that General Convention, while working with painful diligence for almost two weeks, did not completely respond to the wider Communion as it grappled with the Windsor Report; but in the end it will be the Archbishop and the primates of the Anglican Communion who will make the determination.

Meanwhile, my own response to these unfolding events is governed by two complementary commitments.

First, I am committed without reservation to the Episcopal Church. I have known no other church since my Christian conversion in 1966, and I expect to end my days as a loyal son of this small portion of the body of Christ. The bond which Jesus creates in baptism – the bond between the Lord and his church, and the bond between you and me – is indissoluble. Second, I am equally committed to the Anglican Communion and to the Episcopal Church’s membership in that worldwide fellowship of churches, in communion with the See of Canterbury. The Episcopal Church is not a “stand alone” denomination; we are part of a family that exists on every continent, and our lives would be impoverished without brothers and sisters in Africa, Asia, Europe, Australia, South America, and North America. We must do everything we can to “maintain the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace” (Ephesians 4:3).

The Windsor Report, I believe, provides us with the best road map to live out these twin commitments, and to do so with integrity. In the summer of 2005, the Standing Committee of the Diocese of Northern Indiana officially endorsed the Windsor Report and agreed to live by its teachings. Last month I joined a group of 21 diocesan bishops in affirming and embracing the Report. But I am convinced that it is essential, for the sake of this diocese’s relationship with the Episcopal Church and the Anglican Communion, that the highest decision-making body in diocese endorse the Report and commit itself to Windsor’s vision of interdependent life – and the highest decision-making body is Diocesan Convention. I wrote a resolution expressing these concerns, and both the Standing Committee and Diocesan Council have joined me in offering it to

you. My deepest hope is that you will pass this resolution, and will do so without amendment.

Remember that the Windsor Report is not a teaching on human sexuality; it's about the church and the nature of our communion with one another. The whole Christian church is struggling over the difficult issues of sexuality, and in particular about how to welcome and provide pastoral support for gay and lesbian Christians. It is right that we do so. What has happened in recent years, however, is that our conversation about human sexuality has been overshadowed by legislative wrangling. The run-up to every General Convention is filled with anxiety as we anticipate resolutions on same-sex unions and other matters connected with sexuality. The Windsor Process provides us with a gift. It invites us to pause, to stop legislating about human sexuality; it asks us instead to create a safe pastoral space where we can have the conversations that we so desperately need. I am grateful for the gay and lesbian members of this diocese, and for their contribution to our life together; and I pray that in embracing the Windsor Report, we will be freed in new ways to enter significant conversation with them and with one another. I pray as well that endorsing Windsor will allow us to focus our energies back on mission. A church-absorbing fight about human sexuality has proved a massive distraction from our primary task: to bring the Gospel of Jesus Christ to a needy world.

The Diocese of Northern Indiana

Our diocese is filled with signs of life. Once again our diocesan summer camp, under the leadership of Tim and Kim Gray, provided a week of refreshment and renewal for 180 campers and staff. It happened that this year camp coincided with General Convention; and so, unlike previous years, I missed most of the festivities. Convention adjourned on a Wednesday, I drove back to the diocese on Thursday, and by Friday morning I made it to Camp Mack. I can't begin to articulate how encouraging it was, after nearly two weeks of immersion in the legislative process, to experience what we are *really* in business to do: to change lives and to introduce the next generation to the Lord Jesus. Worship at our camp is almost indescribable – not just the volume of the singing, but the sheer joy that campers and staff alike encounter as they draw closer to our Lord. You can be rightly proud of how magnificently our diocesan summer camp is ministering to young people.

Our camping program, as you probably know, does not end with graduation from eighth grade. For the past three years, we have also offered a camp for high school students, under the direction of Jason Beschinski, our diocesan youth missionary. This is a smaller camp, and a very intense one, as young people discover what it means to be a disciple of Jesus Christ in the midst of a changing world. Jason recently took a new position as full-time youth director for the Diocese of West Virginia; but I am delighted to tell you that Ann Carboneau of St. Michael and All Angels, South Bend, has agreed to serve as our new high school camp director. Ann is a seasoned youth worker, with much

experience in our own camping program, and she will continue our tradition of training young disciples. In fact, one of the benefits of our camping program is that it produces future leaders of the church, both lay and ordained.

This brings me to another sign of life in our diocese – vocations. The Lord continues to bless us with a growing number of people who are exploring a call to the diaconate and to the priesthood. At the moment, we have six seminarians at the University of the South, one at Duke Divinity School, one ready to begin seminary, and four in our local training program. In addition, several other persons are actively engaged in discernment, under the supervision of the Commission on Ministry. Fr. Henry Randolph, our vocations director, keeps a watchful eye on all of those in discernment and formation, and Fr. Ted Neidlinger leads the local training program. I am so very grateful to both of them, and to the hard-working Commission on Ministry, for all that they do to for our ordinands. I should add that we are experiencing something of a youth movement in the diocese: a significant number of our ordinands are quite young, and this coming December 21, the Feast of St. Thomas, I will be ordaining Jonathan Melton, Jesse Abell, and Jason Shelby to the transitional diaconate – all of them under the age of 30. We’re restoring a helpful balance between those who come to the ordained ministry later in life and those who will give their whole working lives to the priesthood. This is good news indeed.

I can point to many other exciting signs of life in the diocese. Hispanic ministry continues to flourish and grow at St. Thomas', Plymouth, under the leadership of Fr. John Schramm. Last spring I confirmed and received a number of persons there – *in Spanish!* – and I remain convinced that ministry to Spanish-speaking people, our newest neighbors, must grow and expand. I am also encouraged by the number of parishes that continue to respond in marvelous ways to the devastation wrought by Hurricanes Katrina and Rita. Just a couple of examples: St. Stephen's, Hobart, tithed a bequest that the parish had received, and sent \$23,000 to the dioceses of Louisiana and Mississippi. This past summer, St. Anne's, Warsaw, sent a large mission team to Louisiana to help with rebuilding. Recently the Episcopal Church inaugurated a nation-wide capital fund drive to assist in the Gulf region, to help not only with destroyed churches, but also to provide for clergy salaries and other necessities. It's called the Darkness Into Day campaign. Lisette Bolduc of St. Paul's, Mishawaka, has agreed to chair a diocesan committee that will help parishes to become involved in this campaign and to respond to needs that will go on quite literally for years. When you hear from her, please open your hearts to this important ministry of compassion.

Last year in my convention address I talked about strains on our diocesan budget, the result of shortfalls on the local level, and the possibility that we may need to reduce the size of the diocesan staff. I mentioned specifically that we may not be able to fund both the canon to the ordinary position and the youth missionary ministry. As the finance committee worked on the 2007 figures, seeking to be as realistic as possible in our

estimate of potential assessment reduction requests, we discovered that we do have the funding for the canon position, though we need to reduce the youth missionary budget item to a part-time ministry focused on the high school camp. I am relieved and gratified. Had we eliminated the canon to the ordinary position, it would have significantly hampered the ability of the bishop's office to minister to the complex needs of the diocese, from congregational development to deployment to vision-casting to troubleshooting. You will be hearing later in this address about some of the ways that the canon's ministry will be evolving, especially in light of the work of the Whatever It Takes Task Force. It is enough to say at this point that when Canon David Seger retires next month, we will begin the process of searching for his successor, with the goal of a new canon coming onto the bishop's staff in mid to late spring.

Last year I also reported that our average Sunday attendance had taken a noticeable downturn. From 2002 to 2004, it fell from about 3,000 to about 2,700, a ten percent drop. The 2005 figures are now in, and I'm not sure if I should report them positively or negatively. On the one hand, our average Sunday attendance continues to fall. On the other, the rate of decline in 2005 dropped to about three percent. So the decline (here's the positive spin) has slowed! But the news on the whole is not encouraging. Numbers, after all, represent *people*. The reasons for the attendance drop are varied. In some cases, parishes are located in communities which are themselves in decline. In other cases, parishes still experience some fallout from controversies in the Episcopal Church. In still others, younger members have moved away and the parish is

aging and unable to attract new young people. While the number of congregations requesting assessment reductions has slowed, I still hear stories of financial strain. Budgets are up – slightly – but expenses rise dramatically. Parishes with full-time clergy find it very difficult to deal with issues such as health insurance, which rises noticeably every year. Over and over, parishes make the painful decision that they can no longer support full-time ministry, and fall back into either of a number of part-time patterns. At the moment, only 14 of our 37 congregations are served by a full-time rector.

All of which is to say that we continue to wrestle with major issues in the diocese, effecting both personnel and finances. And that leads me to mission.

37 Missionary Outposts

I was talking with a bishop colleague a few days ago and bemoaning the fact that the Episcopal Church rarely seems to produce megachurches. Oh, there may be an exception here and there, mostly in the Sunbelt states; but on the whole, Episcopal parishes tend to be small and struggling. My friend corrected me. He reminded me that the basic unit of the church is the diocese; and the diocese (when you think about it) is a megachurch – in our case, a megachurch of about 2,700 people on a Sunday – made up of 37 local branches. Or, as I prefer to call them, 37 missionary outposts. In other words,

the purpose of the diocese is to provide a kind of spiritual infrastructure that will unleash our power for mission. The Diocese of Northern Indiana has the potential to impact our region in a major way. Our Anglican heritage – a wonderful blend of Catholic faith and order, Evangelical zeal, and a willingness to engage the culture and its difficult questions – is an unmatched resource. But how are we to release these gifts to a needy world? How can we claim our rightful heritage as successors of Bishop Jackson Kemper, the missionary who worked tirelessly in this region in the 1840s?

For the past two years, the Whatever It Takes Task Force has been pondering these questions. You will remember that for almost seven years we have been seeking to frame everything we do in accordance with four core values:

- A passion for the Gospel of Jesus Christ
- A heart for the lost
- A willingness to do whatever it takes
- A commitment to one another

The third core value, “a willingness to do whatever it takes,” presents us with an incredible challenge. Are we willing to stretch ourselves for the sake of the Gospel? If so, how? That’s what the Whatever It Takes Task Force has been asking. The group has

been a combination of “think tank” and “dream machine,” looking not only at what we *are*, but what by God’s help we *can* be. I’m very grateful for the dedicated disciples who have worked so diligently and thoughtfully on this Task Force. In the end, we found ourselves asking the following question: Is the missionary expansion we’re talking about a diocesan program? Or does it happen primarily on the parish level? What we realized is that the answer is something of a both/and. Mission is carried out locally; but the diocesan structure, and the bishop’s office in particular, can assist and encourage it, providing structure and training so that each missionary outpost can develop its own mission strategy. We also realized that we are talking about congregational development, although we’ve given it an acronym: ACT – which stands for Actions for Congregational Transformation. In many ways, what the Task Force proposes is not new. The concepts I’m about to share have been identified and discussed for decades. What is new is that we are seeking to set up a kind of “encouragement structure” so that we actually *do* them.

We propose that each vestry develop a mission strategy for its own congregation, a strategy that will work in that local setting. The strategy would include four basic elements:

First, CONVERSION. The word frightens many Episcopalians, but it shouldn’t. It’s a basic concept in the Christian vocabulary. Conversion means turning: we turn away from sin, and we turn toward Jesus. It isn’t an optional extra in the Christian life.

We *all* need to turn, every one of us. But remember that conversion does not refer only to a single event, but to a lifelong process. Certainly the Christian life has a beginning, sacramentally marked in baptism, in which we recognize our need for God and we turn to Jesus, who forgives us of sin, gives us the gift of eternal life, and empowers us to follow him. Sometimes this initial turning is dramatic and sudden. Often, perhaps more often, it is slow and almost imperceptible. However it happens, Jesus invites us to turn to him. But conversion is also ongoing. We continually need to be converted, as we discover areas of our lives that need to submit to the Lordship of Jesus Christ. Here's another acronym for you: CRAB. That stands for Confirmations, Receptions, and Adult Baptisms. It is our one measure of adult conversions, at least in their initial stage. I encourage you to look at your own parish statistics and ask the question: What's our CRAB rate? And what can we do to increase that number?

Every congregation, I believe, needs to have a spiritual infrastructure that supports a culture of conversion. That would include not only programs to prepare people for baptism and confirmation, but also Christian formation for every stage of life – everything from the Alpha Course to adult Bible study to a vibrant Sunday School. We need to approach the matter of conversion with miraculous expectations. Jesus transforms lives. And so the first element in this four-fold plan is to encourage vestries and leadership groups to think long and hard about how they can foster a culture of conversion, the kind of parish atmosphere in which people can encounter Jesus for the first time and then grow in their commitment.

Second, EVANGELISM. This is another word that makes Episcopalians uncomfortable – and again, it’s not an optional extra, nor is it something that we should leave to our evangelical friends. William Temple, Archbishop of Canterbury during a portion of World War Two, defined evangelism this way: *Evangelism is the presentation of Jesus Christ in the power of the Holy Spirit, in such ways that persons may be led to believe in him as Savior and follow him as Lord, in the fellowship of his church.* The Episcopal Church has officially adopted that definition, which makes it as Anglican as tea and crumpets. Our goal is to reach people who have no living relationship with Jesus or his church. In the end, evangelism isn’t about selling the Episcopal Church; it’s about presenting Jesus Christ. If we do that, the Episcopal Church will receive its share of converts!

For the past several years, I’ve been offering Newcomer Ministry Workshops around the diocese. So far, about 25 parishes have experienced the workshop, and several of them have even invited me back for a “return engagement”. The purpose of this workshop is to raise consciousness about how churches grow: first, by encouraging parishioners to invite their friends, neighbors, and co-workers to worship with us; second, by paying careful attention to how we present ourselves on Sunday morning; and third, by giving the ministry of welcome a high priority in every aspect of the Sunday experience. I’m delighted to report that a number of congregations have made significant changes so that newcomers can feel “at home” from the time of their very first

visit. If your parish has not yet had this workshop, or if you'd like me to offer it a second time, please contact me. The point is that every parish needs a plan – both to get newcomers in the door for an initial visit, and then to welcome them and incorporate them into the life of the congregation.

One additional note: last spring, our Congregational Revitalization and Development Committee began offering grants to parishes for developing websites. I've become convinced that in our technological age, a web presence is essential. For example, last Advent I confirmed eight adults at Trinity Church, Fort Wayne. At coffee hour after the liturgy, I asked these newest Episcopalians how they'd found the parish. Four of the eight reported that they first met Trinity on the web! People today are less likely to use the yellow pages, and more likely to use the internet, when they're looking for a new church. Advertising, whether in print or in cyberspace, has its limits, and it can never take the place of personal invitation. But having said that, the internet is the billboard of the new millennium, and I encourage every parish to take advantage of this medium. The grant which CR&D offers will help you to set up a fairly simple and easily-maintained web presence, and to do so in a way that will propel you quickly into cyberspace. If you're interested, please contact Fr. David Hyndman, CR&D chair, for more information.

Third, LOCAL MISSION. Picture your parish church – not just the building, but the neighborhood in which it’s located. And now ask yourself the question, What are the needs *right here*? How can my parish respond to the hurts, the pains, the fears that we encounter in our own local setting? I believe that every congregation needs to develop a specific ministry of outreach to its community. Examples already abound all over the diocese. Gethsemane, Marion, maintains a twice-monthly soup kitchen. Trinity, Logansport, also offers a feeding ministry in its parish hall. The Cathedral of St. James hosts St. Margaret’s House, which provides a safe haven for women in downtown South Bend. St. Mary’s, Monticello – arguably the smallest congregation in the diocese – created and now helps to sustain a homeless shelter in its own building. Holy Family, Angola, has inaugurated a “Wednesday School” for children in its neighborhood. St. Paul’s, Munster, last June sponsored a community bike race called the Tour de Faith, to raise money for Habitat for Humanity. These are simply examples, and there are many others. The principle is this: every parish needs to find a way to touch its community.

And so the third element in Actions for Congregational Transformation involves local mission. We are encouraging every parish to identify, pray about, and respond to a specific need in its own neighborhood. The project can be big or small, it can involve facilities or money or people or any combination of those; but it is essential for us to be a presence in our communities. When I first came to the diocese, almost seven years ago, I had a series of stock questions that I would ask vestries. One of them was this: What is the “word on the street” about your parish? What do people in your town or city say

about you? Often vestries would tell me that the parish was largely unknown in its community; that people in town hardly notice the building, and have little idea of who we are or what we stand for. Wouldn't it be wonderful if all 37 of our parishes were known as Christian communities where people care for their neighbors? Vibrant congregations reach out beyond their own walls. Local mission is a key element in renewing and revitalizing the church.

Fourth, MISSION BEYOND THE LOCAL. There's a world well beyond the Diocese of Northern Indiana, and the more we connect with that world, the more our own lives are enriched. At this past summer's General Convention, the Episcopal Church affirmed the Millennium Development Goals – a worldwide effort to eliminate global poverty. I believe that our diocese needs to embrace the MDGs, and to encourage every parish to commit a portion of its resources to them. The specific amount recommended, by the way, is .7%. In other words, if we commit .7% of our budgets to eliminate global poverty – and if churches around the country and around the world join in doing so – we will make a significant dent in the suffering that engulfs our planet. What, by the way, are the Millennium Development Goals?

- Eradicate extreme poverty and hunger
- Achieve universal primary education for children
- Promote gender equality and empower women

- Reduce child mortality
- Improve maternal health
- Combat HIV/AIDS, malaria, and other diseases
- Ensure environmental sustainability
- Create a global partnership for development

I talked earlier about the budget strains that many of our parishes are experiencing. One way to deal with this strains – and I realize that this is counterintuitive – is to start giving away money! For example, the vestry of St. Timothy's, Griffith, learned about the MDGs and decided, despite the fact that this is a small parish with limited resources, to begin responding to them. And so they committed not .7%, but 3% of their operating budget to the Millennium Development Goals. I encourage all of you to follow that example. I intend as well to ask the Finance Committee, as we prepare for the next budget cycle, to include a line item that will specifically offer diocesan resources for the MDGs.

The general principle here is that every parish needs to develop a plan to minister not only to its own neighborhood, but to the world beyond. That might involve committing financial resources, but it can also include people. I have already mentioned St. Anne's, Warsaw, and its work in Louisiana. Another example: St. Michael and All Angels, South Bend sent a mission team last summer to Uganda, to visit AIDS orphans whom the

parish has been supporting financially through its bracelet project. This kind of people-to-people encounter transforms not only the recipients, but even more those who do the ministry. The kind of “mission beyond the local” that a parish can do will vary greatly, depending on parish size and resources. But every congregation can find a way to connect with the wider world – and to make an impact, however small.

The Whatever It Takes Task Force is about to change directions. We have spent two years thinking about our diocese, its 37 missionary outposts, and the way that we can most effectively grow – spiritually, numerically, and in mission. Now the Task Force will look toward implementation. We hope to encourage every parish to develop an action plan that will incorporate all four areas: conversion, evangelism, local mission, and mission beyond the local. The plan, of course, must be congregation-specific. A larger parish in an urban area will design a plan that might look very different from the plan of a smaller parish in a small community. The particulars will vary from place to place, perhaps in radical ways. But the elements, I believe, are universal. We will be taking three concrete steps to help parishes to develop a plan.

First, the ministry of Canon to the Ordinary will change. He or she will take on responsibilities in the area of congregational development. Among other things, the canon will (along with the bishop) be on a visitation cycle, and will visit parishes with the specific purpose of working with vestry members and other leaders to develop an action

plan. The canon will become, at least in part, a specialist, focusing on the four elements of ACT.

Second, the Whatever It Takes Task Force will set up a series of regional meetings, in which we'll ask leaders from small groupings of congregations – four or five, probably no more – to come together and discuss the four elements. This will represent a variation on the cluster conferences that we offered for several years; but in this case the gatherings will be geographic rather than by church size.

Third, Whatever It Takes will also provide leadership for the diocesan clergy conference next May, and will lead discussion on the four elements of ACT and how clergy can help to implement them in their parishes.

Conclusion

I end where I began, with St. Simon the Zealot. There's something wondrous about Jesus' choice of this most unlikely disciple: a terrorist - oh, probably a reformed terrorist, but nevertheless someone with a most unsuitable background – a person whose background would, by human standards, render him incapable of joining the apostolic

band, and especially a band that included the likes of St. Matthew the Tax Collector. But that is Jesus' way. He doesn't choose us because we're suitable, he chooses us for his sovereign purpose, to reconcile us to Father and to one another, and to be ministers of reconciliation in a world that needs Jesus so desperately. None of us, you see, are suitable, that's the wonder of the thing. But we're all chosen. Today's New Testament lesson ends like this, a supernatural vision of the church: "So then you are no longer strangers and aliens, but you are citizens with the saints and also members of the household of God, built upon the foundation of the apostles and prophets, with Christ Jesus himself as the cornerstone. In him the whole structure is joined together and grows into a holy temple in the Lord; in whom you also are built together spiritually into a dwelling place for God" (Ephesians 2:19-22). This is the New Testament's vision not simply of the church in general – but of you and me, of the Diocese of Northern Indiana.

Let us pray

Come, Holy Spirit

and renew in us the fire of your love.

Fill us with holy expectancy

as we gather in the name of Jesus.

Give us a passion for the Gospel,

a heart for the lost,

a willingness to do whatever it takes,

and a commitment to one another.

Enflame us, embolden us, empower us

as disciples who make disciples

for Jesus sake. Amen.