

**Address to the 111th Convention
of the Diocese of Northern Indiana
Plymouth, Indiana
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Grace to you and peace from God our Father and from the Lord Jesus Christ

Last spring, during my annual visit to St. Thomas' Plymouth, Fr. John Schramm presented 22 candidates for confirmation. That's my "land speed record" for the largest number of confirmands to receive the laying on of hands from me at a single sitting in the Diocese of Northern Indiana. I confirmed two of them at the 10:00 am Eucharist, and twenty at 12:30 pm - en español. It was, I must confess, sheer terror. I had last studied Spanish as a freshman in college in 1964; and with a 45-year-old language gap, I'm rusty at best and hopeless at worst. And so I wondered: Will I pronounce the words correctly? Will I avoid turning Jose into a girl, or Maria into a boy? Can I give a reasonable facsimile of a bishop who appears to know what he's doing? I plowed ahead as courageously as I could:

*Defiende, oh Señor, a tu siervo José/María, con tu gracia
celestial, a fin de que permanezca tuyo para siempre, y de día
en día crezca en tu Espíritu Santo más y más, hasta que llegue
a tu reino eterno. Amén.*

After a while I relaxed into the rhythm of the language. And as I relaxed, I became overwhelmed with a sense of the Holy Spirit's presence and power. People came forward with joy and expectancy in their faces. They expected to meet Jesus - and they did. Praying for person after person, I was profoundly aware that John's vision of heaven has its earthly equivalent:

Splendor and honor and kingly power*
are yours by right, O Lord our God,
For you created everything that is,*
and by your will they were created and have their being.

And yours by right, O Lamb that was slain,*
for with your blood you have redeemed for God,
From every family, language, people, and nation,*

a kingdom of priests to serve our God.

And so, to him who sits upon the throne,*
and to Christ the Lamb,
Be worship and praise, dominion and splendor,*
for ever and for evermore.

Revelation 4-5, conflated in Canticle 18 (BCP, pp. 93-94)

In other words, Jesus' vision for the church is multi-cultural, multi-lingual, multi-national. Archbishop Desmond Tutu calls us "God's rainbow people," and the Lord gave me a glimpse of those wonderful colors that afternoon at Santo Tomás. Hold that picture in your own heart as we look at the Diocese of Northern Indiana and the mission to which Jesus has called us. We are here, not for our own sake, but for the sake of a world desperately in need of the good news of Jesus Christ. Remember our 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

Over the course of this address, we'll move from local and administrative concerns to our mission imperative to the national and international issues that consume so much of our attention. Even though only a portion of the address is officially labeled "mission," the whole thing is subsumed under that category. When we look at the budget, the question should be: "How does the way that we spend money help - or hinder - our mission?" When we respond to difficult theological and pastoral matters, the question should be: "How can we struggle in such a way that we present Jesus more effectively?" When we focus our attention on organizational infrastructure, the question should be: "How can we organize ourselves for mission?"

1. Local and Administrative Matters

First of all, some statistics. Our numbers this past year were essentially flat. In 2007, on a typical Sunday in the Diocese of Northern Indiana, 2,349.9 people worshiped in our churches; in 2008, that figure was 2,331.5. But the long-term pattern is troubling. Since 2001, average Sunday attendance in the diocese has declined from a high of about 3,100. These numbers, however, don't tell the whole story. We're a small diocese of small congregations. Our largest parish records an average Sunday attendance of 188, and our smallest 7. This means that we need to think creatively about how to encourage small, vibrant

communities of faith, centered on Jesus and empowering everyone - and not simply priests and deacons - to see themselves as ministers of the Gospel. We're now experimenting with alternative patterns of ministry so that every congregation, large or small, can enjoy a rich sacramental life. For example, in the past year, two sets of parishes - All Saints, Syracuse, and St. James', Goshen; and St. Francis', Chesterton, and St. Andrew's by-the-Lake, Michigan City - have joined together under a priest who serves them both. Some parishes are led by a priest trained here in the diocese and serving in a part-time capacity; others flourish under the ministry of retired or bi-vocational priests. A little later in the address I will mention a new initiative to study the way that we envision ministry, lay and ordained, in the diocese.

Our financial picture is decidedly mixed. The good news is that the diocesan budget ended 2008 in the black, and most parishes are able through their existing resources to provide what's needed for mission and ministry. The bad news is that some congregations are experiencing a good deal of financial strain. When Diocesan Council met in September for our annual "assessment reduction hearing," seven parishes requested a total of about \$93,000 in reductions - out of an annual diocesan budget of \$746,667.04. That's real money! Council wasn't able to grant every parish its full request, but tried to respond as pastorally and generously as possible. The diocesan budget itself is as modest and frugal as we can make it. We've frozen staff salaries for 2010, and the only increase you'll see in the staff category has to do with adding health insurance to the compensation package for the bishop's secretary, a step long overdue. In the past few years, we've gone almost "paperless," using the internet as much as possible for diocesan communication. With all of this, however, it's still challenging to do all that we have to do with the relatively limited resources available to us.

When Diocesan Council looked at the seven churches that requested assessment reductions, we noticed a common theme: most of the parishes have budgets between \$120,000 and \$160,000, with a Sunday attendance between 80 and 100, and are supporting a full-time priest. For parishes like that, the single largest item in the budget is the priest's salary package - which includes not only stipend and housing, but also pension, health insurance, and line items (usually small) for professional expenses and continuing education. Health insurance is, for some parishes, a "deal-breaker" when it comes to full-time ministry. The cost has risen exponentially in recent years. Relief, however, may be on the way. At General Convention this summer, we enacted a canonical change that provides for a nation-wide health insurance system for the Episcopal Church. Up until now, every diocese has been left to its own devices in negotiating for insurance for its employees. In a small diocese like ours, with a limited number of personnel, that's meant higher per unit cost. As the national system goes into

place - the process will take several years - we hope to see a gradual leveling off and perhaps reduction in the enormous premiums that parishes have been paying for health insurance.

I began this section with some challenging, even painful statistics. But we shouldn't let statistics have the last word. Yes, the diocese has been in significant decline in the past decade; but our response is faithful, hopeful, positive, and proactive. To begin with, Canon SuzeAnne Silla spearheads a program of congregational development that now includes half of our parishes. Since February, 2008, teams of clergy and lay leaders have been meeting for four weekends per year, studying various components of congregational life, under the auspices of CDI (the Congregational Development Institute), and helping these teams to develop plans for renewal and growth. This November, the first teams will graduate, after completing two years in the program. Already, teams from additional parishes are lined up for the next phase of CDI, beginning in February, with a waiting list of eager participants. All of this is part of our long-term strategy. The best way to address decline is not simply to rail against the numbers - but to help parishes to plan for growth. I'm deeply grateful to Canon Silla for her leadership in congregational development. A major portion of her responsibilities as Canon to the Ordinary is to coordinate CDI, and to be available to vestries and parish leadership groups as they envision their future. During her two and a half years of ministry in the diocese, she has brought encouragement and hope and the reminder that the Spirit does indeed equip us to build up the church (Ephesians 4:11). We've invested resources and time in congregational development, and I'm convinced that this kind of thoughtful, long-term, non-anxious approach is the best way to provide the vision and the energy that we need to accomplish our mission in the 21st Century. I should add that the success of CDI is due not only to Canon Silla's leadership, but also to the prayerful and enthusiastic way that the participants have engaged in the process. CDI weekends involve hard work, long hours - and fun!

Early in 2010, we will be inaugurating a new program aimed at strengthening the next generation of leaders, and helping congregations especially in a time of change. It's called Fresh Start. In its beginning phase, Fresh Start will work with clergy in transition: newly ordained, newly installed in a ministry position, even newly retired. Later, it will expand to include lay persons, among them CDI graduates and other parish leaders. Canon Silla, along with Fr. Henry Randolph, our vocations director, recently attended a Fresh Start conference in preparation for the inauguration of this program in Northern Indiana.

Two new committees aimed at building a stronger diocesan infrastructure are currently being organized. One, the Planned Giving Committee, has already

held its initial meetings. This committee will work with parishes in two ways: first, to help them to design or enhance an endowment fund; and second, to encourage them to assist parishioners to make provision for the church in their wills and long-term giving. The second, the Property Committee, will work with vestries and building committees as they design new or expanded facilities and seek funding.

One of the bright spots in the Diocese of Northern Indiana is our energetic and exciting youth ministry. This past summer, for example, we offered three camps for young people: one, for those in third through eighth grade, under the leadership of Tamisyn Grantz of St. James' Cathedral, South Bend; a second, for high school students, led by Carol Bianchini of St. Anne's, Warsaw; and a third, a special ministry for the children of prisoners, directed by Mose Carter and overseen by a hard-working committee chaired by Charlotte Strowhorn of St. Augustine's, Gary. The "kid camp" - I'm not sure how to describe it, so pardon the shorthand - revolved around the theme of Walkabout, and helped children to see their lives as a journey with Jesus. The high school camp explored the theme of Masks and how Jesus invites us to clothe ourselves in him rather than the masks which our culture gives us. And Camp New Happenings, the camp for children of prisoners, grew from nine campers in 2008 to 27 this past summer. Jesus is changing lives and giving these children an experience they will never forget. Carol Bianchini will also be leading a retreat for high school students during the second weekend in December; so our ministry to young people is expanding beyond the summer season! By the way, the stipend for Carol's work with high school students is currently funded from youth reserve funds; but these funds will be gone at the end of 2010. It will be necessary for us to include youth ministry in our operating budget for 2011, so be aware that we will have that additional item to fund when we gather for diocesan convention next year.

We continue to experience something of a vocational renaissance in the diocese. At the moment, three people are attending seminary full-time in preparation for ordination to the priesthood, and another seven are being trained locally, four for the diaconate and three for the priesthood. This past year, the local program has been "ramped up" considerably. Ordinands now spend eight weekends per year in spiritual, pastoral, and academic formation. Fr. Ted Neidlinger leads a team for five of these weekends, and Fr. Henry Randolph has recruited scholars who offer in-depth teaching for the other three. All of this is in addition to a good deal of long-distance learning, using materials created by Trinity Episcopal School for Ministry. I'm very grateful to Fr. Henry for his work as vocations director. He not only tracks the extensive paperwork that the canons require in the ordination process; but he also does hands-on teaching and mentoring of our ordinands. And I'm grateful to Fr. Ted; the Formation Group that he ably and lovingly coordinates provides encouragement and

practical instruction for people who are being trained for ordination in our diocese.

And now a special plea regarding two resolutions. The rules of order direct that when resolutions are submitted to Diocesan Convention less than three weeks before it meets, Convention must give approval - by a two-thirds margin - before that resolution can be considered. It happens that two groups met less than three weeks ago and crafted resolutions, both of which (I believe) deserve to be considered. The first comes from the South Bend deanery. At its annual pre-Convention meeting, clergy and lay delegates found themselves discussing the need for creative thinking about ministry and how we organize and provide for it, particularly in a diocese made up in large part of small and sometimes far-flung congregations. So the deanery crafted a resolution which calls for the appointment of a task force to study this matter, report preliminary findings next year, and make recommendations the year following. The second resolution is sponsored by the six deans, who met on October 6. We've recognized for a long time that our deanery structure could be more effective. If nothing else, our deaneries are numerically so small that they don't achieve "critical mass" when they meet. So the deans are proposing a canonical change that will allow us to consolidate six deaneries into three - East, West, and Central. While the canons allow for deaneries to be re-organized at will, they also specify that Diocesan Council is made up of clergy and lay representatives from each of the *six* deaneries. The deans propose amending the canonical language, so that each of the three deaneries will elect *two* clergy and *two* lay representatives, keeping Council the same size. By the way, we've done a Google Maps check on the new configuration, and found that each new deanery has a central location that is no more than about an hour's drive from any parish in the deanery. So this arrangement shouldn't add a significant driving burden to anyone!

I do ask, when it comes time for Convention to give permission for these resolutions to be considered, that you enthusiastically do so.

2. Mission Opportunities

What is the mission of the Church?

The mission of the Church is to restore all people to unity with God and each other in Christ.

How does the Church pursue its mission?

The Church pursues its mission as it prays and worships, proclaims the Gospel, and promotes justice, peace, and love.

Catechism (BCP, p. 855)

These words from the Catechism reflect St. Paul's vision: "With all wisdom and insight, God has made known to us the mystery of his will, according to his good pleasure that he set forth in Christ, as a plan for the fullness of time, to gather up all things in [Christ], things in heaven and things on earth" (Ephesians 1:8-10). You and I - ordinary, garden-variety Christians; redeemed sinners; decidedly fallible, decidedly frail - are the ones whom God has invited to cooperate with his purposes. So I want to spend some time in this section reflecting with you on how this actually happens. What do we *do* to make ourselves available to Jesus? My answer to that question will be in large part anecdotal; but at the end of the section I'll draw some theological conclusions.

The most important thing I will say is this: Mission is already happening, and in powerful ways, in the Diocese of Northern Indiana. Last year, I cited dozens of examples of mission; this year I want to highlight, in particular, two general areas where we have experienced remarkable success.

The first is in our work with college students, grads and undergraduates. In several corners of the diocese, we are experiencing remarkable success. All four parishes in the South Bend area include graduate students from Notre Dame. Interestingly, many of these grad students don't come from an Episcopal background. Some are evangelical Christians who - encountering sacramental and liturgical worship at Notre Dame - make their way to the Episcopal Church. At Gethsemane Church, Marion, there's a different phenomenon: A significant number of undergraduates from Taylor University and Indiana Wesleyan University have discovered the historic Church. Again, these students are primarily evangelicals, often from "megachurch" backgrounds. One evening I sat down with a group of them and asked, "What brings you to the Episcopal Church?" While I can't overly generalize, many said something like this: that their evangelical upbringing introduced them to Jesus, and for that they're profoundly grateful. But now they're looking for something with deeper roots, a church whose worship is grounded in that of the earliest Christians, a church where they can ask question and find answers, a church that will teach them how to pray and how to encounter Jesus in Word and Sacrament. These young people have not ceased to be evangelical Christians. But they've discovered, as evangelicals, the gift of historicity, and how that gift enriches their faith. Incidentally, the IWU/Taylor connection has already yielded three priestly vocations.

I speak to you as one who became an Episcopalian in college, after a life-changing - and evangelical - conversion; and it was college ministry that eventually led me to discern a priestly vocation. So I'm especially grateful to the leaders of these parishes for the way that they invest themselves in work with

grads and undergrads. Several other clergy, by the way, have also told me that they are beginning to experience an influx of college students; the phenomenon is growing. All of this demonstrates that Anglican Christianity is uniquely able to reach students with a faith that is deep, historic, open, faithful, and faith-stretching.

The second area where we've experienced remarkable success is, of course, ministry to Hispanics and Latinos. We decided to hold this year's convention in Plymouth in large part to highlight the work here and to encourage the whole diocese. What's happened at St. Thomas' is remarkable. It began many years ago when parishioners from St. Thomas' took part in mission trips to our companion diocese of Honduras; that led to a social service ministry - Corazón y Manos (Heart and Hands) - that met in St. Thomas' parish hall, and in time morphed into a congregation. Fr. John Schramm traveled to Central America and studied enough Spanish to preside at the Eucharist, preach, and carry on conversations, and in 2003 la Iglesia de Santo Tomás celebrated its first Eucharist. The congregation has had its ups and down over the years, and now it is a vibrant, growing community where lives are transformed and people encounter the Risen Lord. I'm so grateful to Fr. John for his hard, hard work - and to the people of St. Thomas' for opening their hearts to our newest neighbors. Among other things, the experience in Plymouth reminds us that we can actually *do* this. We can successfully reach out to Spanish-speaking people and join them in a journey with our Lord.

This kind of outreach honors Jesus and extends the Kingdom of God. I'm also aware that many of us have, in our own family background, history that parallels that of our Spanish-speaking brothers and sisters. My mother's family, for example, came to this country from Lithuania - they were Yiddish-speaking Jews - and I can still remember that my grandmother, despite the fact that she could speak English, preferred to communicate in Yiddish. Whenever she wanted to talk to my mother about me, for example, she'd look in my direction, lean over to my mother, shake her head, and speak in Yiddish. At a distance of more than five decades, I can't help but wonder what she said! Perhaps she was predicting that I'd come to a bad end. Our Spanish-speaking friends, too, prefer to communicate in their own language, not least when they're talking to God. I once asked a member of Santo Tomás - Eduardo, who is completely bi-lingual - why he would rather attend the Eucharist in Spanish. "Spanish is the language of my heart," he told me. "I can communicate in English, but I *pray* in Spanish."

God is opening doors for ministry to Spanish-speaking people all around the diocese. St. James', Goshen, for instance, is located in a part of town that is now Spanish-dominant, and Fr. Larry Biller reports that one Spanish-speaking family is already attending the Eucharist there. Northwest Indiana is also fertile

ground for Hispanic ministry. At last summer's General Convention, Fr. Ben Jones of St. Paul's, Munster, served as a member of the Evangelism Committee, and took part in drafting a resolution that encourages Hispanic ministry. That experience has helped him to see the possibilities in Munster and its surrounding communities, and he is in the early stages of planning for ministry to Spanish-speaking people in Lake County. The point here is that the work in Plymouth is not the end of Hispanic ministry, but only the beginning. We can actually *do* this!

The Anglican expression of the Christian faith is uniquely able to respond to the spiritual yearnings of our Spanish-speaking friends. We are sacramental, liturgical, and evangelical, and we have the flexibility to honor the cultural traditions of the people whom God sends to us. It's often said, and incorrectly, that work among Hispanics is inappropriate because most Hispanics are Roman Catholic. That simply isn't the case. Many, certainly, have a Roman Catholic background; and we would never seek to "sheep-steal" among those who are active and practicing Catholics. But many others are functionally unchurched, with no living relationship with our Lord or any Christian community. Like the Good Shepherd who sought us out and drew us to himself, Jesus sends us to our Spanish-speaking neighbors - with a message that changes lives.

Remember that mission, according to the Catechism, has three components: we pray; we proclaim the Gospel; and we promote justice, peace, and love. That's a wonderfully balanced approach. We minister to the whole person - body and spirit. And so, all around the diocese, Christians are involved in mission that enriches people's lives in countless ways. Two parishes, for example, gave away a total of 2,200 backpacks and other school supplies to needy students. Another parish is sponsoring a community health clinic that ministers to dozens of people every week. Several parishes offer food pantries, others open their doors and provide free meals to the community. At least two congregations tutor children after school. Parishioners from all around the diocese are involved in our ministry with the Diocese of Honduras; this past year, several traveled there on a mission trip. And of course - to mention one ministry by name - St. Margaret's House, located at St. James' Cathedral in South Bend, offers hope, healing, and safety to hundreds of women every month.

Several years ago, our diocesan Whatever It Takes Task Force identified four Actions for Congregational Transformation (ACT), and they represent a classic statement of balanced mission. The four Actions are:

- Conversion
- Evangelism
- Local Mission
- World Mission

In other words, we ask Jesus to change our lives and turn us in a Godward direction; we ask him to use us to draw others to himself; we ask him to empower us to reach out to the communities around our churches; and we ask him to give us a global vision and to send us around the world as bearers of Good News.

3. National and International Concerns

Every year, as I write my Convention Address, I struggle over whether to put National and International Concerns first or last. Should I get it over with early? Or hold off until the end and deal with pressing diocesan matters first? Obviously this year I'm taking the second approach, and begin with a citation from the Preamble of the Constitution of the Episcopal Church:

The Protestant Episcopal Church in the United States of America, otherwise known as The Episcopal Church . . . is a constituent member of the Anglican Communion, a Fellowship within the One, Holy, Catholic, and Apostolic Church, of those duly constituted Dioceses, Provinces, and regional Churches in communion with the See of Canterbury, upholding and propagating the historic Faith and Order as set forth in the Book of Common Prayer.

Two points are important here. First, to be an Episcopalian is to be an Anglican. The Constitution makes no distinction between the two. Our Episcopal identity and our Anglican identity are inseparable. Second, the Constitution points to a carefully nuanced ecclesiology, with provincial autonomy held in balance with our accountability to the wider Communion. To put it in simple terms, the Episcopal Church governs itself; but our decisions, especially in major matters of faith and order, should be made in consultation with the Anglican Communion. We are not a stand-alone Christian body. Rather, we are part of a worldwide fellowship. What we do here has an impact in Africa, Asia, South America. What our friends in the Global South do has an impact on us.

In this address I'm not going to rehearse in detail the actions of General Convention this past summer. I've already done that in my General Convention reports to the diocese. Instead, I will simply reiterate my conviction that the two resolutions responding to Anglican Communion issues (D025, dealing with ordination; and C056, dealing with same-sex blessings) move the Episcopal Church even more relentlessly in the direction of autonomy. We have, in essence, said No to the Anglican Communion's requests of us - despite the plea of the Archbishop of Canterbury during his General Convention sermon.

I believe that there's a way forward for us, a way to say Yes to the

Episcopal Church and Yes to the Anglican Communion. In 2004, the Windsor Report recommended the development of an Anglican Covenant that would give coherent structure to the Communion in an era when instant, worldwide communication demands it. The Covenant has gone through several drafts, most recently the Ridley-Cambridge draft produced last spring. The Anglican Consultative Council (a representative body which is - put inexactly - the “vestry” of the Communion) has commended the first three sections to the provinces for adoption, and has commissioned a revision of the fourth section that should be sent to provinces this winter or spring. The Episcopal Church will respond to the Covenant at General Convention in 2012. In the meantime, I am hoping that our diocese can thoughtfully and prayerfully consider the Covenant, and to that end a small committee (Frs. Ben Jones, Jim Warnock, and Brian Grantz) will be designing a series of teaching events this spring. This will be an opportunity for us to study the Covenant, to consider the implications of the Covenant in a worldwide Communion, and to look at how the Covenant would impact the Episcopal Church and the Diocese of Northern Indiana. I believe that the Covenant will be the most effective way for us to utter that “double Yes” - to the Episcopal Church and its Constitution; and to the Anglican Communion and its interdependent life.

And now a word about schism. Many people ask me, “Do you think that the Episcopal Church will divide? Will the Anglican Communion survive in its current form?” The answer is that schism is a present reality and not simply a future possibility. Since 2003, average Sunday attendance in the Episcopal Church has dropped by 100,000. We have lost hundreds of priests, hundreds of parishes, large portions of four entire dioceses, and fifteen bishops. This past summer, many of these elements organized themselves into a body called the Anglican Church in North America. This body has asked to be admitted as a province of the Anglican Communion. It’s not clear if this will actually happen, and if so, what the timetable might be. The result, however, is that there is now a large Christian community in North America claiming to be Anglican. I believe that it is essential that we view these Christians as friends, as brothers and sisters in Christ. While the Diocese of Northern Indiana has no “separatist energy” whatsoever, we should honor the consciences of those who have departed, wish them well, and seek to do everything we can to build bridges with them. I mentioned in last year’s address that I’m particularly troubled by two sets of actions taken against those who’ve left us - lawsuits, and canonical actions deposing clergy. I continue to believe that it would be better to let our friends depart gently, and with our blessing. That would increase the possibility of reconciliation in the future.

As a footnote, I should add that the ACNA has now planted two congregations within the borders of our diocese - one in Huntington, and the

other in Kokomo. I hope in the coming months to make contact with the leaders of these congregations, not to lure them back, but rather to do everything possible to develop friendships across our painful divisions.

Last summer, at a series of regional meetings following General Convention, I articulated six personal commitments regarding the Episcopal Church, the Anglican Communion, and the season in which we find ourselves. It is important, I believe, to place these commitments before you in a formal way in this address. I am committed

To the Episcopal Church, and its Constitution and Canons

To the Anglican Communion and its interdependent life; for to be a Catholic Christian is to be in communion with brothers and sisters around the world, and to be an Anglican is to be in communion with the Archbishop of Canterbury

To the Windsor Report and the Covenant Process as the most effective way to heal divisions within our Communion

To the Diocese of Northern Indiana and its place in the Episcopal Church and the Anglican Communion

To gay and lesbian Christians in our diocese, and to a ministry of welcome and pastoral care with them

To the unity of our diocese and the ministry of reconciliation

I acknowledged when I first articulated these commitments that they exist in tension and perhaps, on the surface, in contradiction. But it may be that they express the *via media*, the middle way that our Lord has for us. In any case, I place them before you as a personal, and deeply held, word from your bishop's heart.

A couple of weeks ago, at our annual fall clergy retreat, Fr. Doug McGlynn - professor of pastoral theology at Nashotah House - made the following observations about the diocese, on the basis of his interaction with our deacons and priests. He noted, first of all, that we're a happy diocese. People enjoy being together. We like each other (which is no small matter). That is true, I should add, not only of the clergy, but of the laity, too, as this convention bears witness. When we come together to do business, it's a family reunion. But Fr. Doug added, second, that we are in great danger. The flame under our intra-Anglican conflict burns hotter. It's possible, Fr. Doug said, that this conflict will

begin to dominate the diocese and rob us of the joy that unity brings. And so we must be watchful and careful. Above all, we must be intentional about the ministry of reconciliation, and take steps to ensure that our relationships remain strong, that the way we deal with one another glorifies Jesus and builds up his church. While *of course* we will differ on the matters before us - and while *of course* there are many in this room who disagree with me - what's more important is "making every effort to maintain the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace" (Ephesians 4:3). Fr. Jim Warnock, rector of Gethsemane, Marion, leads our diocesan Reconciliation Task Force, which has sponsored two conferences primarily for college students on the theme of faith-based reconciliation. In addition to our teaching days on the Covenant, I'm hoping to enlist this group's expertise as we look at issues of reconciliation within our diocese. At a time of church conflict, Jesus calls us to another way - finding our unity in him, recognizing our disagreements yet relying on the Holy Spirit to bind us together. A Catholic vision of the church requires no less.

And it may be that we are uniquely suited to this call. Many dioceses have already, and tragically, devolved into irreconcilable conflict; but we - by God's grace - are remarkably united. Relationships are strong. Our eyes are focused on Jesus. We are utterly dependent upon him. That is true not only when we struggle with the weighty business of ecclesiastical conflict, but true as well when deal with local and administrative matters, and when we respond to the mission opportunities that Jesus puts before us. May Jesus, through his Spirit, keep us faithful to that call.

Let us pray.

Come, Holy Spirit,
and renew us in 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.

