

## REMEMBRANCE AND ACTION

In his penetrating book, *Hope and Suffering*, Desmond Tutu tells this story:

*Once in a scripture exam the students were asked, "What did John the Baptist say to Jesus when He came to be baptized?" Well, this chap did not know the answer but was going to have a shot at it, and wrote, "John the Baptist said to Jesus, 'Remember who you are and act accordingly.'"*

Rather than what John (or we) might say to Jesus, this seems to be the twofold message that God is bringing to us as the Lambeth conference prepares to meet this summer: Remember and Act.

First, remember.

Remember that God created and redeemed us, and even now sustains us in the Holy Spirit. Remember that each of us is invited to seek salvation in our need, and in the cross of Christ we have received a transforming mercy which enables us to be filled with the light of the risen Christ. Remember that we were "marked as Christ's own" in Baptism and we are nourished in Word and sacrament week by week. Remember that Christ is the Head of the Church and that His Body is a holy means, not a holy end. Remember to conserve and uphold the essentials of the faith. Remember that Jesus kept wayward company - loving the outcasts, headstrong, marginalized, lost, last and least of the world. Remember that Jesus was counter-cultural, challenging the status quo. Remember that as Episcopalians/Anglicans we were born in comprehensiveness - in the words of Archbishop Williams, "We do have a distinctive historic tradition - a reformed commitment to the absolute priority of the Bible for deciding doctrine, a catholic loyalty to the Sacraments and the threefold ministry of bishops, priests and deacons, and a habit of cultural sensitivity and intellectual flexibility that does not seek to close down unexpected questions too quickly." Remember that in our current denominational conflict we are dealing with the origin and nature of sexual orientation, civil rights, and with ethics as they relate to the Church's sacraments, blessings, and orders of ministry. Remember, that each Province of the Anglican Communion has some measure of self-expression, and we are responsible to our instruments of unity within the Anglican Communion. Remember that Saint Michael and All Angels is an Episcopal Church, and we remain a full participating (and contributing) parish of this Diocese and of the National Church. Remember also that in that participation we are blessed to receive the heritage and benefits of being "Anglican," in communion with 73 million others around the world.

Second, act accordingly.

How do we accomplish this challenge? By receiving Christ more and more and by living,

as best we can, by His teaching. In short, to behave like Christ day by day; to hear and live by the maxims of Jesus, such as:

- Do good to those who hate you. (Mt. 5:44)
- I do not say forgive seven times, but seventy times seven. (Mt. 18:21)
- Love one another as I have loved you. (Jn. 13:34)
- Sanctify them in the truth; as thou sent me into the world, so I have sent them into the world. (Jn. 17: 17-18)
- That they may be one. (Jn. 17:20)
- Then he opened their minds to understand the scriptures. (Lk. 24:45)
- Do this in remembrance of me. (Lk. 22:19)
- In as much as you have done it unto one of the least of these, you have done it unto me. (Mt. 25:40)
- Go and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them, teaching them to observe all that I have commanded you. (Mt. 28:19-20)

But Jesus is more than an exemplar, and who, simply by trying harder, can live up to his teachings? We have Jesus' assurance that if we abide in him we will bear the fruit of his life in ours.

The Apostle Paul describes some of the fruit in his letter to the Galatians: love, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness, self-control.

In our current context, I add several actions for the health of our common life: that we show our appreciation of comprehensiveness by respecting and listening well to those with whom we disagree; to remain fully engaged in the mission and ministry of our parish; to continue in study and prayer, humbly seeking the heart and mind of Christ.

May we remember that each of us is a beloved child of God, and, by God's grace, each of us will be able to act like one.

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