

RESPONSE TO THE BISHOP'S ADDRESS – 2011

Right Reverend Sir, Worthies on the dais, Brothers and Sisters in the Baptismal Covenant, Welcome Guests, and anyone else in the Western Hemisphere that I missed:

Right Reverend Sir, your address is a continuation of the direction you set in last year's Bishop's Address – a direction that uses the Baptismal Covenant as the true north of our journey into the future together. St. Martin of Tours saw what was needed in an unfinished society that had a long tradition of privilege for the few and poverty for the many. The simple act of the cloak is a preserved memory of what made Martin's life special, and is a reminder of what is at the heart of the Gospel – compassion, mercy, and consideration for the struggling lives that continue to look to Christ and His Church for hope and encouragement. You used the phrase "...to do mission..." three times in rapid succession in order to make the point that advocacy and concern begin the task of mission, but involvement incarnates compassion, mercy, and consideration in a way that words do not. Like Woody Allen is reputed to have said, "90% of life is showing up." "Showing up" is a theme throughout your address. "More mission focused, and less task oriented" is how you put it.

You speak of structure, and of major canonical revision as the tools of enabling effective mission to take place. Your decision to appoint a "Diocesan Commission on Structural Reform for Mission and Ministry" coupled with the process of canonical revision are excellent starting points to move forward with making the Baptismal Covenant an action plan rather than a set of "talking points." This response today urges you to make appointments based upon the **skills**, the **purposed commitment**, and **responsible reliability** of those whom you choose, as well as the willingness to do what Woody Allen says – "Show up." You have recently appointed Dean Theodore Bean to chair the Committee on Canons as the first step in this endeavor. It has been my privilege, over the years, to work with Dean Bean in the councils of this diocese. He is **organized, productive, and reliable**. An excellent choice!

Structural reform and canonical revision will take the three years you envision, and will need to be a continuing reality in order to stay effective and relevant. The task will require resolute attention by all concerned with carrying it out. With respect, and with a simile I used with you and the Suffolk clergy a couple of weeks ago, the present organizational and canonical corpora of this diocese are like a **kitty litter box** – every thing you expect to be in it **is there**, but **what a job getting it out!**

A multicultural summit is a **capital** idea! We are diverse, not only in 168 different languages, but in myriad customs, valued cultural foundations and outlooks, what we look like and what we eat. The one thing we all share is our humanity, redeemed by Christ, and lived into in our baptismal promises. The oneness we share is as St. Paul said, *“There is no longer Jew or Greek, there is no longer slave or free, there is no longer male or female, for all of you are one in Christ Jesus.”* (Gal. 3:28)

Your silo analogy suggests, **thank God**, that we need to get away from compartmentalized thinking and progress inhibiting squirreling of information that needs to be shared among all concerned with making this Dominion in the Sea work. You put it well when you said: “What I am saying is simply that we cannot also place obstacles in our own path, nor allow the things we can change to limit our labors in the name of Jesus Christ”. At **all** levels, you also add.

Your staff is everything you say it is – terrific, generous and patient – and very good at what they do. You say you make them crazy. You have no idea! It is like a reality show based upon Bugs Bunny and the Road Runner. Having said that, you are to be commended for identifying the necessity for us to act, instead of using your staff for surrogates for what ably may be done locally. Long live subsidiarity!

Archdeacons, whatever their current brief, wear targets on their backs. This response urges this convention to work with the archdeacons and their new reality and to see them as partners in mission, and not lighting rods. This partnership begins in the deaneries of the diocese. Thank you for emphasizing active participation.

Ecuador Central most certainly will remain in our prayers in a difficult time. Torit continues to walk with us. Thank you to Canon David Lowry for making this an engaged and operative partnership.

Episcopal assistance is needed or you’ll be totally worn out before the structure and canons have been revised. How will you have fun with the fruit of that work if both ends of the candle have met in the middle? With respect.

You entitled your address “Unpacking the Vision”. You did so with clarity and with a clear call to cooperation and teamwork with you, and amongst ourselves. A vision is of what is to be, and Anglicanism has never been afraid of the future. Our heritage asks us to apply reasonableness, prudence, and orderly energy to accomplish the goals of our faith – to make Christ known, and to be in the forefront of that endeavor, with faith, hope, and love. Hugh of St. Victor, in his

small essay, *De Humilitate*, (About Humility) opens with, “The first principal of bringing structure, is, indeed, humility...”, and closes the essay with, “This is humility, the making sense of structure.” In between those two lines, St. Hugh says, in effect, that structure is the servant of orderly result. In the plainest of English, - “If it doesn’t work, fix it, or nothing will get done.” You will excuse my brief, blunt paraphrase.

The electing convention placed faith in you, and today you have expressed faith in us to get Christ’s mission underway. Mutual trust, good humor, competent work, and faith in the living presence of Christ amongst us will move us forward into a new day.

To you, Charlemagne, to this convention, to my colleagues, and to my wife, thank you for the opportunity to do this service each year. Peace.

Respectfully submitted,
John E. Madden,
Response to the Bishop’s Address, Nov. 12, 2011.