

President's Charge to General Synod, 2011

Belleville, Illinois

September 22, 2011

Dear Brothers and Sisters in Christ,

Thank you all for being here. And for participating in the work of God's holy church.

My charge to this synod will be fairly brief. But, lest there be too much disappointment, my sermon at synod Mass will be considerably longer.

As I was preparing the charge, I reviewed the documents of our previous General Synod. It is remarkable indeed what has happened in three short years. Participating in the life of God's church is certainly never boring. And for your bishops and Vicar General...well, we could have benefited from a little more boredom during these past three years.

During this time, several things have changed. We have new leadership for one. Those who have felt moved to "cross the Tiber," have done so. We wish them well, even as we remain firmly committed to the Anglican way and within Anglican structures. We have a new set of provisional canons, ones that we will discuss over the next two days. We will have new appointments for offices that have become vacant. We also will have brand new jurisdictional relationships with other Anglican jurisdictions. Who would have predicted this three years ago? It is an exciting time, a time when we Anglicans are coming together to share their gifts.

But there is one new item that I wish to call to your attention with particular emphasis. And it is this: the House of Bishops is more unified and committed than it has ever been. I have been privileged to work with an exceptional group of bishops and an equally exceptional Vicar General. These men may be trusted. They may be trusted to lead this church faithfully and honestly. They may be depended upon to make decisions in the best interests of God's church. They may be depended upon to make decisions that will serve God's people in love and concern for their spiritual welfare. Bishops Langberg, Williams and Strawn, along with Vicar General John Vaughan deserve the thanks of this body for the courage they have shown, particularly during the past year.

We have many decisions to make during this synod. And I pray that we will all exercise our gifts of discernment. I pray that we will make decisions in the best interest of our church, recognizing always that it is truly God's church and not our own.

What are those decisions we are called to make? First, we will ask synod to ratify the inter-communion agreement with the Anglican Province of America. This inter-communion agreement has been ratified overwhelmingly by three of the four current dioceses of the Anglican Church in America. The Standing Committee of the fourth diocese, The Diocese of the Eastern United States has ratified this agreement. In June of this year, the Anglican Province of America, under the leadership of our good friend, Bishop Walter Grundorf, has ratified this agreement at its Provincial Synod. We need to ratify that inter-communion agreement as a national jurisdiction here today.

What will this mean? The inter-communion agreement will mean that we recognize the holy orders and the sacraments of each

other's jurisdiction. It means that we can travel to each other's churches, receive welcome spiritual refreshment at the hands of faithful clergy and people.

In reality, my friends, we have never been out of communion with each other. We are all members of the same organization with the same values, the same beliefs and the same liturgy. There is no reason for our separation. Our coming together will be a historic event. The symbolism of our joining together reverses a trend that has been part of the Anglican Continuum since its beginning thirty-five years ago. What a legacy this will be.

The Anglican Church in American has always been a leader in the Traditional Anglican Communion. It has been ecumenical in its outlook. It supports missions throughout the world. And it seeks always to express the love of God as authentic Christians who seek to worship God faithfully and in the best tradition of Classical Anglicanism.

It is in that spirit that I call this general synod of the Anglican Church in America to order. Let us do the work that God has called us to do. Let us make some history. But let us, above all, maintain our love of God and each other, taking joy in our work, a joy in Christian service that Anglicans, in their unique way, alone know how to express.

Let us pray: *Direct us, O Lord, in all our doings with thy most gracious favor, and further us with thy continual help; that in all our works begun, continued, and ended in thee, we may glorify thy holy Name, and finally, by thy mercy, obtain everlasting life; through Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen.*

Let us begin our work.