

APOLOGY:

I am Mark Rudolph, the Senior Pastor of St. John the Evangelist Anglican Church, a member parish of the Anglican Mission in America. Thank you for the invitation to be here. My stepmother died this morning at 5 am so I have turned my scribbled notes into a manuscript. I'm truly sorry that I cannot be with you today.

I greet you in the name of Bishop Thaddeus Barnum, my bishop and responsible for the portion of the Anglican Mission in America in the Northeast, stretching from Virginia to Maine. He regrets that he himself cannot personally attend.

COMMON HISTORIES - COMMON FUTURE?

There are many similarities and connections between Lutherans and Anglicans, some of which I discovered for myself while working with State Church pastors in Germany for 4 years.

- Through Melanchthon, Bucer, and Peter Martyr – all influenced by Luther – the reformation in England took on much of the “color” and ethos of the continental reformation, including the fact that our 39 Articles borrow from the Augsburg Confession, sometimes almost word for word.
- I understand that you have a strong connection with a Lutheran Diocese in Tanzania. St. John's strongly supports two Anglican dioceses in Tanzania, and, of course, I'm technically a Rwandan clergyman.
- But we also have something else in common. We are Christians who can no longer submit ourselves to ungodly authority.

THE FIRST TEST: IS THERE LIFE AFTER LEAVING?

It's in this last commonality that the first real test is going to be found. The test is this: how will you respond to the question: “Will God really honor your faithfulness, even though it seems that the consequences of obedience are too dire to consider?”

At one time, St. John's Episcopal Church of Huntingdon Valley (as we were formerly known) was a place where one could find sound theological teaching, good pastoral care and preaching, godly clergy, a lovely campus, and a classical sanctuary. After a long and complicated story with many interesting anecdotes (including denying the bishop communion in a public worship service), the clergy and lay leadership of St. John's decided that it was time to walk away.

The process was long and painful, but on Advent Sunday 2001, worshippers gathered outside of St. John's, prayed, sang a hymn, and left everything behind. And when I say everything, I mean:

- more than a million dollars in trust funds,
- a several million dollar property in an upper class Philadelphia suburb,
- a graveyard with relatives buried in it,
- a respectable library (later given back to us, because the rector couldn't find anyone who could see use in those old and irrelevant books!),
- prayer books that they knew would be thrown out – and in fact were later retrieved out of a dumpster,
- kneelers that had been hand made,
- pictures, music, vestments, paraments, documents and records of all sorts ...
- Not one knick-knack left the property.

Nearly 99% of the parish walked away. Yes, there were tears and a whole host of other responses. But what was the general response? “What a relief! No more snide comments at clergy meetings. No more sneak attacks by the bishop. No more threats of legal action. We're free at last! Now we can just go about being the church God called us to be!”

I admit that not all stories are the same among Anglicans today. In many cases, people are still fighting over property. In others, there's a distinct note of bitterness and anger. But as I talk to Anglicans all over the US, the general theme is the same: there is most certainly life after the Episcopal Church – and life is grand!

So my first message to you is this: God really does honor faithfulness, even when it seems that the consequences of obedience are too dire to consider. There really is life after the ELCA. Do you trust our good Father to bring you through the wilderness into the Promised Land?

THE SECOND TEST: WHERE DO WE GO FROM HERE?

There's a second message I want to share with you. There will be another test and it will be in how you answer this question: “Now that we're out of Egypt – out of the ELCA - where shall we go, what shall we do?”

Learn from Anglicans here too. In order to get as many into the same boat as possible, some Anglicans have set aside our symbols of uniformity and concord – our analogy to your Augsburg Confession. Or they only pay lip service to them. And you know what? As long as the principle held that “the enemy of my enemy is my

friend,” things were fine. But once the common enemy of the Episcopal Church went away, significant differences began to appear.

Let me encourage you to practice a great principle that one finds throughout Scripture. The principle is that one always looks back to the foundations, before moving forward. For example, in Joshua, the people cross over the Jordan into the Promised Land after 40 years of wandering. And God gives a strange command:

Take up for yourselves twelve stones from here out of the middle of the Jordan, from the place where the priests' feet are standing firm, and carry them over with you and lay them down on the banks of the Jordan.

Why such this command?

Let this be a sign among you, so that when your children ask later, saying, 'What do these stones mean to you?' then you shall say to them, 'Because the waters of the Jordan were cut off before the ark of the covenant of the LORD; when it crossed the Jordan ...' So these stones shall become a memorial ...¹

It is in your commitment to your symbols of concord – your confessions, your 12 stones – that you will find your way forward. They are the memorial of your covenant with the historic church, and thus with the faith that has been delivered to that church from the apostles, and thus with the God of that church.

One more comment in this regard. Having a clear confession will make working ecumenically with other groups much easier. You'll be able to clearly say: this far, but no farther. And your working partners will understand clearly who you are and what you want.

But whatever you do – don't go back to Egypt!

CONFIDENCE IN GOD, SCORN FOR THE ENEMY:

There is a song that you may know: “A Mighty Fortress.” In that song, Luther paints a nasty picture of “the old wicked enemy (*der alt' böse Feind*).” There is no one on earth who is equal to him, Luther says. If we try to fight against him with our own might, we can do nothing. We're soon lost.

Luther personally knew something of this old enemy and vigorously resisted him. Sometimes he fought intellectually with words. But he also knew Satan's power and

¹ Josh 4.3, 6–7. This same principle can be found at every significant historic event in both covenants. Consider: the rainbow, the explicit and repeated reference to God's covenant with “Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob,” the use of Jehovah (YHVH) as a “memorial name” with Moses, Passover as a memorial feast, Jesus' own reference to OT texts during the temptation, Peter's sermon at Pentecost, Paul's command of OT history and theology and his dependence on them in his writing, and many more.

cunning schemes regarding his own soul. Yet, for all this, Luther's courage and boldness ring out in his famous hymn. He writes (using a less well known but better translation):

Though devils all the world should fill, All eager to devour us. This world's prince may still Scowl fierce as he will, He can harm us none, He's judged; the deed is done; One little word can fell him.

The Word ... He's by our side ... With His good gifts and Spirit. And take they our life, goods, honor, child, and wife; Let these all be gone, They yet have nothing won; The Kingdom ours remains.

We stand with you. We pray for you. Let us know how we can serve you. You are not alone!

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On behalf of the Rt. Rev. Thaddeus R. Barnum
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