

# Let Not Your Hearts Be Troubled

As requested by your Standing Committee, I am blessed to share with you some words of encouragement as you prepare for your upcoming on-line Anglican Diocese of the Great Lakes Synod, May 30. What comes to mind is the exhortation our Lord gave to His disciples in the upper room on that night when He was handed over to suffering and death. Having taken on the role of a humble servant by washing the disciples' feet and mandating the eucharistic remembrance of His body and blood, in the elements of bread and wine, Jesus declared, "Let not your hearts be troubled. Believe in God; believe also in me" (John 14:1).

I suspect that were I to ask you, "Do you believe in Jesus?", your answer would be an enthusiastic, "Yes!" Yet, might I be so bold as to suggest that your belief—or faith—in Jesus is of little earthly, or heavenly, use to you, unless it is undergirded by unequivocal trust in Him.

Trust is belief in action. It is the blessed assurance that no matter the circumstance or consequence in which we find ourselves, the Lord is in control, pouring out His goodness and grace, even when we cannot discern such provision. Trust is accepting what St. Paul boldly declared to the Church in Philippi: "...my God will meet all your needs according to the riches of his glory in Christ Jesus" (Philippians 4:19). Trust is standing firm on that scriptural promise despite whatever outcome our best laid plans fail to accomplish.

Unquestionably, the past seven months have been a season of intense faith-testing for you who comprise the ADGL, clergy and laity alike. During that time, you have faced the unanticipated resignation of your Diocesan Bishop, as well as a Temporary Bishop. Additionally, you have had to initiate the process of selecting a new Bishop, while adjusting to the leadership of a second Temporary Bishop. Now, after weeks of social distancing and self-isolation, brought on by a global pandemic that has shut the doors of your churches and kept you from your places of work and leisure, you find that prudent health measures dictate you meet in Synod via the internet. Talk about a "let-not-your-heart-be-troubled" moment.

Amid such challenges, the only way to overcome a troubled heart is to believe in Jesus, to trust that He is near, and He cares. For in situations over which we have no control, the sane way forward is to remain confident that our sovereign Lord is fully aware of every personal, parochial, and diocesan need and that He is about the Father's business faithfully addressing those needs.

Truth is, so much has changed in our lives in such a short period of time that God alone knows what lies ahead. Of course, the good news is that none of what you have experienced during your diocesan trials, or this global crisis, has caught Him off-guard. Fully aware of every predicament, He lovingly calls you to embrace His Son's compassionate appeal: "Let not your hearts be troubled. Believe in God; believe also in me."

During my tenure as your Temporary Bishop, the Lord blessed me immeasurably through your prayers, acceptance, and support. What I encountered repeatedly throughout the Diocese was a steadfast faith, witnessed in the resolve of the Standing Committee, the devotion of the clergy to those entrusted to their spiritual care, and the fervent love of the laity for Christ Jesus. It was my

great joy to serve among you, albeit briefly. Even now, as I pray for the Diocese, I praise God for the gift of you and the ministry we share in the Gospel of our Lord.

Therefore, as you approach Synod, and the work that lies ahead in the selection of a new Bishop, I urge you earnestly to remember anew the One who bids you, “Let not your hearts be troubled,” for it is He who has demonstrated so intimately His love, care, and concern for you by sacrificing His very life that you might have life and have it to the full. Believe in Him! Trust in Him! Be still in Him! And then watch Him work faithfully for your good and His glory.

In Jesus’ grip, as are you—always,

*Bishop John*