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The Second Sunday in Advent

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Realignment

Welcome to Bishop Loutitt

We welcome Bishop Loutitt this Sunday for his annual visitation. He usually comes to us in October, but this year is coming in Advent. This year's visit is especially important because of this summer's General Convention, and what has transpired since. Our Bishop voted no both to the election of then bishop-elect Gene Robinson of New Hampshire and to the resolution which affirms same-sex unions. The Bishop will address the Adult Class at 9:30am, and then preach at 10:30am. Please seize this opportunity to come and hear the Bishop.

With the pseudo-consecration of the Bishop of New Hampshire, the realignment of the Anglican Communion began. One could say that it began in truth when the faithful congregations of New Westminster, Vancouver, protesting the passage of same-sex unions at their Diocesan Convention, walked out. One could even say that it actually began with the ordination of women and the change of the Prayer Book, when a million members left the Episcopal Church. But the pseudo-consecration of Gene Robinson will be remembered as the event that confirmed the apostasy of the Episcopal Church to the world. While for some, the word apostasy seems too strong, it is the reality. Pronouncements from within ECUSA and from without ECUSA both in the Anglican Communion and in the Church Catholic have been crystal clear. Not all the pronouncements that will be made have been made. More will come.

From within ECUSA, a number of Dioceses and their Bishops have repudiated the event in New Hampshire and have disassociated them-selves from the apparatus of the Presiding Bishop and the Executive Council. They have cut off their money, and they are forming a confessing alliance to steer the course for orthodox Episcopalians in the task of realignment.

They are not leaving the Episcopal Church. This is a crucial point to grasp. The AAC and its members are not leaving anything. They are taking the lead in a spiritual crisis to insure that the true substance of the Episcopal Church continues. It is now becoming quite evident that those who support the actions of General Convention and New Hampshire are isolating themselves from the Christian Church at large.

Most of what is being done for realignment within ECUSA comes from the leadership of the American Anglican Council, with which St. John's

has affiliated as a member parish. Our position is somewhat different from those in dioceses that are hostile to orthodoxy. Our Bishop voted "no" on both crucial issues, but he has not yet decided to join the American Anglican Council. Our hope is that he will.

In those dioceses, which are hostile to orthodox parishes, the AAC is gathering applications for Adequate Episcopal Oversight, which means that a parish is starting the process to align itself with an orthodox bishop. The process for this realignment was given its inception with the statement of the Primates in October. Their intention was not that the Presiding Bishop of the Episcopal Church administer this oversight, but rather that the process of finding a Bishop suitable to the orthodox parish be done in consultation between the parish and the Archbishop of Canterbury. The Diocesan Bishops who are hostile to orthodox parishes are left out of the process. Their apostasy has undermined whatever trust they might once have enjoyed. The AAC is acting to bring to birth what the Primates conceived. Thus far the active Bishops in the Episcopal Church who have formally disassociated themselves from the Presiding Bishop and all those who participated in the consecration as well as those who voted for it at General Convention are: South Carolina; Pittsburgh; Albany, NY; Florida; Central Florida; Rio Grande; Quincy; San Joaquin; Fort Worth; Western Kansas; Springfield, Ill.; Tennessee; San Diego; Fond du lac; Southwest Florida; Dallas. There are an additional eleven bishops who are either retired, or act as Suffragan or assisting bishops who dissented along with these active bishops.

From without ECUSA, Provinces of the Anglican Communion have already declared themselves out of communion with ECUSA. These churches represent those who will no longer tolerate the heresy and schism of ECUSA. The fact that these provinces, whose Archbishops were present at Lambeth with the Archbishop of Canterbury in October, have acted so quickly shows that our circumstance is clear and spiritually dangerous. It is a great pity and indicative of our spiritual complacency that we in the Diocese of Georgia are not more grieved and distressed about these declarations. Thus far the Provinces who have declared themselves in impaired communion with the pro-New Hampshire forces are: Tanzania; Uganda; Nigeria; Kenya, Central Africa; Southeast Asia; the Southern Cone; and the West Indies. These Provinces represent much of what is called the Global South, and constitute the majority of Anglican Christians. These are the churches whose numbers are growing rapidly in contradistinction to those of northern Europe and North America.

But what should really gain our attention is not just the break in Communion within the Episcopal Church and within the larger Anglican Communion, but also the utter severance of other ties to the Church Catholic. The Roman-Catholic Church warned the Presiding Bishop of the consequences of his heretical consecration of Gene Robinson. Now Bishop Griswold has resigned as the Anglican co-chair of the Anglican-Roman Catholic International Commission. That commission is all but dissolved. In addition to the severing of ecumenical relations by the Roman Catholic Church, the Russian Orthodox issued a strong rebuke to ECUSA and declared itself unable to continue in their two hundred-year-old communications. The Heads of the Coptic Orthodox Church, the Syrian Orthodox Church, and the Armenian Orthodox Church have cut off the work of the Anglican Oriental Orthodox International Commission. Our conversations with the Churches of Catholic

Christianity have been seriously injured.

And so the realignment has begun. It will not do for smug Episcopalians to say that we have weathered similar storms. These are not simply the common troubles experienced every day in the church. We are talking about the fracturing of the Anglican Communion and the Church Catholic.

What is at stake is the light of the Kingdom of God, the light that saves and renews and heals. Those who advocate sin as righteousness obscure that light. Such people endanger the souls of those who accept and practice such behavior.

We must be clear about this. God will hold every Bishop and Priest and Christian layman accountable for advocating and teaching what is contrary to the plain reading of Scripture and the unanimous teaching of Catholic Christianity.

There is this finally to be said. In the weeks and months ahead conflict will ensue. The Bishops that become hostile toward their orthodox parishes, and who depose their priests and sue for their property have absolutely no shred of moral integrity or Christian sensibility. It is clear that the vast body of the Christian Church worldwide is in agreement with the orthodox parishes within ECUSA. If these unorthodox Bishops cannot accept that these parishes, and not the radical element of the Episcopal church, hold the actual tradition of the Church and the understanding of the Bible that has been taught and received for two thousand years, and for this reason are morally and theologically worthy of free access, along with their property, into the new alignment of churches, they will cause untold hardship and grief. But if they insist on wielding a heavy hand, they will reap the whirlwind.

The Rev. Dr. Michael L. Carreker

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