

Archbishop Anne's Lent Message

"Man does not live by bread alone, but by every word that comes from the mouth of God." (Matt.4.4)



The Wilderness in the Holy Land – (Algoma Pilgrimage, April 2018)

The first temptation Jesus faces in the wilderness is an identity test to see whether he truly understands who he is as the Son of God, and how he will live into that understanding.

"If you are the Son of God, turn these stones into bread," Satan urges the famished Jesus – wanting to cast self-doubt in his mind and have him question the nature of his mission and ministry, making it primarily about satisfying his personal needs and less than the all encompassing plan of God. Being part of the **'me'** generation, Satan's self-centred nature always forgets about the other, and of course he wants to beguile Jesus into doing the same thing.

Hungry though he is, Jesus won't be tricked by the wily tempter. With the words of the Scripture in his heart and on his lips Jesus refuses to give in to this temptation or to any other temptation. "It is written", Jesus says, "Man does not live by bread alone, but by every word that comes from the mouth of God." (Matt.4.4)

The temptations that Jesus encountered during his 40 day sojourn in the wilderness are his – but they are not only his – they are the temptations of all of God's people in every age. They are not only temptations to 'do' what we really want to do, but to 'be' someone other than God calls us to be.

The Israelites faced these temptations in the wilderness on their way to the Promised Land when they experienced a time of testing. Several chapters in the Exodus story are given over to their complaints about being brought out of Egypt, their hunger, and their angst.

The Church of today gives into this temptation when it tends to the needs of a few issues or people while failing to address the many aspects of its life and mission in Christ. In doing this, the church risks losing the length and breadth and height of its ministry and becomes a 'one issue', 'one need', 'one word', 'one person' church.

Jesus reminds us that God speaks many words, not just one. As a young boy growing up in Nazareth, Jesus had heard the Scriptures read in the Synagogue and, through them, grew in wisdom and understanding. He lived into those words and they were constantly in his heart and mind. His very last words as he hung dying on the cross were words of forgiveness and compassion for the world he loved so much. Words from Scripture.

In the wilderness, Jesus is hungry, very hungry, but he will not allow the tempter to restrict his diet, or ours. God wants to feed the hunger of the whole world, not just ours. There is a place at the Eucharistic table for everyone, youth or elder, rich or poor, socialite or social misfit, gay or straight, the power-filled or the powerless. We are all sinners, yearning for God's grace, mercy and forgiveness.

Writer Tom Long pictures us hungry and thirsty people in this way: "*standing in front of the, longest and most lavish buffet table, the gospel banquet, but starving and distrustful, we are tempted to fill our plates with crusts of bread only.*" (Thomas Long, *Matthew* p38)

Several years ago, on one of his visits to Algoma, I recall Bishop Mwita Akiri speaking about our partnership with the Diocese of Tarime as a group from our diocese planned their first visit to Tanzania. +Mwita challenged any notion we might have about the people of his diocese being poor. "You are mistaken," +Mwita said. "In fact, the people of Tarime are rich because they have the Gospel of Jesus Christ."

Like Jesus, like the people of Tarime, like Christians everywhere, we have the richness and the fullness of the Scriptures in our Anglican churches every day. We are spiritually fed and nourished by 'every word' that comes from the mouth of God. Our liturgies are filled with gospel words and we are formed by the prayers we pray and sing on Sundays and

throughout the week in services of Holy Communion, Morning and Evening Prayer. We hear holy words spoken from lecterns and preached from the pulpit as they are interpreted to us in sermons and homilies. We are a community that is continually shaped by God's revelation as we are led by the Spirit and engage in the movement from hearing the Scriptures to internalizing them with others in our faith communities.

Every generation has to approach anew the task of engaging with and interpreting the Scriptures, which is the practice of locating ourselves in the biblical narrative of God's unfolding purpose to redeem the good creation that has fallen through sin. The church, along with Israel, reads that story. But as it does, so it also recognizes itself as part of that story. And it tells, indeed embodies, that story to the world as witness to God's faithfulness in Jesus Christ. This story comes to completion in the "summing up" of all things in Jesus Christ (Ephesians 1:10), which is nothing less than "a new heaven and a new earth" (Revelation 21:1)

The actions of the church in the present fill the story out, bridging the time of Jesus' life, death, resurrection, ascension, and the time of his return. As the church worships and as it interprets Scripture, it does theology.

In this season of Lent which is given for us to redirect and rededicate our lives to Christ, let us never forget who and whose we are, remaining true to our calling as God's beloved children, marked with the cross as Christ's own forever.

Jesus remained true to his calling as God's beloved Son in the full knowledge that his life would end on a cross, given in love for the sake of the world. This is the same Christ who promised to be with the church, 'always, to the end of the age.' (Matt. 28: 20), giving strength and supporting the church in its time of testing.

BLESSED Lord, who hast caused all holy Scriptures to be written for our learning: Grant that we may in such wise hear them, read, mark, learn, and inwardly digest them, that by patience and comfort of thy holy Word, we may embrace and ever hold fast the blessed hope of everlasting life, which thou hast given us in our Saviour Jesus Christ. Amen. (2nd Sunday in Advent: BCP)

Regional Gatherings

In preparation for the Special Synod that I have called in May to bring advice on the place of same sex marriage in Algoma, I invite everyone to attend one of the remaining four Regional Gatherings which are being held across the diocese. The aim of the Regional Gatherings is to share information (how we got to where we are now as a church with respect to same sex marriage; what the motion is all about coming before our synod; the shape of the Special Synod; questions people might have) as well as formation as we delve into the Scriptures and learn more about how Anglicans engage with them. Everyone is warmly invited to attend these gatherings regardless of your views on the question of same sex marriage. Several helpful resources have already been posted on the Diocese of Algoma website ([Synod Notes](#)), so check those out too.

The dates of the Regional Gatherings are Thunder Bay-North Shore – February 29th; Algoma - April 4th; Sudbury–Manitoulin - March 19th; Temiskaming – March 28th; and Muskoka – March 21st. Please ask your incumbent for the exact locations and times of the gatherings.

As we make our way towards this Special Synod please hold the whole church in your prayers as we continue to wrestle with this difficult subject where we do not all share the same views and where many feel cast out because of theirs. The table that Jesus invites us to belongs to him and it is long enough and wide enough to hold everyone who would sit at it.

This comes with my prayers and blessings for a Holy Lent,

+Anne