



St. Andrew's Tidings

The following sermon was given by our Presiding Bishop, The Most Rev. Katharine Jefferts Schori at the beginning of the Consecration weekend. The clergy gathered at Christ Church Cathedral at 10 a.m. on Friday. I felt it was too good not to pass on to you. The Eucharist was followed with time for conversation with Bishop Katharine, and then with Russell. At the end of the time, I was fortunate to be the presenter of the Bishop's Purse to Bishop Duncan as a representative of the standing Committee. M+

Thomas à Kempis
Christ Church Cathedral, Mobile, AL
Diocesan clergy gathering
25 July 2015

The Most Rev. Katharine Jefferts Schori
Presiding Bishop and Primate
The Episcopal Church

Thomas à Kempis was born in 1380 to a blacksmith and a school teacher. His name was originally Thomas Hemerken, which means "little hammer," probably a reference to his father's trade. He grew up in Kempen, Germany, whence his more familiar name, and at age 12 followed his older brother to school in Deventer, in the Netherlands. The Latin school he attended had been founded by a new monastic group called the Brethren of the Common Life. The Brethren grew out of a reform movement focused on reinvigorating community life for lay people, and teaching practical Christianity. They were a later chapter in what began with the Beguines and Beghards in the 12th century. The schools of the Brothers of the Common Life were seedbeds for later reformers as well, including Erasmus and Martin Luther.

Perhaps what is most significant is the ongoing reality that life in community continues to challenge the Church – it can be radical and transformative of the members and the larger world. The Brethren of the Common Life became a monastic order only because other orders, particularly the Dominicans, couldn't abide the thought of lay people living together in community without vows – it was deemed at least irregular and often heretical, and some were tried and executed for it. It's a surprising reaction to what Acts says about early Christian communities holding their goods in common and sharing as each had need, but it can deeply

threaten the status quo. I remember a middle school summer camper responding to the Acts communities by saying, “why they’re communists!” I don’t think he knew a more damning epithet. The good news is that we’re seeing contemporary initiatives like “new monasticism,” or even the Young Adult Service Corps and Episcopal Service Corps. Each of these has tried to live into the basics of Christianity in a particular time and context, and they all begin with the reality that none of us walks this way alone.

Thomas the little hammerer went to Latin school with the Brethren and stayed. As a lay brother, he worked as a scribe, making at least four copies of the Bible, and composing new texts as well. Some dozen years later he was ordained a priest and eventually elected sub prior, with responsibility for training the new members. What we have today in *The Imitation of Christ* is likely the fruit of that work, attempting to teach the essentials of what it means to follow Jesus. That work has been translated more times and into more languages than any other book but the Bible.

Thomas eventually died in his bed in 1471 – at the age of 90. So, what did he teach? Christlikeness – simplicity, humility, and what we might call valuing orthopraxy over orthodoxy, right doing over right understanding: for example, he says “I would rather feel contrition than know how to define it.” Thomas shows the way to God through obedience, patience, self-control, and poverty. It has to do with humility, knowing oneself as a creature made of the same dust as everything else. It is the way of the cross, and it frees the spirit within us to see and meet God. Poverty and hunger are the keys to living like Jesus. If we are willing to enter into the poverty around us and within ourselves, to know and experience hunger both physical and spiritual, we are set on what Thomas calls “the way of peace to the land of everlasting clearness.” It’s not an easy road, but it is the way to life – abundant life.

We’ve seen the fruits of life like that in Charleston recently, as the brothers and sisters of the common life of Emanuel AME have claimed and shared forgiveness for the murders in their midst. How can anyone come to that land of clearness, other than walking the way of poverty and hunger?

One of the growing gifts in this Church is a turning outward to discover the hunger and poverty in the communities where we live and work. If we begin to focus on the hunger at the margins around us, we soon discover our own hunger and poverty. The double journey, outward and inward, usually begins in pain and discomfort – how am I going to talk to them? What can I possibly have to say or contribute? How do I relate to a person who seems to be a stranger? Even if that’s not your primary issue, it certainly is for many in our churches. It’s why we have a poor reputation as evangelists, and it is the truth under the apocryphal saying that

everybody who should be an Episcopalian already is. Many of our spouses can tell stories of being ignored or disrespected and then having parishioners apologize and say they didn't know who they were talking to.

Pain and hunger begins to change how we encounter the other. It grows when we glimpse the swollen and scarred feet of a man sitting on the sidewalk, and begins to resonate when we recognize the child of God with no place to lay his head. A good deal of that happened around here after Katrina. What a blessing that has been! The hunger for justice begins to waken, as well as questions about how one person or one small community can possibly transform the mess. There is poverty in knowing we must depend on another – and also deep joy when we do. Tomorrow we're going to give public and outward evidence of what's been growing here over time. A new bishop is a sign of hope in the face of hunger and poverty. The new bishop is also a witness to the despair and emptiness within and around us all. You've elected Russell as an icon for the journey this body of Christ is on. He's here to help this body listen intently to the cries in the desert, to tune the ears and sharpen the vision and learn to feel the hunger pangs. Particularly as a nexus for the deacons the bishop has a vocation to keep the body focused on orthopraxy – doing the gospel. Sometimes it's in tension with the orthodoxy part, the upholding the doctrine, discipline, and worship part, but don't let that be a distraction. Jesus had no compunction about healing people on the sabbath or inviting religious outsiders in to the feast. Deacons and diaconal ministers (and that means all of us) are the community's cattle prods, pushing us out to risk a wider community.

Tomorrow we're going to do the public work of affirming Russell as a bishop – as part of how we remind ourselves of what it means to imitate Christ. The work can never stop as long as we have breath. God's body is hungry and poor – and the body of Christ has the ability to feed and encourage and bring hope. We're meant to be little hammers and hammerers, too, for the world needs more than a little remodeling if it's going to approximate the Kingdom of God. That may be why God has called an architect to lead the work here in this season.

So get up, get out, and get busy! We will discover the Reign of God as we go out and build communities more responsive to pain and hunger. The healing and the banquets we know on this journey keep us moving – and hammering. As Rabbi Tarphon said long ago, “The day is short, the task is abundant, the laborers are lazy, the wages are great, and the Master of the house is insistent. It is not up to you to finish the task, but neither are you free to desist from it.”^[1]

^[1] Rabbi Tarphon, Mishna Pirkei Avot 2:15–16



(Courtesy of Blue Room Photography-Cindy McCrory)

The New Bishop rides with the Most Rev. Katharine Jefferts Schori to the reception following the consecration. The blue in his chasuble and mitre is reminiscent of the waters of the Central Gulf Coast.



Joe McDaniel reads the second lesson. On the left is The Right Rev. J. Neil Alexander, Dean of the School of Theology, Sewanee; Bishop Duvall; and on the right is The Most Rev. Katherine Jefferts Schori. The head behind the altar is our own Deacon Ray who read the Gospel and did the dismissal.

COMING UP

Kick Off Sunday

September 13

Bay Lights

September 25-26

Sunday School for All Ages

September 13

*GUESS HOW MUCH WAS IN THE
PENNIES FROM HEAVEN
BUCKET !!*

*PUT YOUR GUESS ON THE
POSTER PROVIDED. The person
coming closest to the amount will
win a prize!!*

*You will also win a prize if you
match the amount!*

This is the last Sunday to Guess!



Beckwith

Bay Lights is Coming Up!

September 25-26

We are collecting wine for the weekend again, so bring your wine and leave it in Byrne Hall.

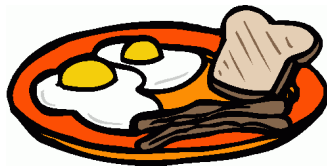
St. Andrew's is in charge of the Bishop's Barbecue. We will be taking donations (tax deductible) for the barbecue which we will purchase; but we will also need side dishes such as baked beans, slaw, potato salad, chips, and soda.

We will also be collecting items for the silent auction. If you have a vacation place, a condo, a boat for a boat trip that would be auctioned, please talk with Kathy Lopez or Camilla Jimmerson



FUN! FUN! FUN! CARD PARTY

The Gulf Coast Women's Club is now holding a monthly Card Party on the fourth Monday of every month in Byrne Hall. They serve lunch and play all kinds of games—bridge, shanghai, hand and foot, Mexican dominoes, etc.—from 10 until 2. The cost is \$15 which covers the cost of lunch and is a fundraiser for their service groups. They would love to have anyone from St. Andrew's join them! Contact Teri Floore (763-2439) for reservations especially bridge players so they have full tables) so they know how many to plan on feeding.



Please sign up to cook for Summer Breakfast. There is a signup sheet on the bulletin board in Byrne Hall. Dates that are available are August 9,16.

***BREAKFAST THIS WEEK AT 8:30!
\$3.00 PER PERSON; \$5.00 PER
COUPLE; \$7.00 PER FAMILY***

Please keep the following in your prayers ;, Elijah, Dan, Anne, Tracy, Page, Norma, Lisa, Elaine, Madison, John, Beth, Carol, Virginia, Iva, Frank, Cynthia, Bob, Harry, Bill, Brent, Blaine, Bret, Phillip, Jeremy & Heather, Kirsten, Titus, Charley, Joni, Jon, Abel, Chris, Shawn S., John, Sallie, Charles, Wendy, David, Marilyn, Sandra, Vincent, Leslie, Mary, Bobbie, Betty and Jim, Hong, Shawn, Bobby, Kirsten, Hazen, Snookie, Anna

(Names are left on the prayer list for 3 weeks, unless specified for a longer time)

We pray for our men and women in the Armed Forces at home and abroad: Jeff, James, Andrew, Kenneth, Evan, Ryan, Joe, Nate, Richard, David, Brian, Jason, Billy, Colin, Todd, Brett, Jordan, Jeremiah, Richard, Patricia