



## In Christ there is no East or West

December 3, 2014

Tonight finds me in Labrador. It has been a busy week with Confirmation in Labrador City on Sunday morning followed by the Induction of the Reverend Jolene Peters as Rector of the Parish of Labrador West that evening. On Monday I held a congregational meeting at Wabush and this evening I took part in the Induction of Archdeacon Nellie Thomas as Rector of the Parish of Lake Melville, Happy Valley-Goose Bay. Archdeacon Sandra Tilley has been with me for most things but also visited Cartwright in between.

Labrador holds many memories for me as it was here in the “Big Land” I began my ordained ministry in the 1980s. I was ordained Priest at St. Andrew’s Church in Happy Valley and many of my “firsts” in ministry happened in Labrador: my first baptism, my first wedding, my first funeral, and so very much more. Our first child was born as Kathy and I arrived in Labrador and our second child as we departed for Arnold’s Cove. With Adam’s early years in Labrador and Ben’s early years in Arnold’s Cove we still joke about raising a Labradorean and a Placentia Bay Man in the same house!

I like to think the journey has prepared me in some way to be Bishop of the Diocese of Eastern Newfoundland and Labrador.

We are a diocese that includes all of the Avalon Peninsula of Newfoundland and almost all of Labrador; the exception being the Parish of Forteau that is part of the Diocese of Western Newfoundland. It’s a geographically-unique diocese with two very distinct regions – Newfoundland and Labrador – although a sociologist would identify many other differences within that grouping: from the metro area of St. John’s and Mount Pearl to the rural parts of Conception Bay North and South; from the inland and industrial places of Labrador to the more remote coastal communities. We are largely of English, Irish and (in Labrador) First-Nations descent although some of us are of French heritage and today it is common to meet Anglicans from many other parts of the world in our parishes. We are an amazingly (and increasingly) diverse church.

There are those today who speak of religion as only a source of division and conflict among people. That’s not true in the Diocese of Eastern Newfoundland and Labrador where we celebrate great diversity while proclaiming “One Lord, One Faith, One Baptism.” It is true that religion can sometimes divide people, but it is also very true that religion can bring different people together in good ways. There is abundant evidence for both in our world today. Jesus prayed that his followers be one. That does not mean that we will all look alike or think alike or act alike. But it does mean that we will celebrate a common faith in Him. St. Paul said it perfectly

in his letter to the Galatians (3:28): "For all of you who were baptized into Christ have clothed yourselves with Christ. There is neither Jew nor Greek, there is neither slave nor free, there is neither male nor female; for you are all one in Christ Jesus."

We do well to remember these words. We serve a Lord who crosses over all human boundaries.

It's like the old hymn:

***In Christ there is no East or West,  
in him no South or North,  
but one great fellowship of love  
throughout the whole wide earth ...***

***... In Christ now meet both East and West,  
in him meet South and North,  
all Christly souls are one in him,  
throughout the whole wide earth.***

Blessings,  
**+Geoff**