



Moments of Grace

from Bishop Geoff Peddle

The Diocese of Eastern Newfoundland & Labrador

The Ultimate Outsider

November 13, 2014

I had a great chat with our Lieutenant Governor on Sunday. The Honourable Frank Fagan and I found ourselves sitting together at the 150th Anniversary Celebrations of St. James' Church in Carbonear. It was a magnificent celebration that day, beginning with a worship service and ending with a banquet. We were both honoured to be part of the festivities and were able to discuss it at length that evening at the dinner. It's not as if the Lieutenant Governor and I don't see each other often; in fact we seem to cross paths just about every second week at one public event or another. We talked about that too. We are both grateful for the privilege of sharing in so many of the good things the people of this province are doing.

There is actually quite a bit in common between our two roles. Both of us represent established institutions: me, the Anglican Diocese of Eastern Newfoundland and Labrador; the Lieutenant Governor, Her Majesty the Queen. Our roles are often about making things official and we both represent venerable traditions through the roles we play and the offices we bear. We also spend a great deal of time on the road with hundreds of social engagements every year.

I told the clergy of the diocese last month that I used to believe that bishops were the ultimate insiders because of their connections and their proximity to the levers of power in the church. I no longer believe that. The power a bishop in our church wields today is a power that is exercised by consent. I believe that to be a good thing. Rather than being an insider, a bishop is really an outsider in many, many ways. Nearly a year into this ministry I still grieve the loss of a familiar parish community as it is replaced by 35 parish communities and 85 congregations. Every Sunday and many weekdays I find myself arriving at the doorstep of one or another of these parishes as a visitor. If anyone needs proof of this they only have to consider that I almost always arrive suitcase in hand!

A bishop, in so many ways, is an outsider because he or she always comes from somewhere else and then travels onward to somewhere else. They are always dependent upon the hospitality and welcome of the community they are visiting. When a bishop speaks it is always from the perspective of a traveler who is only with that community for a short time before departing for somewhere new.

It really is a unique perspective to have on the life of our church and it is a perspective that comes from belonging everywhere and belonging nowhere. Being a bishop has allowed me to see the church from an extraordinary viewpoint and with fresh eyes. Every week it's as if I meet my church all over again for the first time. And I find myself falling in love with my church over and over again because of the immense goodness I see all around me.

Sometimes, being an outsider can be a good thing.

Blessings,
+Geoff