



Unity in Diversity

November 20, 2014

I find myself at the Canadian House of Bishops this week. Twice a year the Anglican bishops across Canada meet to discuss, plan, pray, and share. I am what they call a “baby bishop” this year because I am one of the newest members to join the group. Fortunately there has been no initiation rite (or none that I am yet aware of) so the week has been pleasant, but busy. Beyond our discussions of common matters of interest to all of us, there have also been a number of presentations by individuals whose ministries are of importance to us as bishops, from end of life concerns to refugee and indigenous issues. A presentation from Tuesday was of special interest for me as it was from the Canadian Armed Forces Chaplain Branch. One of the speakers was Lieutenant Commander (The Venerable) Jennifer Gosse who now heads the training for all military chaplains in Canada. She has distinguished herself greatly in her chosen work and I was so proud to see her in her uniform. She remains a member of our diocese and was even introduced as “the former Archdeacon of Labrador” by Bishop Peter Coffin, the Bishop-Ordinary of the Armed Forces!

For nearly 30 years now I have found it helpful to regularly read my ordination vows. There are now three sets of those for me to read: the vows for the diaconate, the priesthood, and now the episcopacy. Everyone in holy orders would do well to revisit their ordination vows from time to time to remind themselves of all that they have pledged to do and be in life. There are many things that resonate with me every time I do that but one that has never changed has been the call to service in community. We are not alone in this work and even though our roles may change over the years we are called to exercise those ministries with others. That can sometimes be challenging.

In this wide and varied Anglican Church of Canada today we wrestle with a rich diversity of thought: liturgically, doctrinally, and ethically. One of the places that diversity is reflected most strongly is among the bishops of the church. I find it amusing, even ironic, that bishops with all of their diversity are also the ones responsible for guarding the unity of the one, holy, catholic and apostolic church.

Bishops may be particularly charged with finding unity in diversity but that’s nothing new for Anglicans. From our smallest bible study groups to our House of Bishops we can be a pretty varied lot when we want to be.

I’m OK with that.

Because even in our diversity our Lord tells us we can be one in Him.

Blessings,
+Geoff