



DIOCESE OF ALGOMA

From the Archbishop

7th Sunday after Epiphany,

Dear people of God,

Last week I had the privilege of being a guest at the Church of England's General Synod in London. As part of my visit, I was invited to preach at Holy Eucharist one morning and later that day address General Synod.

The Gospel from Mark (Mark 7: 14-23) was a particularly challenging one with Jesus's admonition to his followers that it is not what goes into the body that causes impurity or has the power to defile the person and alienate them from God, it is what comes out of a heart diseased with hate and arrogance.

Here is what I went on to say:

“What Jesus has uncovered to his disciples and his accusers has striking and immediate implications for us today. I do not have to say a word about the angry hate filled speech which fills the airwaves and is plastered all over social media along with the ever-increasing anxiety it provokes in a world already torn asunder – literally. “Sticks and stones may break my bones,” goes the old adage, “but words will never harm me.” While sticks and stones do indeed break bones, ill spoken words with the intent to hurt break lives.

The implications of what Jesus is saying to us today have a ripple effect for people of faith and we move from sphere to sphere from the personal, to the congregational, to the communal and political arena, eventually having global consequences.

Aleksander Solzhenitsyn, observing the truth that we are all people, capable of both good and bad. “The line separating good and evil passes not through states, nor between classes, nor between political parties, but right through every human heart and through all human hearts.” After quoting this in her truth to power sermon at Washington National Cathedral Bishop Budde went on to say this: The more we realize this, the more room we have within ourselves for humility, and openness to one another across our differences, because in fact, we are more like one another than we realize, and we need each other. (Bishop Mariann Budde)

We need each other. We are not a congregational church but part of a diverse global church - when one part suffers, we all suffer with it. Such was the case with our lived experience through the pandemic, as we witnessed in the Russian invasion of Ukraine, as we see in the present unsettled situation in the Middle East and in southern Sudan, and in this time of great concern for Canadians as recent events in the United States have the power to impact our daily lives.

The flip side of that is when one part rejoices, we all celebrate. There is much to celebrate in our diocese and parishes as we continue to do the gathering work of Christ as a people of unwavering hope.

Archbishop Desmond Tutu coined the term UBUNTU - a person is a person through other people. I need you and you need me. We need one another to be fully human.

In these difficult times we have in the scriptures the assurance that God's steadfast love is always with us. We have not been abandoned, and we are not alone in our suffering or in our struggle. We don't give up or give in but rather become examples to others of what it means to live within the triangle of self, other and God.

As Christians, the gospel imperative is for us to love and to show mercy to others. We continue our vital ministries of caring for the poor and the outcast, extending hospitality to refugees and strangers.

As people of courage, we must be unwavering and speak out for the voiceless ones and those who are marginalized. Our calling is to be peacemakers in our own contexts, making a difference there, and not just lovers of the notion of peace.

The gospel challenges us to be like those who are 'blessed' in the kingdom - who do not hate when hated but rather do good to those who hate and pray for them.

The Rev. Canon Rosalind Brown has written a book of *Prayers for Living* from her time in ministry in Durham Cathedral. One of the worshippers said these prayers, "say what I want to say to God." Here are two of the prayers that speak into this challenging time which I invite you to use in your personal devotions or in your public worship.

Prayer for Integrity in Public Life

We pray, O God, for integrity in the corridors of power and in the alleys of backstreet life:
 For all with power over others that can be used for good or ill,
 For all who control or manipulate financial and other resources,
 For all who can give or withhold what is needful for others to flourish,
 For all who hold the power of life and death,

And for all who have a measure of control that can be used selfishly or for the wellbeing of others.

O holy God, where power is corrupted, curtail its influence, and where power is used wisely, grant that it may prosper the wellbeing of your people. In the name of Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen

Inexpressible Need

Lord, when we have no words for the world's need,
We bring our muteness and pray once again, "Lord open our lips";
When despair is best expressed in tears, we bring our hope on behalf of a weeping world;
When we cannot see beyond the moment, we pray for hope that sees through the horizon;
When we barely dare to dream, stop us in our tracks and remind us of the fidelity that lies in hopeful living;
Lord, give us the strenuous hope to act faithfully for a world so often paralyzed by despair.
Amen

As we remain a people committed to seek the welfare of all peoples and nations be assured of my continued prayers for the important ministries that are unfolding in our parishes each and every day,

A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads "+ Anne Germond". The signature is written in black ink and is positioned to the left of the typed name.

The Most Rev. Anne Germond
Archbishop of Algoma
Sincerely,