

## 2019 Convention/Saturday Address

November 2, 2019

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*Once while Jesus was standing beside the lake of Gennesaret, and the crowd was pressing in on him to hear the word of God, he saw two boats there at the shore of the lake; the fishermen had gone out of them and were washing their nets. He got into one of the boats, the one belonging to Simon, and asked him to put out a little way from the shore. Then he sat down and taught the crowds from the boat. When he had finished speaking, he said to Simon, 'Put out into the deep water and let down your nets for a catch.' Simon answered, 'Master, we have worked all night long but have caught nothing. Yet if you say so, I will let down the nets.' When they had done this, they caught so many fish that their nets were beginning to break. So they signaled to their partners in the other boat to come and help them. And they came and filled both boats, so that they began to sink. But when Simon Peter saw it, he fell down at Jesus' knees, saying, 'Go away from me, Lord, for I am a sinful man!' for he and all who were with him were amazed at the catch of fish that they had taken; and so also were James and John, sons of Zebedee, who were partners with Simon. Then Jesus said to Simon, 'Do not be afraid; from now on you will be catching people.' When they had brought their boats to shore, they left everything and followed him. Luke 5:1-11*

I begin this address with gratitude. Gratitude for the clergy and laity who dedicate their time and talents to the Body of Christ. The Finance Committee, Dana Hall, James Pope, Doug Horner, Shawn Wamsley, and those who spent days and nights formulating the budget and attending the 12 hearings. To the committees who bind and strengthen the Church.

Dean Sullivan, the Cathedral staff, the diocesan staff for their dedicated work in preparation at this convention. The staff of your Offices of the Diocese. I see their active ministry, the deep faithfulness, and the love they have for you. Doug Horner, Sean McCauley and our contractor for their long hours in the renovation and construction of the new offices of the diocese.

My deepest gratitude is for you. Laity and clergy: the people who are indeed the Church. I quote St. Oscar Romero using the jubilant cry of Jesus, "I have known God because I am with God's people - you." Last year, we set forth ten ministry markers over the next five years. You can see the progress on the **Together** page on the website. I invite you to review them.

Put out into the deep. Peter is on the shore. He had been out all night in the boat, searching for fish. Tired and frustrated, he returns with empty nets. Jesus wasn't invited; he gets into the boat. The invasion of grace. Jesus calls him to leave the comfort of the shore, and "put out into the deep." Imagine what Peter thought.

We tried, we're tired, and there are no fish out there. He wants to stay by the shore. Yet, Peter responds and sets out. He lowers the nets, and when he pulls them up - they are bursting.

Deep water stirs the soul. It suggests the unknown. It implies great power. It inspires fear. It offers a challenge. It requires trust and courage to put out into the deep. We can understand why it is easy to stay in the shallows, hugging the shore. We do not know what awaits. It is disturbing to see the familiarity and security recede in the distance.<sup>1</sup>

We are required to be vulnerable, submit to something greater than ourselves, or what we cannot control. As the prayer says: “Disturb us, Lord, to dare more boldly, To venture on wider seas. Where storms will show your mastery; Where losing sight of land, We shall find the stars.”

In deep waters, we can remember the shore with gratitude, live in the present with excitement, and to look forward to the future with confidence. The scripture is appropriate for your journey because the only way we can put out to the deep is with Jesus Christ.

Today more than ever, it is Christ. The Church cannot be another fiefdom of the world. We cannot lose our identity in the world. We are not a social club based on a religious ideal. Neither are we a social service organization, or a political entity. It is Jesus Christ. All our words, actions, and life must be formed and centered in Christ.

Christ, in every breath, word, thought, and action. Holy encounter after holy encounter — prayer after prayer. We can no longer be indistinguishable from the multitude of organizations and institutions in the world. We offer life - in Jesus Christ. What life in Jesus can bring us as individuals and as a society? If we do not proclaim Jesus Christ, we should not exist. Instead of spending our time telling people to believe in Jesus, let’s actually believe Jesus. Over the past 3 ½ years, together, we have prepared to go to the deep.

We have pruned, made the hard decisions, recast our assets, and are now meeting our obligations. No longer willing to sit by the shore. To put out to the deep, the church, our church must not be content to become a museum or frozen in amber. To do things they say cannot be done. We can no longer plan nor hope for a church suited for 1950.

We must prepare for 2050 and beyond. The church grows when it goes to the deep. We cannot continue to allow the church to be an institution, and we must be willing to do non-institutional things. Rather than seeking the latest growth programs, fighting over liturgy, determining who belongs. Wringing our hands over attendance and decline, let us go deep.

If we are not proclaiming Christ and supporting one another, cast it over the side. If we are not giving food to the hungry, clothing the naked, giving drink to the thirsty, providing shelter to those without or healing the sick, we should have no time for it or all the distracting games. Let’s stop playing church and be the church. Words are cheap substitutes for actions.

Live fearlessly, and let’s put out to the deep. We must continually reassess if our current structures are working. Let’s reassess and if they are slowing us down, if they are obstacles, if they keep us close to the shore, throw it overboard. Review what people are doing around the world and develop new structures that will help us to be innovative, agile, and keep going deep.

Let us show the world Kingdom values instead of worldly values. We continually focus solely on attendance in the pews. Let us weigh with equal value those sacred encounters in our outreach, feeding, and clothing in the name of Christ. Let's fail, fail again, and fail daringly and have the willingness to accept failure. It is okay. We get up and throw our nets out once again.

Instead of acting like a business and expecting relatively short-term goals, let's set our eyes on that distant shore and focus on the extremely long-term goals. Results are not the only measure in God's kingdom. We will be accountable, transparent, and durable stewards, yet remember the words of Thomas Merton: "Do not depend on the hope of results. You may have to face the fact that your work will achieve no result at all, if not perhaps results opposite to what you expect. As you get used to this idea, you start more and more to concentrate not on the results, but on the value, the rightness, the truth of the work itself. You gradually struggle less and less for an idea and more and more for specific people. In the end, it is the reality of personal relationship that saves everything."

In this same vein, we are planting seeds of prayer, allowing the Holy Spirit to move. Communities of prayer and action. In Epiphany, we will begin meeting and praying over the formation of monastic communities in our diocese. People will work in regular jobs and at the same time, live in a community. Lay and ordained. A place of formation, spaces of discernment and disciples, prepared to enter and serve our churches. The world expects a predictable Church. We are not here to be what the world expects and do not want our ministry to be predictable.

As a diocese, we need to support one another as individuals and as churches. We are not 134 individual congregations; we are 134 churches. Where we do not merely tolerate one another, we celebrate one another. Not only called to support one another in Southeast Pennsylvania, as the church, we need to go to the deep with the Episcopal Church and the Anglican Communion. In Lent, we will begin partnerships with the dioceses of New Jersey and Delaware around Hispano/Latino outreach.

Let us endeavor to erase the lines of geography, economy, and race. We are one diocese, one people, one church. We are all God's beloved. As in scripture: "They signaled to their partners in the other boat to come to help them. They came and filled both boats." If one church fails, we all fail. If one church grows, we all grow. Let us lock arms together and go out together.

Let us yoke with one another, joint ministries, outreach, joint liturgies. Let the world see. Thus, I propose five holy days of service in our diocese. Day of Feeding. Day of Clothing. Day of Healing, Day of Serving. Day of Education. The nets will tear. The other boats come and join them. Let's empower the work of evangelism. Each and every one of you are disciples called to go to the deep.

The mission of the church is not reserved for a group of ordained. The laity should lead it. We are all responsible for evangelism. Let the nets of the evangelism committee be filled. I am asking for you to give your time. In 2020, we will provide various stewardship resources for our churches. We are also inaugurating the Bishop's Appeal to empower the ministry of the church.

We have created **a link on the website** so that you can donate directly to a range of ministries. We will begin a series of youth pilgrimages to empower our youth and put their fire and desire out in the world. In terms of supporting one another, we must do something necessary.

Over the past four years, we have made good progress toward promoting a level playing field in deployment for women clergy and clergy of color. It is not enough. We cannot just make progress. We must address the pay inequities between male and female clergy in the diocese and for people of color. Using past work by the Wellness Commission.

I am asking this convention to resolve and pass that a special task force is created to address equity in clergy compensation. With financial resources, to have an outside firm objectively perform an audit to make known and available by Convention 2020. Assembling best practices from throughout the Church that has proven results

Replicable in reversing inequity in deployment and compensation. We need specific focus on inequities created by the increase in part-time clergy positions who are effectively full-time at lower compensation and the interim rector system. I would also like to set goals for all churches in transition that can be evaluated and measured objectively by the task force, so that we are all accountable. We are all in this boat together. In supporting one another, I thank all of you that give of your sacred resources.

Those with abundant resources or those giving whatever you can. I thank you for giving of your money, time, gifts of intellect, design, labor. We are in this boat together. If we are going put out to the deep we must be a church of the Beatitudes. We must put out to the deep and go to the poor. We have one of the highest poverty rates in the nation.

We the highest number of children in poverty. Poverty is not only an economic condition; there are sisters and brothers who are experiencing spiritual, physical, and mental poverty. Together we must work not merely to feed or clothe them for a day but to help break the chains which hold them for all time.

We must be a church that goes out into the world and meets the poor in our own poverty. Not from the top down, but the bottom up. Just as our lives hung in the balance when Christ entered this world, we must enter into the same world. As Jesus entered into our suffering, we must enter into their suffering. Our love for Jesus cannot be solely for Jesus. It has to be for one another.

We must love all or love nothing. For many, life is not merely a series of bad choices, terrible luck, or only having a rough time. Lives are being lost. The blessed are being murdered on our streets by gun violence, killed because of the color of their skin, what they look like, who they love, or how God created them. Suicides are of epidemic proportions, and migrants are dying seeking hope.

Drugs do not discriminate by race, economics, or geographic location. Women are being abused and beaten. Just as our lives hung in the balance when Christ entered this world, we must enter

into the same world. If Jesus is king then Caesar is not. Blessed are we, let us live fearlessly in Christ. To take up our crosses. For many, they carry the cross every hour and every day.

Yet if we stand at the foot of the cross with them, where the cross meets the earth, love radiates outward. As we put out to the deep, in Christ, future generations will be released from the chains of misery. God became poor; let us have the courage to become poor. The Gospel of Jesus Christ is always good news to the poor. We must be the church that goes to the poor.

Over the next year, you will see the development of the Clare Center in Kensington which will spiritually support those in need, the unsheltered, and those suffering from substance abuse; and specifically provide support to female sex workers and trafficking victims.

We will develop a covenant with the poor with specific outcomes that will hold us accountable. I also ask one other item from this convention. This convention resolves and passes the following. One of the first actions of the new Board of Trustees will be to create a system by which a percentage of all unrestricted financial gifts received are dedicated to poverty. A special fund set aside will be used to support direct ministry for and with those living in poverty as well as addressing the root causes of poverty. The Board of Trustees will determine what percentage will be applied to all gifts received and report that information back to Diocesan Council and the 237th Convention. The most important thing is to give our lives. As for me, in my fourth year as Bishop, while I know budgets and administration and use them. I am always profoundly involved but I was not called to be solely an administrator of an institution.

We have a brilliant staff and volunteers with great expertise. I was called to be a shepherd. To journey with you, be with you. A shepherd should smell like the sheep. I remind you that my grandfather was a shepherd, so I understand. I will be out, even more, engaging with your ministries, teaching, praying, and going out to the deep with you.

I must also decrease so that Christ can increase. I do not believe that Bishops are princes of the church. The Bishop is the least of laity and clergy. My call to serve you. Jesus' vulnerability always takes me and moves me. If we are going to change the church, it must start with me. To demonstrate visibly in the same way when Jesus washed the disciples' feet.

Or, when Francis publicly stripped off his fancy clothes. To walk the journey with you. To go to the deepest parts with you. I will endeavor to serve with simplicity where you continue to know Daniel, your servant, and a slave of Christ. I will pray for ways in the time our Lord gives us together that you will not merely observe my Episcopacy; I want you to share my Episcopacy.

Jesus said to Simon, "Do not be afraid; from now on, you will be catching men." When they brought their boats to the shore, they left everything and followed him. Remember, in the following chapter of the Gospel, after they put out to deep, the disciples were out in the city healing. People were tearing down the roofs to see our Lord.

People were getting up and walking, and old wineskins were replaced with new. Just as Christ called Peter to venture out into the deep, He asks the same of us. To place all our trust in Him.

To venture forth into unknown and deep water because He is right there with us. Our faith teaches us not to fear because Christ is present. Perfect love casts out all fear.

To live fearlessly in Jesus Christ. We are trusting because God is in charge. Life will come up from the depths. Let us put out to the deep — an invasion of Grace, which is Christ stepping into our boat. If we do, I can only imagine the smile on the face of Jesus. Diocese of Pennsylvania, let us put out into the deep.

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<sup>i i</sup> Excerpt paraphrased from Father Jack Peterson, a campus minister at Marymount University in Arlington, VA.