

**The Rt. Rev. Audrey Cady Scanlan
Bishop's Address
Diocese of Central Pennsylvania
Diocesan Convention 2016
Spooky Nook, Manheim**

Last night, you heard a story about me (the beginning of my career as a McDonald's Evangelist) and you shared stories with each other from your own lives, as connected to our Holy Scripture.

...all in an effort to build community and to gain a better understanding of God's call to us and our identity as disciples of Jesus.

This afternoon... let me share another story: a story of *us*. In parable form.

The Kingdom of God is like...

The Kingdom of God is like... a woman who travels from her homeland because God said, "Go," and the People said "Come." When she arrives in this new place, she finds it a delight to the eyes and a feast for the senses: tall, green mountains; wide, generous fields with winding rows

of corn; a broad river; sparkling streams ... trout, deer... eagles and hawks soaring in the sky; brilliant sunsets of orange and pink and red; hope-filled *sunrises* of orange and pink and red, cast against the blue-black hills.

The people are kind. And swift to love. They share the bounty of the land as the woman makes her way around: eggs, honey, strawberry jam. Even some homemade wine. They gather with her for worship-singing psalms and hymns and spiritual songs to God with thankful hearts (Col 3:16). They wash their children in the waters of baptism, receive, again, the Holy Spirit in services of Confirmation and Reception, and join to witness the miracle of Christ made manifest, again and again, in the holy food of Jesus' body and blood.

The people and the woman break bread, share table fellowship and they introduce the woman to real bologna, chicken corn soup, a soup with broad noodles called "chicken pot pie", and the decadence of whoopee pies, Hershey Chocolate and Wilbur's buds. And it was good.

An affection develops and a trust begins to build and the woman hears about the people's sorrow: of lost industry, environmental damage, struggling communities, drug epidemics and gun violence in the cities. These concerns are raised up, held up high, and offered with a weariness that begins to wonder from where will their salvation come.

And... it is clear, to the *woman*, that **salvation is *in* their midst- already-** in the faith that they hold in the Lord God and in the power of the Holy Spirit. This faith and this power fuel an *amazing* amount of work: in soup kitchens, in community gardens, clothing drives, and backpack projects. The Spirit is alive in prison visits, nursing home calls, at hospital bedsides and in the halls of St. Stephen's school. God is active among those gleaning in the cornfields and apple orchards, at the Community Computer Outreach Center in Mt Carmel, in the voices of the children's choir at St. Andrew's, York and among the hundreds of souls who find community and salvation in our parish halls in 12 Step meetings. The Spirit of God blows through projects like Transform Jersey Shore. We Share in Marietta. Through the circle of teenagers at a Happening, and in innovative worship on Saturday nights at St. James. In the Beacon Program in Altoona, the Beacon *Clinic* in Harrisburg, and

the Episcopal Home in Shippensburg. Jesus' hands are reaching out in new programs like campus ministry in Bloomsburg, in brave building projects like at St. John, York, and in the wilderness hiking ministries of the Northern Tier.

Our salvation is at hand- as God opens our hearts with compassion to care for the lost and lonely, the poor in spirit, and those who know not the Lord Jesus, but who receive measures of Gods' grace in the mission of our Church.

The Kingdom of God is at hand. Here, in Central Pennsylvania. And, the woman... and the people rejoice, together, for the gifts they have been given, for the blessings of God and for the work, still to come.

The end.

But- it's *not* the end.

It's really, **just the beginning...**

...the beginning of our time together as I enter the slip-stream of God's presence among us, here in Central Pennsylvania and work with you to greet the future of God's Church.

Let me talk a little bit about where we've been together, in the last year, and about my hopes for the next steps of our journey together:

In this past year, I have focused on **listening and discernment**.

I've visited more than half of our congregations (38) on Sunday mornings, participated in Confirmations, Receptions, and Reaffirmations; officiated at 3 Celebrations of New Ministry, led two retreats, attended a Youth Happening event, and, as of last week, have finally made it around to each of our 7 Convocations for "3 Day Immersion Excursion" events. These 3-Day events have been such a gift; they've given me a chance for deeper engagement with our laypeople and clergy and, most importantly, have given me a chance to learn about the places in which you live, work and minister. On those 3-Day visits I have gone fly fishing, on a Holy Hike in God's Country, on

tours of prisons, hospitals, a paper mill, the Army War College, and a Transitional Living Center for the formerly homeless. I've picked corn in a Gleaning project, eaten dinner with the Amish, visited re-settled Syrian refugees, thrown out the First Pitch at a baseball game, had communion in a Pop-Up Eucharist on the banks of the Susquehanna, gone out in my boots and camo baseball cap to stock trout, visited the Horseshoe Curve in Altoona, held baby lambs one-hour old, and had tea with the oldest parishioner in our Diocese, Mr. Bob McGregor- He's 103 ½. I've heard stories of deep joy and great sadness, of redemption, reconciliation, hope, wonder and commitment to serving God's mission. I believe that these trips have given me real insight to who we are... and how God is moving among us. The parable... is real.

I've tried to reflect some of what I am hearing and learning, back to you- in clergy gatherings, in sermons and in my blog. I began my blog, "Compass Points" last year when I arrived in Pennsylvania. In that year I've written weekly entries on Friday mornings and have had more than 33,000 visits in a year. That's almost 700 visits a week; *someone* is reading what I am writing!

As you've seen reflected in the material for this Convention – and heard at our Convocation meetings- there are some **new initiatives** that I've asked us to implement to build our capacity as a diocese, to re-direct some of the choices about diocesan Program back to our people, and to strengthen our existing structures. These changes include adding 3 new laypeople to our Council of Trustees, giving the Assistant Convenors a vote, and inviting the oversight of programs and committees to be conducted by the Trustees. (These will all be addressed in the revisions of the Constitution and Canons)

In the area of staff, we've **re-defined job portfolios** to sharpen the focus on the work at hand including continued commitment to developing clear financial procedures and reporting, a greater emphasis on the formation of children and youth, the capacity to re-develop our website and administer it in-house, new resources to support parishes in the areas of finance, transition ministry, stewardship and community engagement, and dedication to formation for all ages and stages in the Stevenson School. I am grateful to our staff for their dedication and hard work, for their willingness to work with me as we re-shape

ourselves to best serve our parishes and for all that they have taught me in the past year. In this coming year, our Staff will participate in 5 staff Development Days as we work on becoming a more collaborative team, dedicated to serving *you*- and serving God's mission.

Let me say more about the **Stevenson School**. I believe that the Stevenson School- and its predecessor, the School for Christian Studies- is one of our diocesan gems. The Christian Life is one in which our relationship with God is continually evolving and ever richer as we study, learn, come together in Community, pray and reflect on our Anglican heritage, the tradition that we have inherited and the way that God moves in us, today. When we commit to a process of formation, we are, essentially, equipping ourselves for mission, claiming responsibility for our call as disciples and inviting the Holy Spirit to guide us as we are sent out, in Jesus' name. This is hard work. And, we have the school to help us do this work. The Stevenson School for Ministry is shaped to make learning accessible for all of us, and to provide a rich environment in which to grow ever closer to God. The Stevenson School forms lay people. It also forms people for Holy Orders- in the role of deacon and worker- priest. It is an essential resource in a changing church

landscape in which congregations look, more and more, for part-time clergy leadership. The Stevenson School can serve, as it continues to develop, as a leading resource for the Church-at-Large as we face the issue of clergy shortages and smaller (but not necessarily fewer) jobs. Our fellow PA dioceses- Northwest, Pittsburgh, Bethlehem and Pennsylvania- and our Lutheran neighbors have all shown an interest in the school and have supplied both faculty, board members and students as the Stevenson School continues to build itself up. We have added the care of Children, Youth and Young Adults under the umbrella of the Stevenson School and are offering institutional support for this very important part of our church family. Mary Ellen & Bob Kilp and Theda & Jon Tallman have been an amazing support and programming team for our Youth in these past years and the Stevenson School is looking to support them in their work, as they partner together, for the good of our children and young people.

Later today you will hear a presentation from the Dean of the Stevenson School, the Very Rev. Robyn Szoke-Coolidge and the Chair of the Board, the Rev. Canon David Lovelace as they describe some of the work ahead for the school in the next three years.

The Spirit is alive and at work in our midst as **new projects** and programs have started in the past year: a new Social Justice and Equity group that was formed last spring is discovering how they can serve as a networking resource and organizing body for much of the justice work that is already happening in our diocese. A diocesan-wide initiative led by Deacon Loretta Collins has engaged us in aiding re-settling refugees, The Rev. J. Patrick Peters has accepted my appointment as our new Ecumenical Officer and is bringing lots of energy to that role, and a group called The Pool of Bethesda supporting our LGBTQ brothers and sisters has taken shape and meets at St. Paul's, Lockhaven. You can look for a newly designed website in the not too distant future, a new group has been appointed to help direct the programmatic work of our clergy conference, and I am looking forward to forming still another group to study the important issue of "Sacramental Accessibility" or, how, in a diocese with small congregations -some without priests- we can ensure that our people can have communion and access to other sacramental rites on a regular basis.

There's a lot to do.

This year's focus on **Storytelling and Discipleship** is critical for us as a diocese.

You've heard me talk about my **3-Year Plan**: Year One of Listening and Discernment, Year Three of Shaping a Vision and Direction together, and Year Two – *this year*- of Deepening our Understanding of Ourselves as Disciples of Jesus. (**Discernment, Discipleship, Direction**) I believe that this middle year in the 3-Year Plan is crucial. We need to understand who we are today and how God is calling us today to participate in God's mission. The way that we are Church is changing. We need to understand not only the institutional and systemic changes around us, but the personal identity-oriented changes that bear on our participation in God's mission. Our Presiding Bishop, Michael Curry talks about the Jesus Movement. He talks less and less about buildings... and more about God's people on mission. Fulfilling Jesus' command to love. Bishop Curry's new tag line for the Jesus Movement is this: "The Jesus Movement- loving, liberating and life-giving." (X2) He affirms that our call is to be about Jesus' work in this world, *especially* in the areas of evangelism, racial reconciliation, environmental stewardship. How do we do that, as individuals? How are we joining the Jesus movement as

disciples? How are we called to be loving, liberating and life-giving agents of the Jesus Movement?

I hope that in this next year, we will spend time thinking about this and finding our **individual senses of purpose** re-freshed by dwelling on God's Holy Word- connecting our Story to God's Story.

The key to understanding of God's call to us, of finding our place in the Jesus Movement, is by **returning to the source- The Word-** for re-freshment.

Last night we made a start, **connecting our stories to God's story** and with the help of some resources handed out at this convention (a small booklet in your packet) and a regular practice of this kind of discernment among your clergy, I hope that we can, together, grow in our understanding of who we are as Jesus' disciples.

We can do great things together, standing with Jesus.

We are *already* doing great things, together, in Central Pennsylvania.

May we continue to be strengthened, care for one another and rejoice in all that we have received from God.

The parable is true. The Kingdom of God is like a woman... who found a people... and received- in this place- grace upon grace.

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