

We gather, as we do every Sunday, around word and sacrament, to be fed and nourished by the mysteries of this grace; to be sustained in our faith; to understand a little more of what these holy mysteries are all about; to learn what it is we are called to be as a community of Christian faith.

Every Sunday I am deeply aware that we do not do this alone, but we do this with other communities of faith that gather in chapels, churches, cathedrals, monasteries, convents, hospitals, prisons and homes in this country and around the world to break bread and raise the cup. I find this such an encouragement. All of us do it in different time zones and languages hearing the familiar words of the eucharistic prayer: “Do this in remembrance of me”; and the Lord’s Prayer, “give us this day our daily bread,” and the creed, “he suffered and was buried, and on the third day he rose again”; and the comfortable words of the absolution or the peace. We all hear these ancient words and are fed by them.

But today, I am deeply aware that as we gather, all of the bishops from across the Anglican

Communion also gather around these holy mysteries at the Lambeth Conference. All 650 of them, from 42 different ecclesial provinces, and 165 countries, speaking 20 different languages.

This gathering has no legislative authority. It is merely, by the nature of its gathering from different cultures, traditions and expressions of the faith, an instrument of unity; a bond of peace; a demonstration of the rich diversity of the church, that while vernacular to its environment is drawing very different people together to, as the Archbishop of South Africa said, look one another in the eye ball and say, “I too am a follower of Jesus Christ.” That is an extraordinary act of grace. And then to learn and understand what it means to follow Christ in Cairo, Tel Aviv, New Delhi, Iqaluit, or Elora. Every place has its unique challenges and opportunities; and the Lambeth Conference is an opportunity to be enriched by that. But like every gathering, especially one on such a global scale, it is always vulnerable to division, hostility, misunderstanding and oppression. That is a given.

So it is appropriate to hear the words of St. Paul this morning, “If you have been raised with Christ, seek the things that are above.... *For you have died*, and your life is now hidden with Christ in God.... *Put off the old self*, and clothe yourselves with the new self.... which is being renewed in the image of its creator.”

Powerful words that speak originally to a diverse group of people with very different levels of status: some as citizens, but many as resident aliens with no power or privilege, in a culture marked by social oppression and an unequal access to legal, social or economic structures. Sounds familiar. Now, Paul claims, that because our primary identity is rooted in the death and resurrection of Christ, *all* of us have died to the old self and *all* of us have been raised to a new status. *All of us*.

So, as the parable of the rich fool demonstrates, set your mind on the long game picture, not the short term return. Set your minds on things above; build up for yourselves treasure in heaven; make yourselves rich towards God.

What that perhaps looks like is honouring one another; upholding one another. Putting to death

those things that dishonour others, diminish others, disregard others and putting on the new self - a new identity - which extends a generous hospitality to the other regardless of their background, status, or any other cultural definition that might place ourselves above someone else. As our baptismal covenant says, we are called to respect the dignity of every human being.

We all know this. But in our daily living, bumping into one another, of encountering each other, it is always helpful to be reminded that as we come to the communion rail, to feed on these holy mysteries, we come shoulder to shoulder and we come as *equals* before God. We come to share a *common* cup - which in every generation, always for different reasons, is a risky activity. We come as people longing for mercy, connection and belonging, and encountering it in endless amounts, so that we may be changed, inspired and filled with hope. “For you have died, and your life is now hidden with Christ in God.”