

## Sermon for the Third Sunday of Easter

The stories of Peter and Paul are both similar and different. Peter has been among chosen who knew Jesus in the flesh and experienced the reality of the resurrection. While he denied Jesus three times before the crucifixion, he not only is forgiven three times, he is commissioned three times to “feed my sheep.” Paul has a conversion experience only after he persecutes the church and is present at the stoning of Stephen. He too is commissioned to bring the gospel to the Gentiles even though he receives much opposition to his mission from Peter and the Jerusalem Church who want everyone to become Jews first.

In many ways the conflict today in the Episcopal Church and the wider church is again about inclusion as it was with Peter and Paul. Over the centuries we have persecuted, enslaved or excluded many including our Jewish and Muslim brothers and sisters, persons of color, women, gays, lesbians, and transgendered as well as persons with disabilities.

Lisa Miller in an article for the current issue of Newsweek writes that no one seems to care that one of the new Episcopal bishops of Los Angeles is a lesbian. In fact, Mary Glasspool does not seem to be getting any hate mail. Miller says that in seven short years, since the consecration of Gene Robinson as Bishop of New Hampshire, attitudes have changed dramatically. “Polls show that support for gays in the military, gay marriage and civil unions has been for most of this decade, rising.” According to a CNN poll last year half of all Americans have close friend or family member who is gay. I think that this has always been true, but there is less fear of “coming out” at least to family and friends and in some cases the workplace as well.

As was pointed out at history day, as Episcopalians and as a nation we support a woman who wants to vote or run for office, go to college, marry outside her race or religion, or join the army. In less than thirty years women now number more than a third of our clergy in the Episcopal Church. Both our Presiding Bishop and the President of the House of Deputies are now women.

Our Presiding Bishop can now proudly say in the tradition of Paul, “we claim a faith that has a vision of what civilization ought to look like, called the reign of God, or the kingdom of God. When current reality is dramatically divergent from that vision most of us feel it’s our responsibility to advocate for a different vision...” Indeed, as the Archbishop of Canterbury has stated, Glasspool’s election and consents to that election by the Bishops and Standing Committees across the Church, “pose very serious questions not just for the Episcopal Church and its place in the Anglican Communion, but for the Communion as a whole.”

It would be wonderful if we could affirm with Paul in his Letter to the Galatians that there are not distinctions in the kingdom of God and move beyond our differences, all at one table, with one Lord. While we are not quite there, I am proud to be in a Diocese that affirms a new vision and from a Diocese that overwhelming supports this vision, that being the Diocese of Chicago.

I also hope that every adult and youth in our parish will seriously consider boarding the bus to the Consecration on May 15<sup>th</sup> of the first women bishops in our diocese, Diane Bruce and Mary Glasspool. In fact, it would be wonderful to have two buses from St. Andrew's. Our presence would show how much we believe that the Holy Spirit is asking us again to lead the Episcopal Church and the Anglican Communion in new ways.