

THAW

October 2006

An unofficial, monthly on-line magazine
Of/for Canadian Anglican and Ecumenical Franciscans

Published by:

The Highland Shepherd

Canon Jim Irvine,

Go to: www.msgr.ca

(Click on the figure of Francis)

Editor: Harold Macdonald

hgmacton@mts.net

links:

www.tssf.org

www.franciscans.com

www.franciscansinternational.org

OUR HOST: THE HIGHLAND SHEPHERD

A unique, Christian site, featuring many resources for individuals and for parish study and action. Not without humour! A creation of Canon Jim Irvine, of the Diocese of Fredericton. Cruise the site; it's useful, edifying, fun, original, surprising!

General Synod 2007

The October issue of "ThAW" is mostly about housing. The various articles are self-explanatory. But something else is forcing its way onto our pages: namely, the upcoming meeting of the General Synod.

General Synod will take place in Winnipeg, a mere 50 miles from here in 2007. I am wondering what visible presence the Third Order should attempt to demonstrate at the meetings. A booth? Leaflets? Introductory material?

If I were younger, I would offer to be on duty at such a Franciscan outpost.

Remember that many Anglicans in Canada say "I didn't know that there were Anglican Franciscans. I thought they were all Roman Catholic."

Among other significant matters, (such as the election of a Primate) the blessing of same sex unions and our participation in the Anglican Communion will be on the agenda. Will we support the idea of an Anglican Covenant? Will we support the recommendations of the Windsor Report? Or will we decided to embark on our own course?

And what about Canadian Franciscans? Where do we stand on the issue?
An essay by Ty Ragan adds light to this question.

I wrote to our Provincial Minister General, Ken Norian, about this – same sex – and he answered as follows below.

“Hi, Harold:

Some history to help you understand the situation.

The Province of the Americas voted to change the Principles to be inclusive of various expressions of sexuality. The Principles, however, had to be voted on by all provinces. And, there were some provinces that did not concur. It was also thought that rather create a laundry list of every possible time of discrimination, “of all kinds” captured the spriit of what the Principle was meant to accomplish.

Regarding our inclusiveness, I refer you to one of our “Norms”, i.e. approved Chapter decisions:

- “Resolved that the Chapter of the Third Order, American Province, Society of St. Francis, affirms that Christ indwells all persons regardless of sexual orientation; we affirm that we welcome to our services of worship and to all occasions for fellowship all persons; and we affirm that we welcome and encourage full membership in this Order for persons of all sexual orientations. Further, we encourage those of us who would do so, to educate ourselves and others in the Church about the current pressing issues of lesbians and gay men in a society that is frequently hostile to them; and we commit ourselves to action to end ignorance about, prejudice toward, and discrimination against lesbians and gay men in the Episcopal/Anglican Church and in society at large.” (1990)*

Your input would be appreciated.

ANGLICANISM TODAY: A REFLECTION ON THE ISSUE OF SAME-SEX BLESSINGS

TY RAGAN

Down through history of the Celtic Church there have been issues that have arisen that would destroy the church—shatter the Anglican Communion. Each time a heresy has arisen there has been a movement of spirituality to counter.¹ Today another such issue faces not only the Province of Canada, and the Episcopal Church of the United States of America, but the world wide Anglican Communion. The question that has emerged is whether or not the blessing of committed, monogamous same-sex unions is a matter of doctrine or not? (St. Michael's Report, p.3). The Most Rev. Andrew Hutchinson (Primate of Canada) commissioned the St. Michael's Report in 2004 to explore this issue. Now the question arises for reflection is simple: is this the issue that will tear the church apart or is it just another form of renewal where we need to ask ourselves what is God doing here?

Paul Avis' worked from the thesis in his book; *Anglicanism and the Christian Church* that one cannot use the term church to describe Anglicanism. For the term church as it is used today describes a church with a confession (ala Lutherans) or a Pope/Patriarch (ala Orthodox or Romans), whereas the Anglican Church International is not bonded by these matters, but rather by the coming to the Altar each Sunday for the Celebration of the Lord's Supper (The Eucharist).

For the Communion to have survived for so many centuries it comes from walking the *Via Media* unlike most forms of ecumenicism, this middle path does not translate into the lowest common denominator. In fact it involves embracing both the Romanist and Protestant traditions, while at the same time using the Liturgy to create theology and doctrine.

Within the issue of Same-Sex Blessing arises another important part of Anglican History, the Anglican Communion started out as the Church of England (which dates back to shortly after the time of Christ as the Celtic Church that joined Rome, and then left Rome). The Communion started as a state church, which meant that the church and state crafted what marriage meant. In the modern era there is a separation of church and state, yet there is still a mentality of the people in the pew that there should not be or that the separation is actually oppression from the government.

Since the Government of Canada has endorsed civil same-sex marriage is this a catalyst to the Anglican Church of Canada to blessing them? An intriguing note is that in Europe quite a few churches are out of the marriage business altogether, and the Anglican Church there has a blessing service for civil marriages between a man and

¹ Archbishop's Rowan Williams book *the Wound of Knowledge* takes the reader on a spiritual journey through the church from New Testament times up to St. John of the Cross.

a woman (the most famous being Prince Charles and Camilla Parker-Bowles). This removes from the Priest the investment from the country, state or province to marry.

As well saying because a civil marriage is possible, means that it is a catalyst for a church blessing in Canada ignores two key points. The first is that the priest and/or bishop have the right of veto for any marriage of a heterosexual couple within the church. Especially if it is a second marriage where permission of the Bishop needs to be sought. The blessing motif as opposed to marriage would remove much pressure from the clergy. If everyone had to be married by the Justice of the Peace, then it would only be the committed that would seek out the church's blessing, and remove the challenge for the priest. Within the Anglican Communion to have the Sacrament of Marriage only one of the couple need to be baptized within the Anglican Church.

One side note is important here: The Sacrament of Marriage is not a Sacrament of the Priest, but rather of the Laity. The couple being married are the presiders of the sacrament, and it is to one another, not the priest to who the vows are said. The blessings work the same way. Using the benchmark of lawful marriage by the Government of the land for those unions that will be blessed also raises a whole other question the Communion is side stepping. Under Alberta Law, you are lawfully married to your significant other after six months of cohabitation (common law); if the law is the benchmark then a common law couple should be able to seek a blessing as well.

This brings us back to same-sex blessings, some say it is a matter of Biblical Interpretation or Hermeneutic, if this is the case then is it worth tearing apart an almost 2000 year old communion over hermeneutic? Within Canada, the Primate's Theological Commission reported in the *St. Michael's Report* did find that this issue was one of doctrine, but not one that was worth breaking the communion over.

A doctrine is when the church speaks out on an issue, and by speaking out on that issue are revealing something about the nature of God (St. Michael's Report, p.11). An interesting question that the report raised for the church (and I believe the church universal) needs to explore is that of what sexuality is? (St. Michael's Report, p. 8). A further statement from the report is what Same-sex Unions meant, that being a relationship that was committed, adult, monogamous, intended life-long same-sex relationships that include sexual intimacy. (St. Michael's Report, p. 6).

Bishop Ingham in the Diocese of New Westminster gave his ascent to the blessings of Same-Sex Union; unlike what has been reported the true story is that it was on the third time the question had been raised and voted on at the Diocesan Synod. The first two times Ingham refused ascent because below 70% and that was not a clear enough majority for approval. On the third time it was above 70%, but also the Bishop's hands were tied as any question that passes three Synods according to the Canons of this particular Diocese had to receive Ascent.

Since this passed Synod approval with a majority of Synod delegate support the assumption would be that these are parish representatives and the majority of the

parishes supported as well. That would also be a false assumption, for it breaks down each Parish sends x number of delegates to the Diocesan Synod. These are Synod Delegates for the Diocese not the Parish they come from; there are laity and clergy. For anything to pass requires a majority from the House of Clergy and the House of Laity. When the Synod opens the delegates prayerfully need to follow the prompting of the Holy Spirit.

This is the "Hot Button" issue for the Diocese of Calgary election of a new Bishop on June 24, 2006. So much so that it was one of eight questions posed to the eight candidates at a discussion forum put on DVD for the Parishes to view. What would they do if Same-Sex Blessings passed at a Synod or the General Synod of Canada passed it. Everything from resignation to approval was voiced.

Here is the unique way of design of the Anglican Church; the Province of Canada (the national church) can pass it; even the Province we are apart of² can pass ascent. But the kicker is the Primate (head of the National Church) and the Metropolitan (head of the regional province), have no say over whether or not each Bishop will grant ascent. For example in the Roman Church, the Pope can walk into any parish in the world and preach; for the Primate or Metropolitan to come in and preach in a church, they need to be invited by the Diocesan Bishop and the Priest of the Parish. For a church planting metaphor, think of the mother-daughter church method. The Diocese is the Church; each parish is a daughter of the mother (ala what Rockpointe Alliance is doing for church planting). Each Priest does not work for the Parish, but rather works for the Bishop.

All this to say is that it is not as easy as the Pope saying Same-Sex blessings are wrong, and that is the end of the discussion, each Diocese needs to make the decision themselves, so as people looked down on Bishop Ingham for saying that it comes down to whether or not the priest of the parish wanted to bless them or not, was empowering the priest with the power they already held over blessings of relationships.

As the national church, the provincial church and the diocese continues discernment on this issue, one need to understand the full complexity of how the Anglican Communion functions. Internationally big news was made in the media of North American churches being removed from certain commissions, the unique part is that no where was it reported that these were commissions the North American churches had ever served on in the first place. The Communion is diverse, some Diocese ordain women, others do not; some Diocese are more liberal than Bishop Sponge, others are more conservative than Franklin Graham. But it is not our polity or hermeneutic that unifies us as a Communion; it is the simple act of the Liturgy that leads us to kneel at the Altar beneath the cross of Christ in spite of our differences, as

² Here is how it goes: Internationally there are provinces, the Anglican Church of Canada is known as the Province of Canada; that then breaks down to Four Provinces nationally, that also includes a Province of Canada. Alberta and the Diocese of Calgary falls in the Province of Rupert's Land, where currently the Metropolitan of Rupert's Land is serving as Interim-Bishop of the Diocese of Calgary.

family. Just as Christ showed the bond of family at the base of the cross on Good Friday by giving the Beloved Disciple to his Mother Mary; just as the Holy Family showed the church; just as the Disciples and Christ so does the church need to remember that we are diverse, we all have different interpretations of the scripture; but what are make and break issues for each member of the church?

Each generation has had to face a crisis within the church and we have endured. Each generation has had to rediscover Christ for their world, and the church has grown because of God's blessing and love. The question is not whether or not to bless Same-Sex Unions; but for me the question arises is what is God doing with his people in the midst of this crisis?

For if we can discover the heart of God, the revival of faith in the world will be amazing

JESUS ON HOUSING

"The jackals have holes and the birds their nests where they may lay their young, but the Son of Man hath not where to lay his head".

St. FRANCIS ON HOUSING

The Assisi Compilation Paragraph 58

"Do you want me to tell you how the places of the brothers should be built? (asked Francis). 'I wish you would, Father

And he told him. 'When the brothers go to any city where they do not have a place and they find someone who wants to give them enough land to build a place, have a garden, and whatever is necessary for them, they must first consider how much land is enough for them, always considering the holy poverty we have promised, and the good example we are bound to offer to others'.

The holy father said this because he did not want the brothers for any reason to go beyond the norm of poverty either in houses or churches, in gardens or in other things they used. And he did not want them to possess the right of ownership to these places, but always to stay in them *as pilgrims and strangers*.

One of the brothers, a spiritual man, to whom blessed Francis was very close.... Had a little cell built in a remote place near the place of the brothers, where blessed Francis

could pray when he came. blessed Francis said to him, 'This little cell seems too beautiful to me. But if you want me to stay in it for a few days, have it covered inside and out with ferns and tree-branches.

That little cell was not made of stonework but of wood, but because the wood was planed, made with hatchet and axe, it seemed too beautiful to blessed Francis. . . . For the more the houses and cells of the brothers were poor and religious, the more willingly he would see them and sometimes be received as a guest there". Para 57 The Assisi Compilation.

[He taught his] brothers [to make poor little dwellings out of wood and not stone, and how to build these huts according to a crude sketch". Para 23.

[He did not want the brothers to live in any place unless it had a definite owner who held the property rights. He always wanted to have the law of pilgrims for his sons].

[This man not only hated pretense in houses; he also abhorred having many of fine furnishings in them. He disliked anything in tables or dishes, that recalled the ways of the world. He wanted everything to sing of exile and pilgrimage].

[Finally, beds and coverings abounded in such plentiful poverty that if a brother had a ragged sheet over some straw he considered it a bridal couch.]

"When blessed Francis returned from another region and came to the chapter, and saw that house built there, he was amazed. He considered that, seeing this house, the brothers would build or have built large houses in the places where they now stayed or where they would stay in the future. And especially because he wanted this place always to be a model and example for all the places of the brothers, before the chapter ended he got up one day, climbed onto the roof of that house and ordered the brothers to climb up. And intending to destroy the house, he along with the brothers,

HOUSING IN THE NORTH

Father Shivering writes about a perfect example of Franciscan housing in the north.

"The igloo or igloo is a temporary winter home or hunting-ground dwelling of Canadian and Greenland Inuit.

To build the igloo," writes the Archdemon, "the builder takes a deep snowdrift of fine-grained compact snow and cuts it into blocks with a snow knife, originally made of bone. Each block is a rectangle measuring about two feet by 4 feet and 8 inches thick. After a row of these blocks has been laid out in a circle on a flat stretch of snow,

the top surfaces of the blocks are shaved off in a sloping angle to form the first rung of a spiral. Additional blocks are added to the spiral to draw it inward until the dome is completed except for a hole left at the top for ventilation. Joints and crevices are filled with loose snow..... A narrow semicylindrical passageway about 10 feet long with vaults for storing supplies leads into the igloo. .. The major furnishings are a shallow saucer to bury seal blubber for heat and light and a low sleeping platform of snow covered with willow twigs topped by caribou furs."

HOUSING DIFFICULTIES IN PALESTINE

"Between 10 and 20 March, we were in Occupied Palestine and in Israel.In and around occupied East Jerusalem, where we spent most of our time, the colonization takes place with great intensity. This is contrary to what we learn at home from the media. Existing settlements are massively expanded, new ones are established in numerous locations. In the Old City of Jerusalem, sacred places of the three monotheistic religions and the symbol of peace, many Palestinians are driven out by government policy and the impoverishment which results from it. We have seen and heard how settlers penetrate in the heart of Palestinian quarters by immoral and illegal means, settle down and thereby increasingly gain control over East Jerusalem."
(Newsletter Issue 9, May/June, 2006 Canadian Friends of Sabeel)

HOUSING DIFFICULTIES IN FORT MCMURRAY

Housing is so out-of-control owners of a listed bungalow refuse to show their offering or even dimensions. "As is - where is," the ad says, for \$650,000.

This article in a recent Globe and Mail also reports many more homeless than last year, 550 people.