

Presidential Address

Hermanas y Hermanos de la Diocesis Episcopal de San Joaquin, es un placer y un placer ofrecerlos; bienvenidos, bienvenidos, tres veces bienvenidos a 65 (sesenta y cinco) Convencion Diocesana de EDSJ. Que demos gracias por este espacio santo y este tempo santo esta ora santa ante nosotros.

Translation:

Sisters and Brothers of The Episcopal Diocese of San Joaquin, it is my pleasure and delight to bid you welcome, welcome, three times welcome to the 65th Diocesan Convention of EDSJ. And we give thanks for this holy space and this holy time and this holy work before us.

This is my Presidential Address for the 65th Diocesan Convention in The Episcopal Diocese of San Joaquin. It is my 11th address in as many years.

The theme of this 65th Convention for EDSJ is “Called to be... in Holy Transition.” - “Llamados a ser... en transicion sagrada.”

One of the many invaluable lessons I have learned and continue so to do, over the last decade +, as your Diocesan Bishop, has been developing and redeveloping responses and corresponding decision-making through times, often somewhat challenging times, of transition. Said another way, we have employed and exercised, over and over again, adaptation and adaptability. And amid many circumstances, perhaps even most circumstances, since my arrival in early 2014, we have invariably assumed a position of assessing, figuring out (heaps of conversations, collaborations and consultations) and implementing. And before any of that took place, through all of those circumstances, you have consistently heard, wait for it, “we should ponder and pray” before considering any action or non-action. And Siblings in Christ, those last words have not been said, as many times as you have heard them, flippantly. I’ve said those words measuredly and I’ve said them earnestly. And I have done so because all of this belongs to God and it is the Holy Spirit Who navigates us through each of our circumstances (hear transitions) and all of our decisions whether we know it at the time or not. And lastly, we have made mistakes and there have been heaps of failures along the way, and, many amazing things have occurred, and, we have endeavoured to remain faithful through it all.

So, our first acknowledgement is that life is never without transition. Every moment of our lives, the world around us is changing and the world within us is changing. Transitions occur whenever and wherever life is. And it is in our succession of transitions, where we find God, that is to say, if we are open to finding God. Because God is most certainly here and there (I’ll come to that in a moment).

For years I have said The Church is in a state of perpetual transition. Consequently, leadership in the church should be transitional, both in tenure and focus, for both clergy and laity. The only permanence in life, is the presence and the love of God. All else is in a constant transitional flux. It is little wonder we spend an inordinate amount of time pining away and yearning for constancy, predictability and for anything or anyone to remain the same for at least a moment. But that is not the world in which we live. And that is not the life gifted to us. And that is precisely why, Jesus People, faith is our most essential and active and lasting ingredient.

I started crafting this address a few days ago, specifically, prior to the changing of the landscape and our lives due to elections throughout the country in which we live. And as I've often written and said, it is the responsibility of the Faith Community to speak to and reflect the Gospel into every circumstance and context (transition) in which we find ourselves. Thus, I should take a moment here to say a few words about our post election reality. I heard someone say on Wednesday of this week following the election, that they were wondering what God was doing in all of this. It is one of those timeless, frustratingly, unanswerable queries. And I would not be so bold or dare I say, arrogant, to venture-a-go at an answer. However, I wish to say, that election, those elections, as with all moments-in-time, was a Holy Transition. And siblings, what that means, is that God was in the election. God didn't cast a single vote, those votes belong to us. And yet, God was in it all. God is in everything and that is what makes these Transitions Holy, Life, Holy. Moreover, God is not only in our present moments (circumstances, contexts), God is out in front of us awaiting our arrival (here and there). In my humble opinion and experience, that is who God is, how God works. And that is precisely what makes our present, Holy and our moments not yet lived, Holy. And our responsibility in our continued living into Holy transition, as the Prophet Micah reminds us is to: "Act justly, love mercy and to walk humbly with God" whether we like the results of the election or anything else, or not. In other words, in the days before us, we must continue to be the Church, lovingly, boldly and faithfully.

And continuing to consider and reflect this convention's theme, a year from now as we gather for our 66th Diocesan Convention, we will also be engaging in Holy Transition as we participate in EDSJ's Episcopal Election. So this is my penultimate Presidential Address and next year's address will be embedded in and living amid the electoral convention. And the thing is, God is already there waiting for us. And God will be walking with us, in our present moments, every step of the way between now and then, here and there. And we will continue to live into the Holy Transitions of our lives whether they are welcomed or not. And so, as we potentially entertain anxiety and perhaps fret somewhat over the uncertainty of that particular election too, please, may we remember, this belongs to God. And even though EDSJ, we are somewhat out of practice, as it was 1979 since we had an Episcopal Election, again, God will be in it with us.

It occurs to me we may not always need convincing of God's presence with us in our Holy Transitions, perhaps the more challenging convincing for ourselves is whether we will be with God in those Holy Transitions. again, "acting justly, loving mercy and walking humbly with God?" In other words, in the days before us, will we continue to be the church, lovingly, boldly and faithfully?

I have every confidence, as God continues to walk with us in our Holy Transitions, we will most certainly continue to walk with God. There has been too much evidence during my episcopacy to think otherwise. We have lived faithfully a life of adaptation and adaptability. We have travelled exceedingly light adhering to the roadmap of Luke 10. We have lived into and continue to become a Holy Experiment, Finding Ourselves through Finding Others through pilgrimages and revivals and conventions and by entering into our neighborhoods, and paddocks and into the public square. We have heard the voices and responded to the needs of the marginalized, those who are houseless, hungry and vulnerable. We have taken care of one another and insured that we remained as well as possible during an unprecedented pandemic. We have “followed Jesus into loving, liberating and life-giving relationships with God, with each other and with the earth.” And, we have and most certainly continue to be, Called to be... in Holy Transition.

In conclusion, I wish to thank all of you for your good and faithful work, in our respective local Faith Communities, and in our Faith Community called The Episcopal Diocese of San Joaquin.

Thank you laity and clergy of EDSJ.

Thank you to those who participate in ministry through our Diocesan Commissions: SJRAISE, Anti-Racism and Creation Care.

Thank you to those who serve on our governing bodies, the members of Standing Committee and Diocesan Council.

Thank you to Deputies to General Convention and Delegates to our Diocesan Convention.

Thank you to wardens and chapter, treasurer, cathedral staff and cathedral community.

Thank you to wardens, treasurers, vestries and bishop’s committees, throughout the diocese.

Thank you Joanne and Mike, our Co-Directors and their staff at our camp and conference center, ECCO.

Thank you Deacon Greg, our Diocesan Treasurer.

Thank you Nelson, our Latino Hispanic Missioner.

Thank you Michael, our Diocesan Chancellor.

And thank you Anna, my/our Canon to the Ordinary.

EDSJ, I cannot possibly fathom living into Holy Transitions with any other Diocesan Community.

You have taught me more than I could have possibly anticipated. And you have shown extraordinary willingness and resilience and faithfulness in taking chances, having a go, and venturing into the unknown, together, with me. You have continued to provide a model for the rest of the Episcopal Church in the way of becoming the church amid extraordinary change and Holy Transitions. You, EDSJ, are an amazing Holy Experiment and I pray, you will continue to be so. You remain in my heart and in my prayers.

Bendiciones,

Bendiciones, tres veces

Bendiciones

The Rt Rev David Rice

Bishop of The Episcopal Diocese
of San Joaquin