

The Diocese Of Southeast Florida

April 8, 2013

My Beloved in Christ,

He is Risen! He is Risen! He is Risen indeed!

This past Easter Day of Resurrection I celebrate with all of you the Crucified and Risen Lord. As I joined in our “filled to capacity” Cathedral celebration, my imagination ran through every church in the diocese beginning with St. Paul's and St. Peter's, Key West and concluding with All Saint's, Jensen Beach. My imagination allowed me to experience your Easter celebrations with uplifting joy as if I were there in person! Praise God for your years of faithful service to Jesus Christ and the many committed to your charge.

I am also joyfully but painfully aware that my time as your Bishop has only two and half years remaining. As much as I celebrate the tremendous accomplishments we have achieved together, I also know that there is still much ministry to do before turning over the leadership to our next Bishop. The **Discovering Our Future (DOF)** process, lead by John Roberto & the Rev. Charles Fulton, III, gives us a plethora of insights into the possible short and long-term goals that might guide and inform our ministries over the next two and half years. I am very excited about the possibilities that John and Charles have outlined for us, all of which came from the large and diverse participation from across the diocese. The **Discovering Our Future** report will be released shortly so that you can share in my joy and hopefully be as enthusiastic as I am with the possibilities for ministry.

Just to give you a taste of the report's findings, one of the critical areas that needs our ongoing attention appears under the "**Generations**" section of John's DOF report. *"Are we going to have the next generation come through our doors and will we be able to minister and meet their needs?"* This has been a pressing issue for me during my entire episcopacy. As you are aware, I have given you license to experiment with new forms and styles of ministry in order to bring people into a relationship with Jesus Christ and His church.

Your creativity has brought me great joy as you have attempted to reach the unchurched and the under-churched in such a great variety of settings as the Caribbean Club in Key Largo and the Metro-rail and malls across the diocese. Many of you have also strengthened your newcomers ministry which is bearing tremendous fruit. I am also excited about the young adult ministry that is finding creative ways to reach a new generation of disciples. Nevertheless, there is much left undone. As Rick Warren recently stated when asked what was the most overlooked key to a

growing church he said, "*We must love unbelievers the way Jesus did.*"! His comments warm my heart and remind me of my Methodist roots and our call to share the Gospel to all.

The financial stability of our churches and the challenges of adapting to new models of ministry have placed considerable stress on all of our church leaders. This is one of our main challenges over the next two and a half years. In John's DOF report, he tags this reality in the "**Generation**" section of the report. He writes, "*The institutional affiliation of young people, including giving patterns, worship, attendance, and participation will dramatically change how the church does ministry.*" I would add that we all wonder how we will pay for such ministry. New generations call for a change in our style but not content of our ministry.

Even though we have done very well in adjusting to 12 years of financial challenges, most notably the crash of 2008, we have a long way to go in comparison to other dioceses. For example, while the average giving based on weekly attendance for comparable dioceses is \$2,014 per pledging unit per year; our average giving is only \$1,419. Therefore, **Stewardship** along with **Recruiting New Members** are our two most important opportunities that will bear the greatest fruit.

I also realize that some are frightened by their ability to sustain and grow their ministry and are contemplating a 10% diocesan assessment as opposed to dealing with the draft proposal budget for 2014 of 14.5%. Although I can understand the motives behind such a concept, I think the idea of a 10% assessment rate is a terrible and potentially destructive idea. I ask you, as your Bishop, to refrain from bringing such a resolution to the Convocations and subsequently to the Convention. Such a resolution, if approved by Convention, will devastate the ministries of the diocese in ways that most cannot begin to imagine. Yes, the stronger churches will benefit greatly but at what cost to our common ministry? (*As a footnote: one of my initiatives is to charge the Budget Committee with presenting a Draft Proposed 2014 Budget to the Executive Board following the Deanery Convocations at a 14% assessment rate.*)

Even the debate over a 10% assessment will bring great pain throughout the diocese as the dialogue will rapidly and most certainly degenerate in divisions between the large and small churches, between the southern deaneries and the northern ones, and most especially between the ethnically diverse churches and those which are mostly Anglo. It would pain me greatly to see divisions intensify rather than unifying our common and powerful ministry for Christ. Therefore, I ask you as your Bishop please do not generate such legislation and inflict what may be irreparable harm to our mission. Nevertheless, if a group chooses to do so, please know that I will use every means at my disposal to defeat such destructive legislation. There is clearly a better way to address our common challenges, two aspects of which I have already articulated above – **Recruiting New Members and Stewardship** - and the third I will draw attention to now, **Unity in Ministry**.

As you are aware, one of our greatest blessings is our tremendous diversity. This is what brought me such joy at Easter. Our churches are full of people from many countries, speaking a multitude of languages - English, Spanish, French, Creole, Portuguese -, and coming from a variety of cultural and liturgical backgrounds. We have larger churches who minister alongside smaller more diverse churches in order to strengthen and enrich their mutual ministries. New partnerships have formed such as St. Mark's and St. George's, St. Gregory's and the Chapel of St. Andrew's, All Saints and St. Ambrose, St. Agnes and St. Kevin's - Transfiguration, St. Thomas and Holy Comforter, not to mention the cooperative arrangement in Hollywood between St. John's, St. James, St. Anne's and St. Andrew's at the Jubilee Center. And, I am proud to

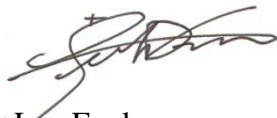
announce that Holy Comforter will join 6 other churches who have become self supporting congregations during our episcopacy.

But, as in most situations, our greatest blessing can also carry unique challenges. Under "**Social-Cultural**", John writes in the DOF report, "*Will the multicultural diversity of our diocese strengthen us and unite us as a community or weaken us and divide us?*" I am concerned that our greatest blessing is not being cultivated with as much enthusiasm as I think is possible. One of the startling revelations from the **Discover Our Future** process is how little we really know one another. We seem to have a vague concept of ministry within our local ministry setting but almost no first hand, person-to-person, face-to-face experience of the ministries of those in other regions of Southeast Florida. This pains me greatly! As I experience the richness of each church's worship and ministry, I grieve that others cannot share in my joy! Surely we can find ways to overcome the gulf that divides us and share more widely in the glories of each other's ministry.

To this end, I am charging all church leaders, especially the Deans, the Executive Board, and the Archdeacons to form partnerships throughout the diocese in addressing the critical and hope-filled opportunities addressed above- **Unity in Ministry, Recruiting New Members, and Stewardship** - so that we might know, strengthen, and celebrate our common ministry. Building upon this common ministry serves all of us – large and small, weak and strong, Anglo and ethnic, north and south.

As we move forward, let us be reminded of the words and actions of Terry Waite, First Assistant for Anglican Communion Affairs for Archbishop Robert Runcie, who while attempting to procure the release of captives in Lebanon, was himself held captive from 1987-1991. Terry wrote, "*the role of the church and of faith is to enable the weak to be strong, the strong to be just, and above all the just to be compassionate. In the world (and in our Church) compassion is so desperately needed.*"

Blessings,



+Leo Frade
Bishop of Southeast Florida

He is Risen! He is Risen! He is Risen! Alleluia!!!