

Celebration of a New Ministry – The Induction of the Reverend Simbarashe Basvi as Rector of St. David, Delta (Tsawwassen) on the Feast of St. Stephen, August 3, 2021.

Sermon preached by the Venerable Luisito Engnan, Archdeacon of Fraser

READINGS: *Numbers 11: 16-17, 24-25A; Ephesians 4:7, 11-16; Luke 10: 1-2*

I speak to you in the name of a loving God: +Creator, +Redeemer and +Giver of Life. Amen!

“Why are you going to Toronto?” asked Lucas, Diana’s seatmate, on a flight out of Vancouver. “Speaking at a conference,” Sometimes, especially on a short flight, Diana takes her mother’s advice that one should not talk about religion with strangers.

“What kind of conference?” Lucas insisted.

“An Anglican Synod” She replied. In Canada’s religious geography, she figured Lucas would know about Anglicans. With a population of 357,123 -- with an average Sunday attendance of 97,421,¹ there may be a probability of sitting next to one on a Vancouver-Toronto flight.

Lucas looked at Diana, wondering as well if he should continue. “I used to be an Anglican. I guess I still am, but I don’t go to church anymore. I’m not mad at the church or anything – I appreciate what it gave me when I was young. I went every Sunday. My mother made me. Confirmation, youth group, the whole thing.” Lucas sighed. “But I just don’t know where it fits anymore, and I just drifted away. My life is full without church; it seems kind of irrelevant. They don’t care about my questions; there’s no reason to go.”

“What questions?” Diana asked.

“Oh, life, justice and equality, and making the world a better place. You know, questions. They seem interested in things that don’t really matter. To me, church is disconnected from the real life.”

“Do the questions bother you?”

“Sometimes,” Lucas said. “But mostly, I’m just trying to figure them out with my wife and family – sort of making things up as I go along.”

“What do you do on Sunday morning now?”

“Sleep in, mostly. Soccer with the kids. Read books. It’s nice.”

Lucas put on his headphones. Another thirty minutes and the plane landed. We went down the jet bridge and Lucas said good-bye. Diana watched as Lucas walked toward the exit, home to his own post Anglican world. *Excerpt from, Questioning the Old God, Diana Butler Bass.*

II. Good News

The Mission of the seventy is a story about faith, love, and new life with God.

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¹The Lord appointed seventy others and sent them on ahead of him in pairs to every town and place where he himself intended to go. ² Jesus said to them, **‘The harvest is plentiful, but the labourers are few; therefore, ask the Lord of the harvest to send out labourers into his harvest.** *Luke 10 N.R.S.V.*

Beloved in the Lord, this celebration of a new ministry is the end of a lengthy in-ter-reg-num, but most importantly it is the beginning of the work of your communal mission, for building up the body of Christ manifested in your mission statement, **“Rooted in God, Responding to God’s Word, Reaching out to God’s world in Jesus Name.”**

Jesus calls you to actively engage yourselves in missionary work inside and outside of this church building. This includes, but is not limited to, providing pastoral support and social contact for elders, attracting younger and enthusiastic members, and a mission that is powerful and relevant to all ages. *St. David’s Parish Profile, 2019.*

Like Diana and Lucas in our story, talking about faith and religion to a family, a loved one, a friend or someone that you care about or even to a stranger can be a terrifying experience to us. In the same way, like the seventy, Jesus sent them out like lambs into the midst of wolves. They were supposed to ⁴ **Carry no purse, no bag, no sandals; and greet no one on the road.**

⁷ **But each of us was given grace according to the measure of Christ’s gift.** ¹¹ **The gifts he gave were that some would be apostles, some prophets, some evangelists, some pastors, and teachers,** ¹² **to equip the saints for the work of ministry, for building up the body of Christ,** ¹³ **until all of us come to the unity of the faith and of the knowledge of the Son of God, to maturity, to the measure of the full stature of Christ.** *Ephesians 4*

III. Calling

Nowadays, to some people in society, church is no longer needed for them to become a better person: They believe that Sunday morning is irrelevant in their daily lives. They also believe that religion and salvation can wait until the final days because faith and spirituality are just encounters with God that have no importance in life today.

How would our prayers be translated into a more concrete and passionate life in growing our communities of faith in Jesus Christ and dedicating ourselves to serve God’s mission in the world?

¹⁵ **But speaking the truth in love, we must grow up in every way into him who is the head, into Christ.** *Ephesians 4*

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I can see the value and relevance of our Christian faith and Anglican spirituality today, if we care spiritually for our children, grand children, loved ones and parishioners in the same exact way that we care for our own spirituality. If we have the love of Jesus, we can also share that same love of Jesus to others. We can only give what we have.

We need to tell them our own personal story of how God and the Church have assisted us to be where we are in our life today. This may include success stories as well as challenges we have conquered in the past.

You are the best agent of God in your own family and community to tell them that God, faith, spirituality, and church is a priority in their lives.

Parish development is self-renewing and responsive to the challenges and opportunities before us. *Diocesan School for Parish development.*

This celebration of a new ministry calls our attention to fulfill our promises before God and His Church.

Our task right now is to be oriented with the message of the gospel, “To bring Jesus Christ to people.” To accept Christ as our saviour and Lord is a personal journey. To bring people to Christ is our communal vocation.

Let this calling guide our missionary zeal both now and forevermore.

Amen!