

Reflection

“Patience and Trusting God”

As I look out at all of you, both in person and online, feelings of joy and apprehension compete for emotional dominance. How many of you remember the feeling of butterflies dancing madly in your stomach as you walked into a new classroom at school? The fear of a new situation held you fast in its grip. There were new kids and a new teacher. What if you didn't fit in? What if they didn't like YOU?

We all have faced, and continue to face, uncertainty and change in our lives. In fact, it was the Greek philosopher Heraclitus that said, “Change is the only constant in life.” And even though humans have had to adapt over the course of centuries to meet new challenges, we still often view change as something that is scary and undesirable. It is hard to feel at the mercy of something, or someone else, that we may not have complete control over. The need to be the “master of our own destiny” comes to the fore and we often lose sight of a very fundamental reality of human existence – that we were designed to work collaboratively – together. Indeed, we would not be here, right now, if our earliest ancestors had not banded together to hunt, gather, and survive.

Indeed, the quote “No man is an island” was taken from a 1642 sermon by the Dean of St. Paul's Cathedral. The Dean at that time just happened to be John Donne, a clergyman who now is regarded as one of the greatest English poets of his time.

In this sermon, Donne was illustrating how deeply human beings are connected to each other, and how important that connection is for the well-being and survival of any individual. This was equally true in biblical times as it is now. Members of the tribes of Israel had to work together to thrive. Fast forward to today, and the two congregations of Northminster and St. David's have come together to form a faith-based partnership, to work alongside each other for the common good.

But we are not alone in this endeavor for we live in God's world....

And in both scriptures read this morning, we hear, see, and *feel* God offering reassurances that no matter what we face, God's spirit, strength and will are with us. For God is creating something new and we must trust in the Spirit, no matter how much we are fearful of the creation process.

In many ways, the process of two churches forming a partnership is like a courtship and marriage. Each relationship is unique. Yet, the differences don't preclude universal principles and realities.

Partnerships do not develop overnight. Just like a dating relationship, we will spend a lot of time asking questions and listening to each other, taking one step at a time. After seeking godly counsel, listening to one another, honoring those with organizational leadership gifts and trusting those who were attentive to the wind of the Holy Spirit, I am confident we will prevail and grow.

The path will sometimes be uneven and rocky, and we might not see the way forward clearly at times, however, we must never lose sight of our common denominator. The "super glue" so to speak that binds us together. And that is our faith and confidence that no matter what comes our way, God will always be with us, just like the scriptures promised.

I would like to close with a Prayer of Teilhard de Chardin entitled "Patient Trust"

Above all, trust in the slow work of God.

We are quite naturally impatient in everything to reach the end without delay.

We should like to skip the intermediate stages.

We are impatient of being on the way to something unknown, something new.

And yet it is the law of all progress
that it is made by passing through some stages of instability—
and that it may take a very long time.

And so I think it is with you;
your ideas mature gradually—let them grow,
let them shape themselves, without undue haste.
Don't try to force them on,
as though you could be today what time
(that is to say, grace and circumstances acting on your own good will)
will make of you tomorrow.

Only God could say what this new spirit
gradually forming within you will be.
Give Our Lord the benefit of believing
that his hand is leading you,
and accept the anxiety of feeling yourself
in suspense and incomplete.

May this be so for all of us.

Amen.