



## **October 13, 2018: 118<sup>th</sup> Synod of the Diocese of New Westminster (Special Synod)**

### **Luke 8:16-25**

“No one after lighting a lamp hides it under a jar, or puts it under a bed, but puts it on a lampstand, so that those who enter may see the light. For nothing is hidden that will not be disclosed, nor is anything secret that will not become known and come to light. Then pay attention to how you listen; for to those who have, more will be given; and from those who do not have, even what they seem to have will be taken away.”

Then his mother and his brothers came to him, but they could not reach him because of the crowd. And he was told, “Your mother and your brothers are standing outside, wanting to see you.” But he said to them, “My mother and my brothers are those who hear the word of God and do it.”

One day he got into a boat with his disciples, and he said to them, “Let us go across to the other side of the lake.” So they put out, and while they were sailing he fell asleep. A windstorm swept down on the lake, and the boat was filling with water, and they were in danger. They went to him and woke him up, shouting, “Master, Master, we are perishing!” And he woke up and rebuked the wind and the raging waves; they ceased, and there was a calm. He said to them, “Where is your faith?” They were afraid and amazed, and said to one another, “Who then is this, that he commands even the winds and the water, and they obey him?”

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To discover that one has a propensity to seasickness is a fearsome discovery. Yep, it happened to me on one of those cruising vessels that was making its way one summer from the Florida Keys to somewhere on the Florida panhandle. We were not far out from the Keys when the wind kicked up, and the waves began their business. Before I knew it, my head was in a bucket below deck after which, I was instructed not to stay there but go back up and look at the horizon. I did this and, while it did help with the seasickness, it replaced my seasickness with fear and awe for what looked like an endless ocean before us.

While I haven't been on a boat for a while, I find these days that I suffer from a kind of seasickness—a kind of nausea at being tossed back and forth with this political story and that, with this news about yet another natural disaster and that, and with the ever-flowing stream of the usual, upsetting news of illnesses, accidents, and challenging transitions in the life of individuals and parishes. And, yes, while I do a pretty good job of turning my attention toward the horizon or something else that steadies me, there are times when I think, “Oh my God, whatever boat we're in is filling up with water. Someone needs to wake Jesus up and get him to command the wind and the waves and all this nonsense to cease.”

I do spend time these days wishing we had a more interventionist God—you know, one who would reverse climate change, stop racism and violence, neutralize every weapon, and impart a powerful sense of compassion and reconciliation to us, all with a wave of the hand. But then I tell myself: “Archbishop, remember who Jesus was and is. Remember that, in him, God chose a different mode of being. God chose to come to us in and through the flesh—with all the flesh's vulnerabilities, limitations and capacities. Remember that Jesus rested in the midst of the waves filling up the boat. Jesus fell asleep! And remember that Jesus' disciples felt fear and awe not on account of the waves that threatened them but on account of their realization that, though entirely human, Jesus would not be overcome by the chaos of the waters.

This Jesus is the Lord that we, all of us, carry within us as people who have been buried with Christ in the waters of baptism—a Lord who rests in peace at the centre of any peril and chaos that the world can dish up and who tells us that we too can do this. And, at the same time, this Jesus is a Lord who expects that we will set sail into rough waters, becoming the agents of all the things we would so love to for him to do for us—caring for the earth and doing what we can to reverse the effects of climate change, eradicating racism and violence, putting down our weapons, being the compassion and reconciliation we, ourselves, long to experience, being faithful companions to others in times of illness or in the face of challenging transitions.

Today, of course, we are here to do some work around an upcoming transition. We are here to consider, discuss and make some decisions about what many would regard as something rather prosaic--the canons governing the election of the next bishop of this diocese.

Some may wonder what all the fuss is about and why we would be spending time on such a thing at this point. After all, the current Bishop is not on the cusp of retirement. And what's wrong with the current canons anyway? This is what I would say to these things. The mandatory retirement of this bishop is not that far away; and before we set sail out again on the sometimes peaceful and sometimes choppy water of the transition to new bishop, fine-tuning the canons is a good and advisable thing--like bringing our boat into dry dock and working on her so that she can be as fit a vessel as possible no matter what the weather or water is once we put out to the open water.

And so today let's say our prayers—for ourselves, for the church and for the world we love—for leaders, for the poor and the oppressed, for justice and peace, and for the earth itself. Let's say our prayers and let's give thanks for the opportunity to do this work together, with the peace of Christ, with the rest of Christ at the centre of all we are and all we do.

