

Celebration of a New Ministry Eucharist

The Installation of the Reverend Lucy Price as Vicar of Holy Cross Japanese-

Canadian Anglican Church, February 10, 2020.

Sermon preached by the Reverend Liz Hamel.

John 15: 9-17; Ephesians 4: 7, 11-16

May the words of my mouth and the meditations of all our hearts be pleasing in your sight, O God, our rock and our redeemer.

I am so honoured to be preaching at the induction of my colleague and friend the Rev'd Lucy Price, here at Holy Cross. The power of God's love and wisdom has drawn Lucy together with this community of faith, for a new adventure in being disciples of Jesus, loving God, loving our neighbours, and serving God's mission in the world.

I wanted to know more about Holy Cross and so I went to the church web site, where I read this statement.

"We take pride in the bonds of spirituality and love that bind the individuality and diversity of the people who make up our friendly parish."

“the bonds of love that bind the individuality and diversity of the people who make up our friendly parish.” Individuality and diversity bound together by love.

This statement of the identity of Holy Cross is almost exactly the same message we heard in this evening’s reading from Ephesians. *“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, (diversity)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.”*(unity, bound by faith).

As the Holy Cross message on the web site says, and the letter to the Ephesians make clear, unity not the same as uniformity. The body of Christ is made up of God’s beloved people who are diverse and multifaceted, and God loves this. When we share our diverse gifts, strengths, perspectives, senses of humour, ways of praying and imagining God, when we share these it makes us all stronger.

Isn’t this a message that the world needs to hear? Unity is not the same as uniformity. We are not all the same as one another. We are not *supposed* to be the same as one another. We were not created to look the same, speak the same

or act the same as one another. And yet, and yet we all belong. We are all enough.

Our God loves diversity. Just look around to see diversity everywhere: colour, flora and fauna, sexuality, language, music, prayer, worship - everything. Look and see the beauty of difference, the sparkle of diversity.

Perhaps that is why envy and jealousy are so damaging. Envy, one of the 7 deadly sins. When we look at others who are different from us and wish we were more like them in some way –, wiser, funnier, more patient, quieter, louder. When envy drives us, we put our energy into fitting into someone else's way of being, and we forget to nurture our own gifts. We forget to appreciate our own God given gifts and the diversity of these gifts. We stop trusting our own capabilities, our own room for growth, our capacity for love. Envy - When we measure ourselves with someone else's ruler and decide we haven't measured up, we forget that God knows us and calls us beloved. We can doubt ourselves.

There is plenty of room for self-doubt these days. The message of commerce is usually something that tells us that we are not enough, that we would be happier, richer, have more friends, be safer, if we just bought something that will fix us. Something that will make us more like someone else – a movie star

or a model or a superhero, or the mega church down the road, or the church of long ago.

Self-doubt. Jeremiah had this problem. He didn't think he was enough, worthy. He didn't think he was capable of doing what God asked him to do. God told Jeremiah – go and speak the truth to the rich and powerful, go and tell them that God cares for the poor and lonely. The suffering and lost. Tell them that God doesn't like their hierarchies and palaces that profit from the suffering of others. Jeremiah told God he wasn't up to the task, that he wasn't good enough, because he was “only a boy.” Only. Not enough. God said, I know you better than you know yourself. Don't underestimate what you are capable of. I'll be right there beside you. And then, in a gesture of touching tenderness, the Lord reached out and touched Jeremiah's mouth, giving him the words he needed to in order to do what God was asking of him. God was saying, you don't have to be anything other than who you are here and now to do the work I ask of you. You are enough. You are worthy.

God asks all of us to go and speak the truth in love. In love. Not spite, not hate, not envy, but love. God has chosen us. God has chosen Holy Cross.

God has drawn Lucy and Holy Cross together, to work together as a faithful Christian community, held together by mutual love and faith.

Already this parish has a story to tell us about how they bind one another in their diversity. About their courage to start a new chapter in their story. How they have arrived here, now. How, since 1903, they have persevered, adapted in some ways, held firm in others. How in 1949, when Japanese Anglicans who were interned during the war came back to Vancouver, found that their church building had been sold, but still persevered as a community, and continued as the Anglican parish of Holy Cross. It is a long story, a story of joy and of suffering and of love. And God is right there beside them.

These days, in Vancouver, we can see that spring is upon us. Small, tender green shoots are poking out of the ground, leaning towards the light, and flowering to the delight of all who pass by. Holy Cross is budding, is leaning on faith, to flower, to experience a new spring.

I know Rev'd Lucy. I know her passion, her unfettered imagination, her fearlessness, and the deep well of love in her heart. This all comes from her profound and abiding faith in our Lord Jesus Christ. I celebrate with the people of Holy Cross and with the whole diocese as Lucy is inducted as Vicar in this place, and as we all pray for the flourishing of this diverse community, bound together by love.

