

Grace to you and peace, from God our Father and the Lord Jesus Christ.

The theme of this diocesan convention is “That Wonderful and Sacred Mystery.” These words come from the familiar collect prayed on Good Friday and at services of ordination, and it refers to the Church itself. It is a very old prayer, and those words have been around for a long time, but they have a particular resonance and poignancy after two and a half years of COVID. I will confess to you that it had never been my custom to kiss the altar upon entering and leaving the sanctuary, but the first time I re-entered one of our churches after many months of deprivation, I became overwhelmed by the holiness of the space and I realized how desperately I had missed it, and I couldn’t help myself. I came to the altar with that sign of devotion on my lips and it has continued now to be my practice and I suspect it always will be. Now I understand, but it took the privations of COVID to help me to see it. From the beginning of this pandemic we talked about what life in the church would be like after COVID, and I think that story has not really been written yet, but one fruit of this experience is that we will never be able to take things for granted again that perhaps had become routine for us before. Certainly we cannot take one another for granted.

I have friends in the House of Bishops who retired during COVID, and never had the chance to see all of their people together all at once again before they took their leave. I couldn’t bear that. But that is not our story. Here we are today, after one convention held in an empty cathedral, and another with a modest gathering. But this feels more normal, and I am profoundly grateful to see your faces, and grateful that we can be together again as a diocese.

As tired as we are of COVID, we know that it is not over. Indeed, we are being told now that it will never be over, and that what we are experiencing now, with a

low-ish level of infection punctuated by periodic spikes and surges of greater illness, and regular doses of vaccination and booster, may be our future for the long term. Right now COVID is active on the cathedral close, with new cases every day, so I guess we are in the middle of a new COVID surge, and everyone here had to get a negative COVID test in order to enter this convention. I guess this is what they mean when they talk about learning to live with COVID.

At the eucharist yesterday evening a team of spiritual directors was made available to you for the laying on of hands and anointing with oil and healing prayers, and those spiritual directors will remain at your service throughout the convention. The last two and a half years have been extraordinarily costly. We have lost members of our churches who fell before the ravages of this virus. For our clergy and lay leaders this has been a period of physical, emotional and spiritual exhaustion. Clergy have admitted to suffering from depression and burn out as this pandemic just kept on keeping on. I have felt all these things myself, and have been open about that. The isolation which, at least initially, was forced upon us wasn't good for us. It wasn't good for me. Many years ago I read an essay which commented on Henri Nouwen's landmark book, and the essay was entitled "How Wounded is Too Wounded to be a Wounded Healer?" And those words came back to me regularly during the worst of COVID time.

But I want to be clear about something else. There are those who consider that the clergy of our churches have been broken by COVID. That they have become overwhelmed in perhaps long term ways by the suffering endured through this disease. I must say that that has not been my experience. Rather, I have seen our priests and deacons honor the vows and promises they made when they were ordained, and keep and preserve those vows even when that was hard. Especially when that was hard. Because it was hard. What did you come out to see? A reed shaken by the wind? It was precisely for these days, and the terrible burden we

have had to carry, that we made our vows. And what I saw were our priests and deacons keeping the faith, caring for the people given to them, staying brave and strong and faithful. Honoring their charge, and not counting the cost. And I am proud of what the clergy and people and leaders of the churches of this diocese did during COVID. Proud, and extremely grateful.

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Next Spring, this diocese will hold a worship service in the Cathedral of Saint John the Divine at which I will lead us - the clergy, people and parishes of the Diocese of New York - in making apology for our participation in the enslavement of African people, and for the privations and prejudices that are the fruit of racism and which flow out of that old history of slavery. The making of this apology has been long planned, under the leadership of the Reparations Commission, and I am most gratified to be able to say these words on your behalf. Over these last several years, beginning with the Year of Lamentation, the Reparations Commission has created, produced and offered to this diocese and the larger church a substantial body of program, ritual, dramatic presentations, and study, which has helped us as a diocese, and across of our parishes, to go deeper into a very hard part of our history, and to do that together, unafraid and without risk of judgment, so that we all might learn and know what responsibilities and burdens we still carry for the stolen lives of enslaved persons in New York and America.

A not small part of this work has been to encourage parishes to explore and examine their own histories, and I have offered the resources and assistance of our archivist Wayne Kempton to that end, so that we may unearth and name the ways in which this church, founded two thousand years ago in discipleship of Jesus Christ the Son of God and Prince of Peace, has failed to renounced Satan

and all the forces of evil which corrupt and destroy the creatures of God. That is our baptismal imperative, but this church joined in the larger societal oppression of African men and women and children, and participated in the kidnapping and sale of human beings, and enslaved countless people who were made in the image of God as we are made in the image of God, and born into the promise and possibility of freedom, as we are too. We did this because there was money in it, and that money built our churches and funded Christian mission and sustained our common life. For a long time we could pretend that slavery was a southern problem, because here in New York we fought for Abraham Lincoln. But the work in which we have been engaged over these recent years has rolled back the cover from our history, and we have seen and named the crimes for which the Diocese of New York must make account.

At this convention, shortly before COVID, we allocated one point one million dollars of our endowed funds to provide the foundation and seed money for a larger reparations fund to be raised and created out of the offerings and gifts of this diocese to fund actual, tangible work to help, as we are able, to repair the wound in our collective body, the damage done to people of African descent in this diocese. Today this convention will receive a resolution from the Reparations Commission to set up a 501c3 corporation to hold, invest, manage and distribute our reparations money. This separate corporation will exist entirely within the larger umbrella of the Episcopal Diocese of New York. But with the creation of a structure for this funding we are at the threshold of a new chapter in reparations in this diocese, and can begin to strategize how our resources can serve the repair we seek.

In the reparations video during our virtual convention roll-out meetings, I heard the words “Dare to Repair,” and I was struck by that. I believe this work does require daring, and courage, and faith in God and one another. The prospect of

paying reparations has always been the third rail of the Civil Rights movement, with all of the questions of who has to pay and who gets what, that can knock this effort off the rails before we even begin. This work has asked a lot of us, and we have experienced the push back too. So we know that this work requires daring and the willingness to make ourselves vulnerable. But I also heard the words “Hear, Trust, Pray, and Heal.” Is that not the witness we have been making, trying to make, through the work of these years? All of this is the work of God, and in all that we do, but in nothing more than our work of reparation, the heart of our call is that we remain Brave, Strong and Faithful to face and meet the challenges put before us by a broken world and church.

In that same video, Nell Gibson talked about the certainty she lived with for so many years that the state of Mississippi would never become integrated. Yet she has lived to see it happen. She talked of what it meant for her to witness the inauguration of Barack Obama as President of the United States. We are no longer the utterly segregated country of her younger years, and if I may presume to speak for her, I believe that what she was talking about was the discovery, as the shadow begins to pass, of the possibility of Hope. Desmond Tutu was asked once, in the darkest days, if he was optimistic. He replied that he was not optimistic, but he was hopeful. “I am,” he said, “a prisoner of hope.” The difference is profound. The optimist simply believes that one way or another everything is going to work out in the end. The optimist has no basis for believing that, he’s just “a glass half full kind of person.” But the hopeful one knows better, and comes before the world out of his bitter experience, and lays the burden of his living, and the pain of his history, before his God, in trust that our lives are not accidents, but are infused with meaning from our birth, and that our destiny is in the hands of one who can be trusted.

The author of the Book of Hebrews defined faith as “the substance of things hoped for, the evidence of things not seen.” What we are doing in this diocese is about our choosing, all together, to embrace the possibility of Hope. And the unseen. And that begins - the bright future for which we pray - begins when we acknowledge and give voice to our repentance for the things we have done, and for the things done by others before us which have continued to our day to force the yoke of division upon our shoulders. Repentance makes a clearing in the thicket of those things we have done and left undone, in the tangle of our sinfulness, where the light may shine through and where we may stand before our God in that light, to know and be known, in abject self-offering and fervent hope. And, “to make a right beginning,” we start with apology. So that we may restore dignity to those we have harmed, so that we may re-establish trust in our relationship, and so that we may impose a sense of justice onto our hard shared history.

But, it’s complicated.

Repentance and forgiveness are the means by which we may forge a redeemed life together. It is when we humble ourselves before one another that something becomes possible that is denied us when we remain in our defensiveness. When we consider a violent, inhumane history of degradation and bondage, the twin acts of apology and forgiveness are the essential place from which we can make the deep dive, seek and tell the truth, be accountable, and have the possibility of making a shared future.

But the fact of human slavery in America, the phenomenon of the horrific, depended on a set of discourses and narratives, philosophies and creeds, ideologies (even theologies) and ideas which gave permission to the oppressor to deny even the humanity of the enslaved. With the stroke of his pen Abraham

Lincoln ended the institution of slavery in America, but the deeper current of those beliefs and ideologies and patterns of contempt on which slavery was structured were not only untouched and unaddressed by emancipation, they really went deeper and became the seeds of an even more virulent 19th and 20th century institutionalized racism from which we have yet to extricate ourselves. And it is that slavery, and the long reach of the legacy of slavery which implicates the church and for which we are called to apologize.

But when and if the act of apology is a simple and uncritical expression - just the statement of our regret - then like so many political apologies with which we are so familiar, the words will be said, sighs of relief will be made, congratulations will be given, but no real redemptive work will have happened. Until we address the discourses and narratives, and take apart the philosophies and creeds, and refute the ideologies and theologies and ideas which justify slavery and racism and division, actual transformation will be impossible. We will go on living at the edge of our inhumanity, and never understand why we said we were sorry and nothing changed. Worse, as we have seen in the rise of institutional violence against black men and the sudden eruption of anti-Semitism in America, we will always be subject to falling back and becoming again our very worst selves. Because those old ideologies have power. And that power is most dangerous when we are not thinking about it. Do you renounce Satan and all the spiritual forces of wickedness that rebel against God? I do, we do. And in that renunciation is the process of transformation, and it is the substance of apology. Do you turn to Jesus Christ and accept him as your savior? What we are about in this effort is not simple regret for things done, but a rooting out of the evil that besets us from without and the evil that rises up from within. It is all baptismal, is it not? So that when we make apology we must first renew the vows and promises we made when we first became Christians or it will be for nothing.

I am prepared, indeed I long for, the opportunity to lead this diocese in making apology for the involvement of this diocese in the slave trade. What I am not prepared to do is to engage a facile, easy cheap grace that voices words of regret but does not seek to effect the actual restoration of those who have been oppressed. We seek and desire reconciliation, but we are people of the Gospel, so more than that and before that we seek and desire transformation. We seek to be changed in mind and spirit. To be conformed to the mind of Christ. To be made new, lest we work out some kind of reconciliation which is not and can never be sustainable, which profits us nothing, and leaves us only confused.

This is why we cannot speak of apology without thoroughly committing ourselves to reparation. Nor can we make reparation without doing the first deep hard work of repentance and apology while we struggle with the hope of transformation. It's all of a piece. With the resolution before you today, which will establish the structure by which we may manage and pay reparations, and with the preparations will be begging from this convention to lead us to the place of apology we are I believe coming to the threshold of a new chapter in our life as justice-seeking Christians. We have been doing the hard work. It's not going to get any easier now, and it's going to cost us something - and I don't just mean the million dollars we set aside for this - but the rewards will be profound. We may by this work make a witness to the larger church and world. It's possible. But it doesn't matter; the only one whose blessing we need and we seek is Our Lord Jesus Christ.

In three weeks we will elect my successor as Bishop of New York. I am now well into my winding-down time. It is idolatrous for Christians to talk about legacy. Whatever else we are doing we are surely not about building monuments to ourselves. But if later on someone should ask me what happened during my episcopate that made me proud to be a Christian, I hope I will be able to say that

during these years we took a few more steps forward toward real racial justice, actual godly reconciliation, and the possibility of Beloved Community. In my first address to you as bishop I quoted (I actually sang) that old gospel song “Jesus on the Main Line”: If you want your soul converted tell him what you want; Call him up and tell him what you want.” This. This is what I want.

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As we gather here in convention, the United Nations Climate Change Conference - COP 27 - is meeting in Sharm El Sheikh, Egypt. The Episcopal Church has a 19-person representation at COP 27, including three delegates from the Diocese of New York. In July of this year the House of Bishops of the Episcopal Church issued a statement, in which we said that “as people of faith, we are not without hope, but the sustainability of God’s creation demands our action. Confronting climate change and environmental degradation has never been more urgent. As members of the Episcopal Church, we are committed in baptism to resist evil, seek God’s will, treat all people with dignity, and strive for justice and peace. Living into these promises, we must face the climate crisis for the sake of love of God and neighbor.”

We are convinced that the matter of Climate Change is not only a scientific, economic, societal and political challenge for our country and the world, but is also profoundly spiritual. This is God work. This is Gospel evangelism. Human beings have declared war on the earth and the bad news is that we are winning. And this disregard for those who come after us, this indifference toward the suffering of the poor, and this exploitation of the health and integrity of our planet which is home to billions upon billions of living things is an affront to the creation theology of the Old Testament, the justice imperatives of the Gospel, and the baptismal promises by which our Christian lives are shaped and the Beloved

Community is called into being. The Episcopal Church believes in God and believes in science, and we serve each as we serve the other.

Our 19 Episcopalians are among 35,000 delegates drawn from over 200 countries across the world who are meeting right now in Egypt to explore together actions to which the world might commit to mitigate the effects of Global Warming. But they are meeting without Greta Thunberg, the young Swedish climate activist who don't take no guff, and who has concluded that the annual COP conferences amount to a "greenwashing" by the largest corporations and wealthiest countries. It is certainly not essential that Greta Thunberg attend COP 27, but actually she might be right. One of the first headlines to come out of the conference was the discovery that there are over 600 representatives of the oil and gas industry among the delegates, some of them representing the biggest carbon polluters on earth. I'm not ready to conclude that "the fix is in," but I do note that the recent Lambeth Conference declared in one document about Climate Change that "the global response has been wholly inadequate - both in the level of resources dedicated to the response and in the level of urgency with which those with most power to make radical changes are taking action." Before this month is over we will know much more about the moral courage of COP 27 and every leader in the world.

But I think it's up to us. At our last convention before COVID we pledged the churches of this diocese to annual property surveys regarding climate readiness and environmentally sustainable energy practices, and to report these findings in each church's annual parochial report. Three months later COVID struck, and those measures became temporarily impossible. It is time to revisit those convictions. Everything which that resolution asked for three years ago is enfolded into a new resolution which will come before you today from the Creation Care Committee of the diocese that would commit this institution to

reaching carbon neutrality by 2030, and calling on individual parishes to do the same. That is seven years away. This will be a challenge, but I am convinced that it is doable. Following this convention I will call a meeting to bring together in the first quarter of 2023 the Creation Care Committee with members of the Standing Committee and Trustees and my staff to develop together a strategy for helping to equip the annual property surveys and developing strategies to meet the 2030 imperative. I am particularly interested in the partnership between this diocese and the World Resources Initiative, and when the Creation Care Committee comes forward later today to move their resolution I would invite them to say more about what that may mean for us and what it may require of us.

But some of the most interesting and inspiring resources, to my mind, that came out of the recent Lambeth Conference in Canterbury, England had to do with the movement of the church on matters of Creation Care, specifically Climate Change. There were some profoundly well-thought-through documents produced, which following this convention I will have put on our diocesan website. And one of those documents is a little book called “the Communion Forest: Renewing the Life of the Earth Across the Anglican Communion.” The Communion Forest is a call issued to the whole of the Anglican Church worldwide to begin to take steps at the local level to begin the transformation of the world in the places where we live, and to make a witness to the communities around us. At its heart, the Communion Forest is about planting trees - planting trees everywhere and anywhere. It is forestation. It is giving seedlings to confirmands. It is new young leaves trembling in the breeze in our churchyards. So it is also about oxygen. But recognizing that Anglicans live in myriad ecological circumstances, the Communion Forest invites adaptation for church communities who live in wetlands or along the coast or in places where planting trees is impractical but other steps to take care of our backyards and build strength and health are possible and urgently needed. Almost half of our

churches are in New York City, and these parishes will need local adaptation to plant the Communion Forest in this urban setting. But I have seen in our city churches and institutions the planting of vertical green walls, beehives on rooftops, and community gardens in small strips of yard next to our churches. Everything is possible.

There is very little in this world which the church can control. The powers we wield are spiritual and sacramental and rooted in the Holy Spirit. But what we do is make our witness and stand in the light. Let's everyone of us do something and join the global Anglican Communion Forest. And in the year to come and following, we will gather all of this in and tell our story together, and witness to hope and certainty and things unseen and a future which is God's future in which none of us need be afraid. And while these small local measures may not be able on their own to turn the tide on this mounting catastrophe, they will tell our neighbors, and declare before the powers and principalities, and demonstrate before our God, that we are not giving in to cynicism and despair and we are not giving up.

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Last year I announced my intention to form a task force to study the Apportioned Share formulas in the Diocese of New York. It has been clear for some time that the current formulas are probably not sustainable and they definitely put an unreasonable burden on our largest parishes. The reason why that has become clear is that so many of our parishes - maybe most of them - have worked out so many reductions or deferments of their Apportioned Share that maybe the majority of our churches are not paying according to the formula that this convention worked out, approved, and set into place. So it's not working. But also, I have noted in earlier addresses that the ten or twelve largest contributing

parishes in the diocese provide for over eighty percent of the diocesan budget (if that statement isn't one hundred percent accurate it's close enough), and that cannot be sustained in our current form. And that has the effect of consigning most of our churches to a stifling dependency, and laying a disproportionate burden on the shoulders of a small handful of parishes. This "works," but only at extraordinary high cost, and it is exhausting some of our highest-giving churches. I had actually reported my intention to launch this task force a few years ago in my annual address, but then COVID came, and this project had to wait along with so much else until we got more or less through the pandemic. Which we sort of are now, but the landscape has shifted in other ways.

In three weeks we will elect a bishop coadjutor, and sixteen months later that person will become the XVII Bishop of New York. And whatever conclusions are drawn by the task force and whatever recommendations and resolutions are then made to diocesan convention about the Apportioned Share will absolutely have a dramatically greater effect on the life and ministry of the seventeenth bishop than it will have on the sixteenth. For that reason I have felt strongly that the coadjutor who will be elected in three weeks needs to be part of that work. Over the next six months I will work with my staff and with the trustees on studying the state and health of our budget and our system of apportioned share obligations, and when the Bishop Coadjutor comes on board in May we will begin to gather representatives from churches across the diocese to look at next steps, and consider what fairness and justice would look like in a renewed budgetary system.

But I would like to be clear that the work of this task force will not begin with its members putting their parish budgets on the table and talking about what they can and can't afford to pay. Nothing would be less helpful or more destructive to our common life.

Instead we will begin by asking these questions:

What kind of diocese do we want to be?

What does it mean for us to have (what I used to say back in 2013 when we were doing Indaba) “a shared understanding of our common life?”

Can rich and poor make communion together?

Is real communion even possible?

What does parity among congregations mean when poorer and smaller churches are put in the position of being always dependent on others, and when the larger burden of supporting the common life falls disproportionately on the very few?

What is owed to one another?

How do we build each other up and create health across the whole church?

What is the mission of the Church, and what responsibility do each of us have for that?

And anyone who comes onto this task force will be expected to engage those conversations and to take a stab at answering these questions. And only then can we talk about the compromises and strategies for funding ministry in the parishes of this diocese, in the episcopal church, in the world.

I have a map of the diocese in my office that has all of our parishes on it - the same map that you probably have in your parish offices. And sometimes when I am meeting with members of my staff or with people from the diocese and we are talking about these challenges of mission and funding, I will point to the map and observe that we are expending an enormous amount of energy and resources to try to preserve a map that was put together before we were born. But this is our church, and anything we do in it will affect the whole system, every parish. A study of the Apportioned Share formula is really a study of mission and ministry, and if we reduce it to a conversation about church financing only we will talk past

one another and never understand what it is that we are doing and who and what we are called to become and to be. When we begin this work we will step onto a road which leads we do not know where, but we will strive to do this with trust in one another and a shared loyalty to the diocese of which we are a part.

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If you have been in the Diocese of New York for awhile you know that we have been talking about establishing a Diocese of New York Federal Credit Union for a long time. I have spoken about it in at least three of these convention addresses. We made strong early progress on this but then seemed to have stalled, and lots of people in the diocese asked what was happening with that and when or if it would come on line. But there is nothing simple about founding a bank, and the gears of a process like this grind slowly. But we are at a place now where we can see the light at the end of the tunnel.

Some five years ago we held an event in my living room to which church treasurers and rectors from parishes of significant resource were invited, and a presentation about the credit union was given. What we sought from that meeting was to discover whether our parishes would commit or trust their parish assets, or a portion of them, to the credit union. The meeting was spectacularly successful. Not only were the represented churches willing to invest their money in the credit union, but they were ready to make deposits right then! But it was premature. There were many steps that had yet to be taken before we could accept deposits, and indeed, we are not ready to do so even now. But we are close, and we can see the path toward bringing this dream to reality. A very fine video was produced and featured during the roll out meetings, and like all of those presentations can be found on the diocesan web page. We are so close to bringing this to completion that conversations are even now being had with

locations around the diocese which can become sites for ATM machines and in-person banking.

The credit union will be for everybody, and all people in the diocese will be invited to keep at least part of their financial assets in the credit union. The deposits are federally insured, just like in your neighborhood bank, and it's entirely safe. But the credit union will make it possible for us to provide ordinary banking services to people who are shut out of banks now because of their poverty or lack of sufficient resources. These are the Unbanked and the Underbanked. Through the credit union they will be able to create accounts to hold their money, to earn interest on their savings, to apply for loans, and to save money for their futures. Financial counseling will help those who are inexperienced with banking to understand these services and begin to let their money work for them. The credit union is the easiest way imaginable for those of us who take banking services for granted to, at no risk to ourselves, further the cause of economic justice for men and women who are members of our churches and citizens in our communities, but whose poverty holds them forever hostage. This is a real opportunity for all of us to do well while doing good.

The coming together of the several strands of our reparations work, the initiatives regarding climate change with real and effective goals for all of our churches to engage that work, and the realization of the diocesan credit union all represent long held goals in this diocese that, as we come back to life after COVID, are all approaching the finish line at more or less the same time. These are forward-looking initiatives which hold out the promise and possibility of real transformation of our churches and people, and of the integrity and courage of our common life. We live in a world that is characterized by racial division and injustice, by climate crisis and environmental degradation, and economic disparity. But we do not have to be held hostage to these things. We remain free

and faithful people with real agency in the world, and today we are laying out several paths going forward that hold out real promise for every person in this diocese. It is our conviction that God loves every person through his Son Jesus Christ that gives us hope and both drives and sustains our life as Christian people. These things we talk about today are the work of years, and I am so proud and grateful to those who have labored long to bring each of these strands of our life to this day and this place. Dare to repair. Don't be afraid to make a difference.

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In the last twelve months, this diocese lost two priests and former members of the Bishop's Staff, each of whom was nothing less than remarkable in the service they gave to this church. On December 9 last year, Claudia Wilson passed, and was followed on August 10, three months ago, by Constance Coles. Among other ministries in this diocese, Claudia was a Canon for Congregational Development, and Constance was Canon for Ministry. Claudia worked for three bishops and Constance for two, and for many years I was a colleague of each of them. And I suppose it is because I can see retirement looming a bit closer each day, but I find myself thinking often of the people I have loved and worked with in this diocese for over two decades, and speaking personally for a moment, I must say that these passages were for me grievous losses, as they were for a great cloud of witnesses across the Diocese of New York. And beyond.

I would never run out of things to say about each of these priests, nor ever lack for superlatives by which to describe their fidelity to their church. But I want to say something for a moment about Claudia Wilson. Something I just learned on Monday at the Meeting of the Board of Episcopal Charities.

It was announced at the meeting that Claudia, in her will, left Episcopal Charities a bequest of two hundred and forty thousand dollars. This is not something that happens every day. And people on the board were expressing such gratitude for her generosity, and were so moved by what she had done. And I asked if any of them had known Claudia. And none of them had. So I told them her story. Of years spent in publishing followed by years spent as one of the very first deacons ordained in the Diocese of New York, and of her late in life call to the priesthood. How she went away for three years and earned her Master of Divinity and then returned to her diocese and to a new ministry. She did not become rich doing church work, but she was a Christian steward, and she managed well what she had been given. I told them that I couldn't remember ever seeing Claudia angry or in ill-humor. And I told them that she had never married and had no family. When she knew that the pancreatic cancer with which she had lived for five years was soon to run its course, she began to give careful consideration to the distribution of her assets. I certainly have not read her will, but I became aware after she died of gifts she made that were in some cases life-changing and were just brilliant and beautiful in the quality of consideration she gave to long and loyal friends and to the church which she loved. I was moved to see how moved were the members of the Board, and so I tell you about this today to speak for the Board of Episcopal Charities in giving thanks for this sizable gift by a servant of God and of this diocese, and one of the most stalwartly faithful priests I have ever known.

And in light of her commitment to Episcopal Charities, I want also to raise up here today that ministry and the incomparable work that Episcopal Charities makes possible through the parishes of this diocese. The work is done by you and the people in your parishes, but the funding that comes to you through Episcopal Charities is one of the brilliant lights of this diocese. In early December we will host the annual tribute dinner for Episcopal Charities in our cathedral. In the

final years before COVID, Episcopal Charities was raising and distributing through your churches a million dollars a year from of that event. But during COVID, when it became impossible to hold the regular fund-raising events, contributions dropped off. That was entirely understandable. But now we are back, and I would be remiss if I did not, in honor of Claudia's profound self-offering, call on the people and churches of this diocese to step back up with renewed generosity and recommit your support of these life-changing, life-giving ministries. And if your church can buy a table at the dinner, all the better. In the meantime, Episcopal Charities has a booth at this convention, and I commend it to you.

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Three weeks from today we will gather in our cathedral church to hold another convention, with a single purpose, and that is the election of the Bishop Coadjutor. Five faithful Christian priests have offered themselves to this ministry, and that discernment is in front of you now. I am supremely confident that this job is a lot harder than they think it is, but I am also confident that each of them is more than capable of figuring it out and doing honor to this ministry and leading the Diocese of New York from strength to strength and glory to glory. When I had just been elected bishop I was in conversation with Family Bass-Choate one day, and confessed that I didn't know how to meet the profound challenges that were about to come before me as Bishop of this large and complicated diocese. I told her that I was afraid. And she said to me that God does not call the equipped; he equips those he calls. It is so important that we never forget that the Holy Spirit is alive and active in our shared life and in all the processes and strategies of the church. God is in our successes and most of all God is in our failures, and God is in this coming election.

After I called for the election of a Bishop Coadjutor last year, I had a conversation with my own predecessor Mark Sisk. I want to tell you that I had known Bishop Sisk for thirty years before I was elected to follow him in this office, and worked with him as closely as it is possible for ten years before I was elected. There are few people I admire more. And he told me that once he called for the election of his successor he found that when he talked with people they always seemed to be looking over his shoulder, looking for the one who was to come. I am beginning to understand that, and strangely it gives me great peace. I know that this diocese will be fine, and as I pray now for the five candidates, soon I will be praying for the one who will become the seventeenth bishop of New York. He or she will be consecrated in May, and then will serve alongside me until April of 2024 (I know you have seen a March date, but I am pushing my retirement forward a few weeks to get this diocese and my family past Holy Week and the Spring meeting of the House of Bishops). I look forward to that partnership and final transition. I'm not ready to go yet, but I am confident that I will be when the time is at hand.

I won't be at the walkabouts, but I will see all of you at the electing convention. Great days of discernment are about to begin - for you, for the Diocese of New York, and in a different way for Margaret and me. May God cast his grace and favor over you. May he fill you with wisdom for the work you have to do. May he make you brave and strong and faithful for the journey. And for that one whom even now God is calling into this ministry, may he make that person patient and gentle, humble and faithful, worthy of your trust, and may God give you a true and loving pastor. Amen.