

Always and
Everywhere

It is
right and
a good and joyful
thing always and
everywhere to
give thanks.

BY BISHOP PAUL V. MARSHALL

If you look carefully at this picture of Grace, Allentown, set up as an emergency shelter, especially at higher resolutions too big to reproduce here, there is something optically striking about the picture. Either deliberately or accidentally, the photographer (or his camera!) chose the sanctuary lamp as the focal point of the picture. The body of the lamp is the most sharply in-focus area of the picture and the tiny flame has a special intensity.

It is that very symbol of the sacramental presence of Christ that will be extinguished as we descend into Good Friday, and stand together at the Cross.

But Saturday night fires will blaze again and lamps such as this one will joyfully receive a new flame, signifying Christ's presence with and in his church. It is in the presence of and in partnership with the Risen Jesus that the

Accident? Bishop Paul's Easter Message



PHOTO BY PATRICK MALLOY

Church serves the world. This picture reminds us that the light at the altar does not signify that Jesus is imprisoned in the tabernacle. This picture reminds us that when we understand and rejoice in the resurrection blaze, the light reaches out through stone walls and dark stained glass, and touches the world through our words and deeds. Homeless, hungry,

seeking truth, whoever they are, there is light for all.

But back to the photo. Jesus puts us in the picture with the simple words "follow me" and the promise "I am with you always, even to the end of the age." When we rely on that promise and accept our share of the mission, we discover that the resurrection of Jesus is not a matter of debate – it is a matter of experience. Each of us learns that because he lives, we live – now and in eternity. This experienced learning is no small thing:

the powers that Jesus defeated in an eternal moment on the Cross paradoxically remain our enemies and the creation groans for freedom and healing. Until everything comes to its fullness, our living in the light is what God chooses to work with.

I have been out of action for some months now and must sit out for a couple of weeks yet. I am thankful that nobody

else has been sitting still. I could only watch with wonder and thanksgiving when so many parishes organized this winter to care for those who might otherwise freeze to death. I have been amazed as parish clergy changed the mind of a mayor. I have some idea of how many of you gave blankets and other supplies, and acted as hosts in church buildings.

The media program in the north and west is another example, a very literal one, of our sisters and brother reaching out through and with light, in this case real photons. We pray that they will touch many. Again, sisters and brothers who walk in the light use their diocesan relationship to organize and make a difference, and the Body of Christ lives out its identity.

It may be that God has put us in these 14 counties in the business of giving new hope on a long-term basis. In any event, I can only be grateful that so many people are bearing the light with generosity and grace. Especially at a time in my life when I could do nothing, the witness of your commitment illuminated my mind, not to mention my heart. You teach the reality of Jesus' resurrection.

May these three days bring the fullness the light to each of you.

My position on The Northern Michigan Episcopate

BY BISHOP PAUL V. MARSHALL

The Church, as it ponders scripture, tradition, in the light to the best reason it can muster, is itself the judge of the Church's latitude in doctrine and practice. It defines that latitude from time to time, seeking to welcome the broadest possible expression of the basics of the faith. Core doctrines are maintained most notably by unambiguous reference in our liturgy and catechism.

Thus, when Bishop Righter was tried for allegedly violating the Church's doctrine in accepting certain persons for ordination, the court was able to say that, while the question was a theological question, it was not a matter of core doctrine and was not addressed in our central documents. Unpublished documents from the right wing opine that they subsequently think they would have more likely gotten a conviction if they had charged Righter with violating the discipline (operating rules) rather than the doctrine of the Church.

When Bishop Robinson was elected, there was again a question of doctrine, but no core doctrine in prayer book and canon to which appeal could be made.

When a multiply-divorced man was elected in Northern California, at least

a majority in both houses believed that what the New Testament teaches about divorce, and particularly its prohibition of remarried bishops, did not form an absolute barrier. Although I did not agree, this made a kind of sense, the question of moral modeling aside, because the Church is in fact now more open to remarriage. Beyond that, both Bishops Pike and Righter, not to mention many priests, had contracted serial marriages.

In the case of Father Kevin Thew Forester, bishop-elect of Northern Michigan, perhaps we can get our ducks in the correct rows. His Buddhist practices are sensational but not the point. In sermons and other writings (including eucharistic prayers which I fear were used outside Rite III settings, giving us a question of discipline as well as doctrine), the bishop-elect makes it clear that the doctrine of the Trinity as confessed in the Creed and explained in the Catechism is not what he holds.

He will use base-three theological language, but never in service to the proposition that in Jesus of Nazareth God became fully human. Similarly, his understanding of the atonement is not conformable with the liturgy or

catechism, but appears to be something like gnostic enlightenment. His writings represent a very shaky understanding of the Second Person of the Trinity, God incarnate, severely weakening his gospel.

Apart from his sense of freedom from the seeming minutiae of rubric and liturgical text, in which he is by no means alone, Father Thew Forrester seems to have been an exemplary priest, a saintly pastor and an enviably fine human being. That is not the point. The point is that there has been no time like the one we inhabit for bishops to proclaim unambiguously the gospel of Christ in all its fullness.

In a cardinal church in the west the creed is never used, and a eucharistic prayer from around the world is used each week, along with other ritual freehand before and after the gathering. I couldn't tell what I had just attended or what the church actually celebrated.

As a Church we are increasingly a laughing-stock. Not because we welcome lesbian and gay people, and carry on social ministries that enact the sacrifice of Christ on a corporate basis, and certainly not because of our latitude and the conversation it engenders. We

are a laughing stock because we do not consistently proclaim a solid core, words as simple as "all have sinned and come short of the glory of God," yet "God was in Christ, reconciling the world to himself."

Increasingly it seems that the Cross has become foolishness in the Church, and our former hallmark teaching of the Incarnation is seldom heard, and less seldom heard to matter. If our embarrassment is going to end, the voices of bishops as clear, traditional, and powerful evangelists need to be raised in the churches and in the market place.

Many bishops find a number of techniques that come from the social sciences useful in their ministries, and have significant investment in Eastern meditation – their qualification to be bishops, however, is as the chief confessors of the creeds and as presidents at the sacraments. They are to be unambiguously ambassadors for Christ, God making his appeal through them.

For these reasons I believe the election of Father Kevin Thew Forrester cannot go forward and hope that it will not.

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