

THE PRESIDING BISHOP'S KEYNOTE ADDRESS

To Brothers in Christ -- men and women alike -- called by him to new undertakings in Mission -- grace be unto you and peace from God, the Father, and from the Lord Jesus Christ.

We are gathered as a tiny band of Christians, chosen representatives of a Church which is, itself, a fragment of "the mystical body of Christ, the blessed company of all faithful people," to worship, to deliberate, to decide, and to share in the ancient bond of fellowship and faith by which we are bound to Christ Jesus and, because of this, bound to each other and to all men everywhere. Let us deliberate together in patience and gentleness, with sure confidence in the power of the Holy Spirit to lead us past our all-too-human limitations into the role of responsible stewards of the manifold gifts and opportunities which God has bestowed upon his world! We will meet people here who are intellectually our superiors. We shall be in the presence of some whose quiet yet incandescent piety will tell us, without their knowing it, that they have walked with God. We will sit beside men and women whose suffering is that of a whole race of people whose anger and agony have been etched unforgettably upon our cities' streets. And we will rub shoulders with parents and wives whose sons and husbands have died in the human horror that war is, amid the rice paddies and watery wilderness of a land that, at any other time, would seem so fair!

Let us be determined to deliberate together in openness and in charity, cautious lest we impute to those with whom we are inclined to disagree motives we would not permit anyone to arraign against ourselves. And no matter with how many talents God has embellished our persons, may we learn to guard against the temptation to triumph one over another out of local or regional or ecclesiastical or intellectual pride -- a posture from the exercise of which only dishonor can come to Christ and His Church, and confusion to the world.

We cannot but be aware that we meet in a time when the whole world "groaneth and travaileth" and when the crust that has protected some quite ancient institutions and traditions is cracking badly -- unable to hold any longer against a boiling, inner anger and frustration which has been festering in the hearts and minds of millions of men, women and children, until

it has now out-run patience and, on occasion, prudence, and is quite willing to face the prospect of death (yea, would even welcome it, many of them) rather than continue to suffer the daily indignities, the forced alienation, the ceaseless discrimination, the grinding poverty, the monotonous parade of broken promises ... all of which have tended to close doors and build in ceilings and set boundaries ... with the finality of "Thus far, and no farther!"

Much of the "shaking of the foundations" is the direct result of the quest of a people for self-determination, the exercise of freedom, and the right to participate in the decisions that affect their destiny. Some have tied these privileges to economic affluence while noting their denial to those who are both poor and undeveloped. The miracles of communication, the pervasiveness of world trade, the speed of travel all have invaded the former "blacked-out" areas of the globe. As a result the poverty-ridden two-thirds know exactly how the affluent third lives. And the contrast tends to make their own miserable existence no longer a bearable burden. They know that this is the kind of world in which, given justice, no child need go to bed hungry, no unemployed person need be without work, no family need be homeless or compelled to share squalid quarters with the roaches and the rats. They know, too, that change is wrought not by pious exhortation but by the exercise of power, and they know that in the long history of the dynamics of change the instances of a voluntary orderly transfer of strongly entrenched power, individual or institutional, are so rare as to impart more of despair than of hope.

It is in these volatile, exciting, highly charged times that we are called to proclaim, by word and deed, the awesome fact of God's judgment upon a self-seeking people, and the renewing power of God's forgiveness through the reconciling, healing presence of the living Christ! The world has a right to know about this. That the world may have a future, depends upon it. That we, as men and women for whom Christ died, are charged with this most difficult, most rewarding responsibility is undeniable. How then shall we respond? That is the question this Convention faces. For the nature of our response may well determine the credibility and integrity of "mission" for this Church for generations to come! We need to make our own the conviction carved by Carl Jung above the doorway of his Switzerland home: "Vocatus atqua non vocatus deus aderit." "Called or not called, God is present." For indeed He is!

One of the critical matters before this Convention will be a decision concerning which direction this Church should take in being responsible participants in the whole ecumenical ferment of our times. A focus for this will be the attitude we take with reference to the progress of the Consultation on Church Union. Three years ago the 61st General Convention authorized representatives of this Church to engage in the Consultation with representatives of five other communions -- now happily grown to eleven. We sent our "first team" -- men highly respected both for their scholarship, their catholicity of approach, and their integrity in confrontations. I have watched them at their work, even participated a little when a substitute had to be called into action. Under the gently astute chairmanship of Bishop Robert Gibson, the entire consultation procedures were carried to an appropriate point of considerable agreement -- unanimous, I am led to believe -- in what we know as "Principles of Church Union." Not a completed document; far from it. But an honest one in which our representatives (quite diverse themselves, you know) agreed -- and upon which their request for continuation and encouragement (if this Convention sees fit) is based. As was to be expected, "Principles" have evoked both widespread acclaim and sharp demurrer! This household, the Church, had jolly well be able to afford and contain as much! Some of the debate in these next few days may turn on theological, doctrinal, or technical points. So be it! But even as war is too important a matter to be left entirely to the generals (as someone suggested), unity in the Body of Christ is too significant a matter to be left entirely to the theologians! We can learn from them. God help us if we do not! But there are considerations in the whole matter of the unity of Christendom which no theological formulation can totally encompass: obedience to a Lord Who literally poured out his life as a prayer "that they all may be one!"

You did not elect a theologian when in St. Louis you placed me in this office. I could easily miss the significance of an obscure "iota" such as the one that unlocked dialogue at Nicea. But it is plain that many, many more, than Episcopalians will be watching the decision of this General Convention as regards the stance of this Church in the quest for organic union with other Christians. Will it be a grinding

halt, an ignoble withdrawal, or a faithful and confident forward move towards it, authorizing continuing exploration of avenues of understanding, including tentative probing for light on potentially viable structures to contain the common life and common mission to which God has called us all.

In the proposals before us concerning the Consultation, we are not being asked to make any final commitments. We are being asked to take some risks. I believe them to be reasonable risks, hardly commensurate with those we resoundingly affirmed when in confirmation we promised to "follow Jesus Christ as Lord and Master." If we support the proposals, in effect we will be saying to those representing us in the negotiations, "We believe you are honest, well informed, reliable, and -- having the totality of Christendom foremost in your sights -- we believe you are heading us in the right direction. God helping us, we are prepared to move ahead." In good conscience I do not believe that this General Convention can do any less!

In proximity to the quest for unity is whether or not this Church is willing seriously to see Theological Education as a matter potentially so profound in its influence that only by making it a national concern backed by national support can it be brought to its rightful focus. I have used the word "potentially" advisedly. Twenty years ago it would not have occurred to me to use it at all in this framework. It is not that our resources for seminary training and lay education were so remarkably effective. They were not. It is simply that two decades have seen other education move so fast in the use of bold new concepts, creative teaching methods, the use of electronic teaching devices, the recruiting of capable young minds, the search for relevancy and openness to truth that our own education for ministry has not been able to keep pace and has fallen behind in a time which calls desperately for the boldest kind of ethical and moral leadership. I have only the deepest sympathy and the highest admiration both for individuals and for some theological communities courageously fighting the battle for excellence against odds inflated by lack of resources both financial and human. But anyone can see that the battle, however gallantly joined, is also being lost! The quality, depth, disciplined creativity, wide-ranging attraction of education for ministry in this terribly complex day are less than is required to keep the

Church within hailing distance of the forefront of "mission." Seminaries, and what goes on in them, is a "never-never-land" for the vast majority of our lay people. The money this Church is willing to give in order that theological education may "make the vital difference" can hardly be dignified by calling it "pocket change!" People who are called by God -- in whatever form -- to ministry deserve better at our hands. Not to respond is to condemn the Church to hopeless mediocrity in her leadership precisely at a time when the fate of humankind hangs in the delicate balance.

The report of the Committee on Theological Education, called for by The House of Bishops in 1964, and enabled by funds raised by the Episcopal Church Foundation, is critical of much that passes for theological education in this Church today, but the report is not an attack upon seminaries as such. From its analysis it draws conclusions and offers a way through which improvement might well come in this essential field. Here again "business as usual" will simply compound small disasters into a fatal catastrophe. This the Church can never afford. One thing is certain: the reconstruction of theological education is too big a task for small enclaves of scholars and saints. This is a job for the whole Church!

This nation is engaged in a costly undeclared war on the other side of the world, a war which bears heavily upon the human conscience and makes inordinate demands upon our social and economic fabric. But -- closer to home -- there is raging another conflict which, if it is not understood and immediately dealt with intelligently and compassionately can be as fatal to the well-being of this nation as anything short of nuclear holocaust! There is no doubt in my mind that the impact of the war in Vietnam upon us is in part of such dimensions because this is the first war which you and I have been able to view first-hand while sitting at home before a television set. The same can be said of the appallingly destructive bloody rioting which has destroyed much inner city fabric, damaged communications between black and white, waved the flag of "black power" menacingly, and wasted precious human lives, setting at naught respect for law and order.

We have been shocked and bewildered by all of this -- most of us! For these are people rebelling in the streets of Watts and Newark and Detroit and New Haven whose forefathers fought for the right of self-determination, for the rights

and dignity of every human being, for freedom under law, for deliverance from discrimination, and for a dream which for nearly two centuries has been a brilliant torch to which the shackled and oppressed everywhere could look up in hope. We are bewildered because for too many that torch had guttered into gloom and violence has shattered our complacency about something basic we had tended to take for granted.

Let us be clear that lawlessness and violence are inherently destructive and are not to be condoned as such. But let us be equally aware that men can become prisoners of the law unjustly. For the administration of law which is abused into an instrument of oppression by insensitive men of power, thus inhibiting rather than releasing the process of change which rightfully could bring healing to body sores and spiritual cancers that affect the neglected and dispossessed inevitably must face the rude awakening, namely, that desperate despairing human beings will revolt against the tyrannous character of such law inasmuch as they have no other recourse open to them through which their wrongs may be redressed. The beneficiaries of order and domestic tranquility must understand this. Indeed, we must learn to respond creatively to the violence of frustrated hopefulness patiently, sympathetically and without hypocrisy and self-delusion. For the application of increased restrictive power only is to compound the root causes of alienation, abandon the responsible role of reconciliation, and mutilate the God-created bonds of human brotherhood by which all men belong to each other inseparably and forever.

As Presiding Bishop of this Church, by God's help I trust, and with the help of others -- some not of this Church -- I have tried to hear what God may be saying to the churches in this crisis. Such extreme actions on the part of a dispossessed people bespeaks a conviction that white man's justice is no justice for the black man, particularly those trapped in the ghettos of this land. And many of them have despaired of attaining that justice through structures and institutions which they see as channels of the white man's power! The grim consequences of the rioting indicates a tenaciously held conviction that any relief that comes will have to come by acquisition of, or seizure of, sufficient power on their own part to enable them to shape their own destiny, taking their place equally alongside other men. This they are prepared to do -- even if they have to die in the attempt. Further, and this touches us at a sensitive point, these unfortunate

people -- many of them -- have written off the churches as possible allies in their quest for justice for they have seen little concrete evidence that church people are concerned about their plight or will take the necessary risk to help redeem it.

In trying to hear what is being said in the confusion of our time, I have walked -- a little bit -- and listened as much as I could -- in the ghetto areas of two of our cities. I can only tell you what I know -- know from an unrehearsed face-to-face confrontation with black people, some militant leftists, others solidly moderate -- most of them bearing in their souls (and some on their bodies) the indignities and brutality which have erupted in anger and rebellion. I recruited a task force of our own staff, together with competent outside advisors. I requested the counsel of a group of ghetto leaders in exploring the question: "How the resources of this Church, resources human and financial, might intelligently and humbly be enlisted in the service of the people of the cities, and by what criteria this Church might enter into partnership with the indigenous community groups in impoverished slum areas which have been organized by the residents themselves, are run by them, and are seeking to alleviate the conditions which are destroying them." I believe that people in all walks of life, churchmen in our own land and abroad, the people from whom hope is being squeezed out, want to know where we, as Christians, stand -- and whether our position is manifested in deeds that cannot be misunderstood!

As at least the beginning of this Church's response to the deep human need dramatized by the conflict in the cities I am recommending the development of a program to be extended over the next triennium, by which this Church can take its place humbly and boldly alongside of, and in support of, the dispossessed and oppressed peoples of this country for the healing of our national life. Among its aims will be the bringing of people in ghettos into areas of decision making by which their destiny is influenced. It will encourage the use of political and economic power to support justice and self-determination for all men. It will make available skilled personnel assistance, and request the appropriation of substantial sums of money to community organizations involved in the betterment of depressed urban areas, and under the control of those who are largely both black and poor that their power for self-determination may be increased and their

dignity restored. It is suggested that these efforts be administered through coalitions with other churches and agencies such as Inter-Religious Foundation for Community Organization, that we may be joined with and by other groups in similar efforts directed toward the same goals. I am requesting the funding of such a program in the amount of approximately \$3 million annually. Such funds to be secured from various sources, principally from the General Church's Program.

Finally, a re-ordering of primary emphases and priority ratings in the proposed General Church Program will be required in order to support the programmatic response outlined here.

I am requesting General Convention and the Triennial of the Women of the Church to create appropriate committees to review this call to action by your Presiding Bishop and Executive Council and charging them to make such recommendations as may seem wise to them in the light of the critical nature of the need. I am sure that means for mutual discussion and cooperation between these committees can be found by such ingenious and creative personnel. But I would heavily underline a word of caution: no matter what this Church at the national level may decide we can do both in human and financial terms, it will be only a token, a symbol, if, perhaps happily a sacrament. What we do here can never be more than an "earnest" pointing to the necessity for, and the effectiveness of a sensitive and sacrificial response on the part of the people of the Church. For unless our men, women and young people enlist in patterns of diocesan, parish, and mission engagement, which involves them personally as well as financially, even the best effort at this level will prove fruitless. What is before us is not primarily a matter of money. Money can help if we take our hands off of its control, giving it because we realize that it is God's and not ours. But if we attempt to use money to "buy our way" out of responsibility, the less credible we will appear to men and women struggling with their misery, and the less likely we are to build our part of a bridge between our alienation! Perhaps we can understand a little that it is only through our sharing in the pain and agonized frustration of the dispossessed that our own renewal can come to be!

I hope that this plea for a corporate response of Episcopalians will not have to stand alone. We are too small a group, and

our resources -- even if given freely -- are far too limited to cope successfully with the crisis in our city streets. I hope I am not presumptuous in appealing to the nation-wide community of faith -- to our Jewish brethren, to our Christian brethren -- Roman Catholic, Orthodox and Protestant -- to join together with us in a bold, full-scale mobilization of our resources that can be dedicated to the righting of a great wrong and the healing of a bleeding wound in the body of our nation's life. For it may be that we are in "a moment of passing grace" given to us by God, that may never again re-occur -- and in which we are given together the opportunity to act!