

Special Session of the 39th Synod of the Diocese of Sydney to Elect an Archbishop

Election of Archbishop Robinson

Presidential Address

Delivered by The Right Reverend A J Dain, OBE, Administrator, on Friday 26 March 1982.

Meeting the Demands of the Hour

Brethren of the Clergy and Lay Members of Synod,

I bid you all welcome to this special session of Synod when you will have the privilege and the responsibility of electing a Bishop for the See of Sydney.

This is an onerous task for which I trust you will have prepared by seeking the help and guidance of Almighty God through constant prayer. We meet, I trust, with our own personal views and convictions but without any trace of partisanship and with deep humility, recognising our supreme need of that wisdom that comes alone from above.

The process of synodical government which we all treasure involves the practice of disciplined debate. If we have come here today to share in a spiritual exercise that will lead us corporately to an understanding of the mind and will of God, then we must have open minds to respond to every constraint and restraint of the Holy Spirit.

Only thus shall we ultimately arrive at the place where, like the apostles and elders at Jerusalem, we can say with conviction, "It has seemed good to the Holy Spirit and to us." (Acts 15:28.)

Tribute

My first task in this address must be to pay a further tribute to Archbishop Sir Marcus Loane, who, for over 15 years, has graced with distinction, the office we are about to fill.

People, far more gifted than myself, have rightly paid tribute to Sir Marcus and Lady Loane over recent weeks and months. Few who were present at the memorable farewell in Sydney Square will forget the contributions of His Excellency the Governor, of Sir Harold Knight, Bishop Kerle and Mrs Shirley Cole.

His Excellency made special mention of those many personal qualities of wisdom and compassion, of the high sense of duty, of intellectual honesty and courage, of generosity and accessibility, of courtesy and humility which have characterised Archbishop Loane. We as clergy and laity, would add those spiritual qualities of self-discipline, biblical teaching and pastoral care, hospitality and spiritual leadership. The '79 Billy Graham Crusade with its enduring impact upon this Diocese and city, owes under God, a tremendous debt to the Archbishop for his initial vision and subsequent leadership.

May I, on this occasion however, as we meet in Synod, seek to pay a special tribute to his unique gifts as a synodman. He had the highest regard for synodical processes, initially on the floor of Synod, but in later years in the Chair as President. I myself, have vivid memories of his wise use of his Presidential Addresses in the early years of his office to secure the total support and co-operation of the Synod for his imaginative plans for Wollongong, the new Housing Areas, the Inner City and Parramatta. I doubt if any Diocesan in Australia has taken Synod more fully into his confidence or given back to Synod a more loyal acceptance of synodical decisions, even when these were contrary to his own views - as in the case of the change of the name of our Church.

He observed the time-honoured discipline of not participating in debate, but occasionally after the vote had been taken, he would stand up, fold his gown in front of him and to the chagrin of some members, express his own views forcefully.

Archbishop Loane was a man of immense personal commitment to the Gospel, to the life of the Church at national, diocesan and parish level and to the needs of individuals, particularly those in deep personal need.

As one who perhaps observed him very closely, I would remind Synod that he worked harder than any man I know in this Diocese. He never shirked unpleasant issues such as Glebe Board tenancies, SCEGGS, or social issues such as poverty and unemployment.

In seeking to pay this tribute to one who was my leader and my friend, I realise I am, by implication, placing an onerous burden on the shoulder of his successor. The enumeration of those gifts exhibited by Archbishop Loane is a matter for profound thankfulness to God; they are not however and must never be, the inevitable blueprint for his successor.

The Role of the Archbishop

The specific and particular gifts required when this Synod last met in 1966, as an electoral synod, are not, in every respect, the gifts required by an Archbishop who will, under God, lead this Diocese over the years of the coming decade or more.

Perhaps we might pause at this moment to ask ourselves what do we expect from our new Archbishop. Have we placed upon previous Archbishops burdens that are grievous to be borne? I believe we have. I am convinced that if you expect the new Archbishop to do all that Archbishop Loane has done over the past fifteen-and-a-half years, you are probably doing a serious disservice to the Church and denying, to the Church and the Archbishop, time and opportunity for the quiet reflection on the major issues of our time that will be essential if his ministry is to be truly relevant in today's church and today's world.

The Lambeth Conference of 1978 produced a series of preparatory articles which had a special focus on the ministry of Bishops, and they should be compulsory reading for any Bishop or Archbishop. I would only select two or three relevant quotations. Speaking of changes in episcopal responsibilities - dress and life style - the report speaks of these as outward expressions of a basic change in attitude "which has brought episcopacy closer to ordinary people" and continues, "it may be argued that much more contact is still needed. 'Small is beautiful' has much to commend it as a philosophy." I pause and ask what does this have to say to us in the area of regional episcopacy?

That particular essay concludes with these words: "Bishops wherever they may be are overseers, leadership is embodied in their person. It is a vocation set, not without risk, in a world in which the Bishop and Archbishop of 1982 walks a tightrope far different from that of his predecessors. In his earnest intent to be seen as a humble man of God, especially by a society which will expect of him a humility compatible with the teaching of the New Testament, he must yet remain the man of standing whose administrative competence, business acumen and personal standing will allow him to move with ease in the ranks of men and women who lead and govern in secular walks of life."

In contrast to that last quotation, I was deeply impressed by a statement in the following essay. "Recently there seems to have been a greater realisation that a reshaping of administrative structures and rewriting of liturgies will not solve the Church's basic problem and the more urgent priorities are a renewal of the gospel message and a deepening of spirituality."

It is not surprising that the essay that follows is entitled "Bishop and Pastor". In recognising that certain Archbishops in the past have personified the role of statesman, priest, scholar or administrator, it states that "none of these images would be acceptable today". I quote, "Now the demand is for pastoral bishops - pastoral - all is pastoral." "The Bishop," it continues, "must be one who cares and who is seen to be exercising a caring ministry. That involves time which the burdens of office must permit. 'I must never be bored, never be offended, never be busy,' said Mother Janet Stuart, 'for to be busy is to be engaged in an occupation which makes it inconvenient to be disturbed'."

This concept, which is so important, is difficult to sustain in the pattern of our existing structures and the present demands upon the man who occupies the office of Archbishop.

Meeting the Demands of the Hour

The world of 1982 and the Church of 1982 are different in certain respects from the world and church of 1966.

Paul, writing to the Church at Rome in the First Century, urged them (Rom. 12:11 NEB margin) "*to meet the demands of the hour*". What, we may well ask, are the demands of the hour for the Church of Jesus Christ, the Diocese of Sydney and the man whom we shall elect to be our Archbishop?

I would not presume to speak on such a matter from the background of my own limited knowledge and experience. I have sought the counsel and advice of a few respected colleagues - episcopal, clerical and lay -

on what they considered were, in fact, “the demands of the hour”. Two interesting facts emerged. First, the wide variety of suggestions and secondly, the wide measure of agreement on a number of basic issues and these are the ones which I have chosen and will include in this address. In every case they are the result of consultation but at the same time, they represent my own firmly held convictions.

General Synod

At our next ordinary diocesan Synod in October we face two highly sensitive and potentially divisive issues in the form of bills which have been forwarded to the Synod for consideration following upon the deliberations of the General Synod of the Anglican Church of Australia, which met in August, 1981. I refer here, in particular, to the ordination of women and the remarriage of divorced persons.

It is unquestionable that these are among the most commonly discussed and hotly debated issues in the Anglican Church, worldwide, here in Australia, and in our own Diocese. They contain within their parameters questions which are absolutely fundamental to the life and pastoral ministry of the Church, of the authority of Scripture, of relevant and appropriate ecclesiastical order and discipline in this day, of the limit and extent of fidelity to the tradition and practice of this Church, of sensitivity and necessary response to the consciousness, the pain and cry of this age, of the real nature of compassionate pastoring of the people of God.

The Ordination of Women

This is a matter upon which evangelical Anglicans are divided. That is clearly the case here in Australia, as was visibly demonstrated in opinions expressed at the National Evangelical Anglican Congress convened in Melbourne in May, 1981.

While many deny any biblical warrant or precedent for the ordination of women to the presbyterate, few can see any scripturally-based objection to the ordination of women to the diaconate. I count myself among their number. Our own *Committee Appointed to Consider the Meaning, Value and Theology of Ordination*, whose report was received by the Synod of this Diocese in October, 1978 endorsed the notion of the admission of women to the diaconate.

It should not be forgotten that this question of ordination is, however, but part of a wider whole, that is, the role and place of women in the Church. Does Scripture give them an equal or a complementary role? If the former, then in justice, it should be implemented with speed, so that the servants of God may answer His call. If the latter, as I believe, then how should that understanding of the role of women be so implemented in church and congregation that God’s servants may stand in dignity, and in loving obedience exercise God-given gifts of ministry and service for the building-up and edification of the Body of Christ? Are there unnecessary, unscriptural, man-made limitations which should be removed to allow that role and ministry to be exercised in the fullest possible way?

The Remarriage of Divorced Persons

No faithful pastor in a congregation, indeed no compassionate Christian, can be unaware of the hurt, the guilt and despair, the overwhelming sense of failure and alienation experienced by individuals and families undergoing the pain of broken marriage and divorce in our community today. It has been said that at present in Australia, the statistical expectation is that one marriage in every four will end in divorce. How do we respond?

Taught by Scripture, we believe that marriage “is a lifelong union in which a man and a woman are called to give themselves in body, mind and spirit . . .” (AAPB p. 560.). We believe that integral to marriage is the notion that it is a God-ordained permanent relationship, demanding life-long commitment. We are bound to say –

“Those whom God has joined together let not man put asunder.”

I venture to suggest that no-one amongst us would deny these latter words. Yet we would find ourselves disagreeing upon the question of the responsibility of the Church and the minister in the matter of remarriage after divorce. To use ancient terms, some would adopt a “rigorist” position. That is, a marriage is indissoluble in the sight of God. There can be no remarriage in church. Others would adopt a more flexible position. They would maintain that the marriage relationship has “died”. The “till death us do part” vow is abrogated; another marriage, therefore, may take place. Others would hold that in individual cases there has been true repentance and now there is a determination to enter into a Christian marriage and family relationship; therefore the second marriage may take place.

The Christian knows that in the Gospel failure is never final. We all know the healing and reconciling power of God in our lives. We know that in Christ we stand forgiven, the past has been blotted out, and we have been created anew to a new life in Him. What, then is our pastoral responsibility?

These two matters cannot be left aside for another day. They are the demands of the hour that we must meet. We must constantly call for the guidance of the Holy Spirit as Synod moves towards decisions in each case.

No man is an island. No diocese is an island. We are being, and we will be watched and judged on the manner in which we resolve our differences on these matters. We are going to need wise leadership that such issues are resolved in a way which will be to the glory of God and to the greater unity of His Church. This will require of all of us a willingness to listen, a true humility which is open to the Spirit of God and to the Word of God, and a recognition that we are not only Christians and evangelicals, but also Anglicans.

Relationships

We cannot ignore one further issue which undoubtedly underlies our consideration of the matters referred to us from the General Synod. As a Diocese, a metropolitan see, what is our responsibility and relationship to the national Church whose legislative and consultative body has referred these Bills to our Synod?

Our harshest critics (and they are sometimes to be found in our midst), often accuse us of possessing a “ghetto mentality” - of a complacent pride in our own strength and our own independence of our fellow Anglicans in Australia. This pride, in part, stems from our distinctive evangelical tradition, which makes us unique, not only in Australia, but, one may justly claim, in the whole Anglican communion. We are inheritors of a tradition in which we can take pride, and it is incumbent upon us to continue to uphold it. Yet we are in relationship and fellowship with all Anglicans in the national Church.

There is no doubt that one of the traditionally characteristic marks of the Anglican Church of Australia is its “diocesanism”. This has developed for historic reasons. It is quite simply a result of “the tyranny of distance”.

The Anglican Church of Australia may be observed to be a lively and growing child. Since the present constitution came into effect in 1961, there has been an increasing growth in unity of purpose and in fellowship. As Archbishop Loane has so forcefully argued, an Australian Prayer Book is an achievement of the Anglican Church of Australia. We are deeply conscious of the significant contribution of fine scholarship and patient labour of men from this Diocese in that achievement.

This is but one instance of the positive contribution that this Diocese can make to the Australian Church as a whole. The contribution lies also in the input of good biblical scholarship without which no report to General Synod has been lacking to date; and this has been partly due to the hours of work done by members of this Diocese. Major issues will come to this Diocese by way of Bills from General Synod, and the future shape of our Church as a whole depends upon the scholarly contribution we can make in the area of committee work at a General Synod level. The future calls for a positive, not a negative, approach on the part of this Diocese, for it is in the area of General Synod that the future shape of our Church will be determined.

Evangelism

Having touched upon matters arising from the Canons of General Synod, we turn to my first heading which is “Evangelism”. This does not, for one moment, deny the priority of the ministry of the Word and Sacrament and the pastoral care of the people of God.

When Paul opened his heart to the Ephesian elders at Miletus, he shared in an illuminating way his understanding of the ministry. He said, “I did not shrink from declaring to you anything that was profitable and teaching you in public and from house to house.” (Acts 20:20.) That is clearly a teaching ministry.

He goes on, however, to speak of “testifying both to Jews and Greeks of repentance to God and faith in our Lord Jesus Christ”. (Acts 20:21.) That is surely evangelism. Evangelism has a high priority in God’s plan for His world. Mark tells us that “Jesus came forth preaching the Gospel of God” (Mark 1:14), and it is because the Son of Man came to seek and to save the lost that we should and must, engage in evangelism. It should be dear to the heart of every minister. It should be high on the list of our parish priorities. It should be an integral part of our way of life.

New Developments

We can rejoice as a Diocese that there has been a resurgence of evangelism in recent years. Not only have we had recent visits from Billy Graham and Leighton Ford and a proposed visit in the near future by the Rev Dick Lucas from London, but we have seen parishes adopting on-going programmes. These have been varied

to meet the varied needs of parishes. Many have adopted the James Kennedy method known as the “Evangelism Explosion”. Others have used the World Home Bible League method, “Operation Philip”, with its accompanying course “The Touch of His Hand”. Still others have engaged in a “Christianity Explained” course. Many are doing visitation programmes too numerous to name.

We rejoice in the revival of Guest Services and evangelistic meetings of one form or another organised by the local churches. And above all we rejoice in the fact that these efforts are bearing fruit in people, being converted. An indication of this new concern is the course of Parish Evangelism introduced at Moore College to fourth year students.

Special Areas of Concern

In spite of these welcome developments there is no room for complacency. There are areas where much creative thinking and action need to take place. Foremost among these is the whole area of evangelism and church planting in *New Housing Areas*, particularly those areas which are mostly government-owned, without disregarding those areas being developed privately. In some isolated areas we have seen encouragement, but the overall pattern shows that much work needs to be done in this field.

Parallel with this need is that of the *Inner-City Parishes* with their ever dwindling traditional Anglican population and an ever increasing ethnic one. The fact that every third person living in Australia has migrated to this country should alert us to this very important aspect of evangelism. It is another priority area. Will these people be evangelised through the local church or should we set up specialist agencies to do it like the Chinese work going on at Cabramatta through the Soldiers’ Memorial Church, or the Italian work centred at All Souls’, Leichhardt, and Edensor Park through the Department of Evangelism, and the Turkish work through the Inner City Committee.

While developing all such initiatives we should surely be training the local congregations to reach out to their new Australian neighbours.

In this connection it would seem obvious that the helpful guidelines in the area of flexibility of worship permitted by AAPB may need to be increased. Men and women of our clergy and laity are going to be in frontier situations needing the personal encouragement and counsel of diocesan leadership as they struggle to find suitable forms of evangelism, ministry and worship which are biblical and Anglican, but still relevant.

Structures - Manpower and Money

Reference was made earlier to the future of regionalisation. This is a concept being used increasingly elsewhere in the Anglican communion and does not involve necessarily any movement towards division. There is obvious pressure for this from many quarters, mainly on the basis of the present size of the Diocese, the administrative pressure on the Archbishop and the difficulty of fostering a real sense of “family” under their “father in God”. Such regionalisation should enable a measure of decentralisation where this is desirable and financially feasible.

The Diocese is being well served at the present by a number of major organisations - Home Mission Society, New Areas Committee, Research Board, Board of Education, Secretariat and Priorities Committee, etc. There is growing evidence, however, of overlap in the activities of these bodies which calls for a more integrated and concerted policy for the Diocese as a whole.

One of the major challenges comes from the massive shift of population. The application of the Great Commission is to all of Sydney’s millions - the growing communities in the western area as well as the old established areas of the city and its immediate suburbs. I believe in certain areas, existing parochial structures are adequate, particularly where flexibility is developed in ministry and where legitimate initiatives are taken in the deployment of laity, both men and women.

The recent significant rise in clergy stipends has, however, precipitated a series of minor crises. An increasing number of low income parishes are finding it impossible to meet minimum stipends and allowances. It is patently obvious to me that if the ministry and outreach to the Diocese is to be maintained, there will have to be a rationalisation of the existing pattern of such parishes with fewer parochial units and a much greater use of trained and licensed laymen and women. Churches abroad are growing at an amazing rate and one of the main secrets is the spontaneous witness of laymen and women to their faith. It is happening in parishes in our own Diocese. It can happen anywhere.

Recently, I personally interviewed individually, all the deacons who were ordained in February, and was greatly encouraged by the spiritual calibre of the group. It is in no sense a reflection on the dedicated work of the Moore College staff, if I ask whether our current pattern of theological training is keeping pace with today’s world. Is

there not room for some bold initiatives in the fourth year of study, with more emphasis on practical work? An exposure to real-life situations, which exist in so many areas of the Diocese, would be a helpful initiation for many who otherwise will face very real problems in the early years of their ministry. Recognising the problems facing the staff of any theological college, I wonder if there is not also need for the occasional dialogue between the staff, diocesan leaders and representative parish clergy.

Money is an essential commodity even in the Church of God, but its rightful stewardship carries very serious responsibilities. A Synod Committee has this matter under review and will report in October. Suffice to say we are, comparatively speaking, a wealthy diocese. The capital grants from the Endowment of the See to the country dioceses of Armidale, Bathurst, Grafton and Riverina, were not only right and proper, but they were a scriptural example of what it means to be part of the Body of Christ.

The allocation of \$1,000,000 from the Glebe Board funds for the purchase of church sites in new areas, is a further evidence of responsible stewardship.

Significant increases in minimum stipends and superannuation provision, together with special provision for increased superannuation for senior clergy, are further indications of a desire to ensure the adequate remuneration and retirement provision for clergy. It is my growing conviction that the Priorities Committee will increasingly have to be what its name implies, and courageously assess priorities in ministry.

Charge

Fifteen-and-a-half years ago, at about twenty hours' notice, due to sudden illness, I was faced with the task of preaching the Synod Sermon at our last Electoral Synod. My thoughts turned instinctively to the threefold injunction in Hebrews 10. I believe those words are equally relevant and equally needed today and in the coming days of our Synod. First, v. 22: "Let us draw near to God with a sincere heart in full assurance of faith."

Secondly, v. 23: "Let us hold unswervingly to the hope we profess."

And, thirdly, v. 24: "Let us consider one another to provoke - to spur one another on - towards love and good deeds."

Drawing near with faith, holding fast with hope and considering one another with love. It is my prayer that every session of this Electoral Synod may be characterised by that drawing near, holding fast and mutual loving consideration.

Having thus elected the man of God's own choosing, may I lay upon each one of you the burden of supporting him with your love, your loyalty and your prayers. He will be the chief pastor of us all and will carry a heavy responsibility for the care for all the churches committed to his charge.

I now commend you to the Grace of God, and join with you in prayer for His benediction and guidance on all our deliberations that He, and He alone, may be pre-eminent.

The Right Rev A J Dain, OBE
Administrator of the Diocese

Sydney, 26 March 1982