



THE BISHOP OF NORTH CAROLINA

November 1, 2011

My Sisters in Christ,

I am writing this letter to you while attending the meeting of the bishops of North Carolina. At the request of the Rev. Dr. Brooks Graebner, the Historiographer of our Diocese, I shared some preliminary ideas for the commemoration of the establishment of the Diocese of North Carolina in 1817. What could otherwise have been a rather dull and low key response became an energized, thoughtful and reflective sharing of some of the stories of past bishops, clergy and people, who in many and varied ways witnessed to the Lord Jesus in their times. The telling of stories became so energized that we had to stop ourselves so that we could continue through the rest of the agenda.

When someone in my family has died, one of the times of blessing amidst the sadness and pain, has been when our family has gathered informally, usually around a meal, and starts telling stories of the past. We almost do it instinctively. It's not planned. Most families do something like that. Most cultures do. Why? Because story has the capacity to bear deep truths and realities that ordinary and direct speech simply can't bear. And stories can bear many levels of truth that it would take an encyclopedia to cover. We humans are wired for stories.

"A sower went out to sow," Jesus said. Then he told a story, a parable about seed cast freely, landing on various kinds of soil. "A father had two sons," and then he tells a story of a prodigal father, as Archbishop Desmond Tutu likes to say of the parable. Most of Jesus' oral teachings are in the form of story. Most of the Bible is told in story form. Story has the capacity to move us to deep places and to open up deep and complex truths. Story can speak to the depth of the soul, touching both head and heart, informing and potentially transforming both inner thoughts and outer actions.

We have a story to tell, as the body of Christ called the Episcopal Church, as the Episcopal Church Women, as the Diocese of North Carolina. And that story includes how men and women of times now past followed Jesus in their generations, through a Revolutionary and a Civil War, through a Great Depression and profound and difficult social transformation bringing about human equality for all peoples. And, most importantly, ours is a story that has been touched by the very story of the God who "so loved the world that he gave his only Son..." That is a story that the world desperately longs to hear. Ours is the high privilege and deep challenge of telling it, not just with our words but in our lives.

I love to tell the story,
Will be my theme in glory.
To tell the old, old story,
Of Jesus and his love.

Keep the faith,

+ Michael B. Curry

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Bishop of North Carolina