



SPRING ENRICHMENT 2018

Companions along the journey



Homily from the Opening Mass

Wednesday, May 16, 2018

Most Rev. Howard J. Hubbard, Bishop Emeritus

I am truly honored and humbled to be invited by Steve Mawn and the planning committee in this opening ceremony to reflect upon this year's Spring Enrichment theme "Companions along the Journey."

What an incredible journey we've had as God's people in this local church known as the Diocese of Albany.

Actually, the journey began long before our Diocese was established on April 23, 1847. It began billions of years ago when our triune God by a creative act set into motion the universe which has evolved in wondrous and mysterious ways, much of which still remains unknown and unexplained today.

The work of creation took on new meaning with the history of salvation, whereby God created Adam and Eve and this union unfolded into a tribe of their descendants, the people of Israel. Over the centuries through divine revelation God made his presence known to them and formed a covenant by which God enabled them to overthrow their oppressors, rescued them from the slavery of Egypt, led them to the Promised Land and assured them that in due time there would come forth from these 12 tribes of Israel the long awaited Messiah. That Messiah, Jesus, the Christ, the anointed one, became our brother, Redeemer, Savior and friend and established a new and eternal covenant which remains unbroken today in the assembly of people known as the church. Through the sacramental life of this Church, God welcomes us into his family in baptism, nourishes us in the Eucharist, strengthens us with the power of the Spirit in confirmation, prepares us for our life's vocation in marriage and Holy Orders, heals us of our sins and failures in the Sacrament of reconciliation and facilitates our transition from this life to the eternal life by the anointing of the sick.

This pilgrim journey has been fostered by a plethora of role models, saints and scholars from Abraham, Isaac and Jacob, Sarah, Rebekah and Rachel to Mary and Joseph, John the Baptist, the twelve apostles and a bevy of holy men and women who, over the centuries, have embraced the mystery of God's salvation,

updated it to the times, and passed it on uninterrupted and pristine to generation after generation.

We in Albany have been privileged to have had exemplary role models prior to our formal designation as a diocese: St. Isaac Joques and his companions who courageously suffered martyrdom in their effort to evangelize our Native Americans; St. Kateri Tekakwitha, the Lily of the Mohawks, who embraced our Christian faith and lived it to the full despite being scarred permanently by small pox and suffering the ostracism of the members of her tribe when she became a Christian. Then, there was St. Mother Mary Ann Cope who was born and raised in Utica when this city was still part of the Diocese of Albany and began her ministry as a Franciscan sister, which led her to evangelize in Hawaii among the lepers of Malachi. And Venerable Father Patrick Payton, the Holy Cross priest, who launched his promotion of the rosary as family prayer during his chaplaincy to the Brothers at Vincentian Institute and with the dedicated assistance of the students and faculty from the College of St. Rose. Thomas Dongan, an Irish Catholic became the fourth colonial Governor of New York, who brokered peace with our Native Americans and established the Charter of Liberties, which included a clause for religious freedom and formed the basis for the future of the New York State Constitution. The first Catholic parish in what is now the Diocese of Albany was St. Mary's, on Capital Hill, still resplendent in its colonial glory and after St. Peter's in New York City, the second oldest Catholic parish in our Empire State.

In the early years St. Mary's and other catholic outposts were served by circuit rider priests but eventually, as the Catholic population grew with the development of the Erie Canal, the railroads and the Industrial Revolution, permanent pastors were brought forth from abroad or trained in regional seminaries. They were assisted by women and men religious who were recruited to staff schools, faith formation programs, orphanages, health care and

human services institutions. The Daughters of Charity, the Sisters of St. Joseph of Carondelet, the Sisters of Mercy, and the religious of the Sacred Heart were in the forefront of these developments as were the Augustinians and the Conventual Franciscans and the Brothers of the Christian Schools. The French, German, English and Irish formed the early Catholic parishes, to be followed by French Canadian, Italian, Polish, Slovak and Lithuanian Catholics in the late 19th and early 20th centuries.

In 1847, the Diocese of Albany was established with John McCloskey appointed to serve as its bishop and later as Archbishop of New York, he became the first American Cardinal.

In 1866 the Diocese of Ogdensburg was separated from the Diocese of Albany headed by an Albany priest, Bishop Edgar Wadhams, and in 1885 Syracuse was formed from the Diocese of Albany and served by another Albany priest, Bishop Patrick Ludden, who had been vicar general in the Diocese of Albany.

One of the most active priests in the Albany Diocese in its early years was Father Peter Havermans who established St. Mary's and St. Peter's parishes in Troy, LaSalle Institute, the Troy Hospital, now known as Seton, and St. Joseph's Seminary.

Succeeding Bishop McCloskey, the diocese has been governed by Bishops Conroy, McNearney, Burke, Cusack, Gibbons, Scully, McGinn, Broderick and my successor, Bishop Edward Scharfenberger.

Priests of the diocese have also served as bishops in other sites. In addition to Bishops Wadhams and Ludden in Ogdensburg and Syracuse, Bishop Henry Gabriels succeeded Bishop Wadhams in Ogdensburg. Bishop William Kenny of Delhi in Delaware County was the third bishop of St. Augustine, Florida. Bishop Mahoney of Rensselaer became the bishop of Sioux Falls, South Dakota. Archbishop Joseph Ryan was the first Archbishop of Anchorage, Alaska and, then, the first Archbishop of the US Military Ordinariate. Archbishop Harry Flynn of Schenectady became bishop of Lafayette, Louisiana and later the Archbishop of St. Paul-Minneapolis. Bishop John Nolan and Bishop Joseph Estabrook were Albany priests who served as Auxiliary bishops in the Military Ordinate.

We also had missionary bishops appointed from the diocese. The Augustinian William Ambers Jones from Cambridge in Washington County became the second bishop of San Juan, Puerto Rico; the Franciscan Capistrano Heim from Catskill was the bishop of Itatuba, Brazil and my classmate from LaSalle in Troy

the Conventual Franciscan, Bishop Elias Manning served, as bishop of Valencia, Brazil.

There have also been outstanding priests, religious and lay leaders: Father Clarence Walworth was the leader in the Oxford movement, following St. John Henry Neumann from Anglicanism to Roman Catholicism and encouraged Isaac Hecker to found the Paulist community. Madame Henriette de la Tour du Pin, a French aristocrat who fled the French revolution, provided a way station for the underground railroad for slaves fleeing the United States to Canada. Peter Cagger, helped establish St. Peter's Hospital, which bears his name. Leandre Alexandre du Mouchel, the great organist at our Cathedral of the Immaculate Conception composed music which earned him a worldwide reputation. Sister Lucy Eaton Smith, of Glens Falls, a convert to Catholicism founded the Sisters of the American Congregation of St. Catherine De Ricci. Martin Glynn of Schenectady became the first Catholic Governor of New York State and Margaret Brady Farrell's generosity made possible the Brady Maternity Hospital, St. Catherine's Infant Home, the Grotto at Vincentian Institute and the land that would be used for St. Peter's Hospital, Maria College, the Mercy Motherhouse, Mater Christi Seminary, the Dominican Monastery in Schenectady and the Holy Cross Retreat House, Noviate and Retirement Center in Valatie.

Then, of course, there are all those who raised families, fought in the wars from the French and Indian War to the present day conflict in Afghanistan, forged the Erie Canal, built the railroads, highways, bridges, factories and homes, tilled and reaped the farmlands and orchards; tended the sheep, cows, pigs and chickens; taught in grammar schools, high schools, community colleges, 4 year colleges and grad schools, staffed the collar and shirt factories and the ironworks in Troy, state government operations in Albany, GE in Schenectady, the carpet mills in Amsterdam, the tanneries and glove factories in Johnstown and Gloversville, the Beech-Nut plant in Canajoharie, the Baseball and Farmers Museums in Cooperstown, the baseball bat plant in Dodgeville, Remington Arms in Ilion, the diamond mines in Herkimer, the mushroom farms in Coeymans and Ravena, the arts colony in Hudson, the racetrack and performing arts center in Saratoga Springs, the wood processing plants in Corinth and Glens Falls and the vacation getaways in Delaware, Schoharie, Columbia, Greene Warren, Washington, Fulton and Saratoga counties.

And most important of all, hovering over everything I have just cited and always present is God the Father who set in motion the creative process that resulted in the Adirondacks, Catskills and Heldeberg Mountain ranges, the Mohawk, Hudson and Schoharie Valleys and all the rivers, lakes and streams which grace our diocese. God the Son who nourishes us on our life journey in the Eucharist and God the Holy Spirit who dwells within us as a source of guidance, inspiration and strength, enabling us to live a supernatural life in the midst of the natural world in which we find ourselves.

Further, during our 171 year history we have endured and weathered no-nothingism, nativism, modernism, American pietism, the threats of facism and communism, anti-Semitism and McCarthyism, along with the abolitionist movement, the labor movement, the Civil Rights movement, the Civil War, The Spanish American War , the two World Wars of the twentieth Century, the Korean War, the Vietnam War, the Persian Gulf War and the wars of the 21st Century in Iraq and Afghanistan as well as the present day threat of ISIS terrorism. We are still coping, too, with materialism, consumerism, agism, sexism, racism , transhumanism, narcissism, homophobia and xenophobia, as well as the Black Lives matter movement, the hashtag Me-Too movement, and the threats to life in the womb, and during a terminal illness.

So let me pause a moment to ask you to reflect upon the priests, deacons, religious and laity who have been your companions on the journey and who have greatly influenced your lives as disciples of Jesus: perhaps your parents, or an aunt, uncle or cousin; a parish priest, a religious or lay teacher in grammar school, high school or college; a camp counselor, a school or CYO coach, a catechetical leader, a hospital chaplain, a deacon who witnessed your marriage or baptized your child, a doctor, nurse, social worker or lawyer, a couple who conducted a Marriage Encounter or Cursillo you attended or someone involved with

Residents Encounters Christ, the Ladies of Charity, the St. Vincent DePaul Society, the Legion of Mary, the Knights or Dames of Malta, the Knights of Columbus or the Ancient Order of Hibernians.

Think of that person or those persons who have contributed to your understanding and growth in holiness and ministry and give thanks for the manner in which such persons have helped you to know God more fully and to serve the members of the Body of Christ more joyfully and compassionately.

Finally, I would urge you today to give serious consideration to what God may be asking of you in these times of polarization in our society, of hemorrhaging of membership in our church, of growing income inequality among our citizens and of alienation of people based upon race, class, gender, ethnicity or social-economic status.

All of us present are being called to serve as evangelists, bearers of catholic social teaching, witnesses to the sacred bond of marriage and to the dignity which belongs to each person regardless of color, creed, national origin, mental or physical disability or political party.

We are all members of God's family; we are all blessed with gifts and talents to be used to serve others in their spiritual, social, cultural and educational development and we are all anointed to be beacons of light, anchors of hope, vessels of charity and healing and instruments of peace and justice in a church, world and society which so desperately needs such.

May our time and prayer together, then, during this week of Spring Enrichment, coupled with the insights afforded in the plenary presentations and by workshop leaders enable us to appreciate more fully how truly blessed we are, and how God wants us to be agents of change and growth for the better in this corner of the Vineyard known as the Diocese of Albany.

May it be so!