

**Consecration of The Ven. Peter Fenty
As Area Bishop Elect in Diocese of Toronto
June 22, 2013**

*1 Corinthians 3:5 - What then is Apollos, What is Paul, servants
through whom you came to believe.....*

In his struggles to help the members of the Church at Corinth grasp the significance of the Good News he was preaching, and make the necessary adjustments in their lives, St. Paul faced many hurdles.

If we read his letters like the Corinthian correspondence, it seems sometimes as if everything he did, all he taught and preached was just going over the heads of the members of the congregation.

At Corinth, there seemed to be far too many tensions to quell, far too many misunderstandings to put right, far too many struggles to suppress.

But St. Paul persisted. He was convinced that he was in possession of a treasure called the Good News that should be proclaimed and shared, whatever may be the challenges.

Our text emerged out of a struggle that was threatening to distort and misrepresent his ministry and weaken the message he was proclaiming. There was a misdirecting of the focus.

St. Paul and his assistant Apollos were being projected to the fore of their missionary activity in a manner that seemed to push God to the fringe. So he had to put things right.

Our text is an effort to do so:

What then is Apollos, what is Paul, servants through whom you came to believe.....

There were challenges, but he persisted. He did, not only because of his grasp of the power of the message he was proclaiming, but because of his grasp of the frailty and complexity of humanity.

And in order to unravel the lines of adoration and so ensure that they were kept absolutely clear, and that he and Apollos were never elevated to a status reserved for God, he placed their work in true perspective:

I planted, Apollos watered, but God gave the growth.

I think that ministry at all levels is all about keeping the lines clear. It is about being sure of where the focus should be, not having the lines of mission and ministry entangled with any lines of personal power and aspirations, and being absolutely clear about who gives the growth.

My brother Peter, as you embark on this new and challenging path of Episcopal Ministry, ensure that you exercise a ministry that reflects all this.

Proceed ever conscious of who gives the growth. Proceed with a deep awareness that in this life, that in ministry, lines can become entangled, a condition that can lead to all types of complications. It is so easy for example, to have accolades misdirected, and so God can come in a distant third in the search for the one who gives the growth.

We may assume that unlike the Christians at Corinth, we are fully aware of who does what, and who is responsible for what. We may believe that we have our lines clear. There is that hidden assumption that we are surely far better in our time than they were then.

But never take it for granted. Live each day, conscious of who is doing the planting and the watering and who is responsible for the growth. Never confuse these areas

Your new office will place upon you, a level of authority that will demand that you stay conscious of the lines of mission and ministry of progress and growth as set out by St. Paul in his letter to the Church at Corinth.

Yes, in your ministry as Archdeacon you would have become aware of the various lines of authority that crisscross the diocese, as well as the levels of contributions that support your ministry. You would have worked like St. Paul to ensure that that lines are never entangled or the contributions confused.

As Bishop however, there is a sense in which you will need to do more. You will become an embodiment of all the lines and all the contributions and indeed all the contradictions, in a manner that did not exist at the level of your ministry as Archdeacon.

All the contradictions, the strengths and the weaknesses, the good times and the bad times, the success and the failure , the planting and the watering, and even the growth, or lack thereof, all this as it relates to

your area of Episcopal authority, will all be linked to your Episcopal ministry.

You will have to exercise your ministry holding all these together. They can easily become entangled. You will face the challenge to sort them all out.

And here is where there is need for that delicate balance of reality and hope. The reality is the stark reminder that we have no power to sort it all out. The hope is that with the guidance of the Holy Spirit we can still engage in the process and achieve some success.

We do so with the realistic conviction of St. Paul, that we can only plant and water but in the end it is God, God who sorts out the contradictions and gives the growth. Never pretend as a Bishop that you have the power to do what only God can. Stay sober and realistic as St. Paul did in his ministry with the Corinthians.

Be wary of the creation of timetables and of the proclamation of a certainty of the time when things should happen. The Church has benefitted tremendously from the numerous modern management theories and practices that have emerged in recent times. It has used the knowledge and the skills in many areas to improve efficiency and productivity. Our, mission and ministry have benefitted.

But as Christians, even while we employ all the skills that are available to us as we exercised our ministry, we must have a sense of that space where only God acts. It is a sense that points us beyond the theories and

studies and places us on the spot where the only theory is faith in God to act, faith that he will act in his time and give the growth.

You will know that so often in life and ministry, as we struggle with all good intentions to get it all sorted out in a given time, to reach our goal according to some agenda, we realize that God has his own agenda and things will come together in his time. Sometimes he seems to ignore ours completely. His agenda can frustrate ours sometime.

This conviction is not an excuse for not planning and trying, it is not an excuse for not planting and watering, but an affirmation of the belief that we can only plant and water, but the ultimate result is with God. He gives the growth.

This understanding of the work of God is firmly grounded in the ministry of Jesus. His ministry will always be the model, the template of our own. I sometimes think that the ministry of Jesus was not unlike that of a Bishop.

His was a ministry that held a bundle of contrasting human experiences and personalities and contradictions together, all in the name of God. He placed them all in the movement of time controlled by God's agenda, a movement that takes us to the Kingdom of God.

In his ministry, there was hunger and satisfaction, pain and sorrow, sickness and healing, life and death, despair and hope. There were the personalities like Zacchaeus, and Mary Magdalene, Peter, Judas and the sons of Zebedee, the lepers, the Pharisees and the Sadducees, the women

and the children, all part of the mix. And Jesus held them all together and pointed them along the road to the Kingdom.

And as Bishops and ministers of the Gospel we too have to do the same. It is very easy for us as Bishops to let go pastorally of some members of this mixed batch, just to make life easier. Sometimes they may seem to create threats to our authority, a very sensitive area for us, Bishops.

Authority can become very precious to us as Bishops, so precious that we may believe that one of our primary duties is to protect it from the threats that seemed bent on testing, reducing and destroying it.

And yet our authority as Bishops is more than that enshrined in the constitution and regulations of our diocese. It is more than all that is captured in the Ordinal. It extends far beyond the obedience of our priests and the support of the laity. As critical as these are in defining and supporting our ministry, they can never say all there is about the authority we have as Bishops.

For surely our authority must also emerge out of our pastoral care of God's people. It has to be earned , and should be experienced not in the wielding of the power entrusted to us but in our willingness to guide and to support , our willingness just to listen at those critical moments that call for our presence.

Sometimes our most effective ministry is exercised and experienced not when we try to sort out all the contradictions using our authority, but when we can help someone to cope with those in their lives, even while we help them to sort them out.

Our ministry as Bishops is more about presence, godly, pastoral, prayerful presence, that generates compassion and understanding. It is more about this than about saying and doing and making our point for all to hear.

We live in a world where everyone wants to make their point, to ensure that they are heard, to go on record, to get the right credits and the right media coverage that can be put to use at the right time for their benefit. As leaders of the Church we can become caught up in this as well.

But this is not what the Church is about. It is not what ministry at its many levels, in its many dimensions, is all about. It is surely not what the ministry of a Bishop is about. As the embodiment of what the Church represents, your ministry as Bishop like that of St. Paul and Apollos at Corinth must not confuse the *doing* with the *being*.

It is the *being* that allows us like St. Paul not to become so taken up with our own actions, so obsessed with our results, with the doing, that we forget that it is God and God alone who takes it all to that point of achievement and success. It is God and God alone who gives the growth.

And there is that link between *being* and *presence*. Let me say again that our ministry is also about presence, godly pastoral presence, the type that can easily point to the abiding presence of God. It is about being there in the good times and the bad times, affirming the presence of God. It is about helping someone to believe that there is a God and that he is present and available.

My brother, be a symbol of God's presence at all times. Do not let anything or anyone entice you to be other than. For this complex mix called humanity with its mixed agendas, different interest, with its prejudices and many varied fears can work to distort and weaken what we know is our mission and our ministry.

Do not allow your office, with all the authority and status attached, with all the added pomp and ceremony and the trappings, lead you to weaken the strong links you have already established with the people of God in this diocese.

Ensure the office does not lead you to shift the spiritual welfare of God's people from the centre of your ministry and replace it with concerns for the authority and the other externals of the Episcopal office.

Never forget that at the very core of our theology, is a profound understanding of humanity. Our theology is matched by our anthropology. People matter. We hold the incarnation central to our theology. And this fact must be reflected at all levels in our ministry.

Let this be reflected in the compassion your share as your minister to your clergy and congregations. Keep the balance between compassion and authority. Oh there will be many times when you will be tempted to forget the compassion and wield the authority. The temptation to do so will be great. But never let go of compassion.

Compassion enables us to keep the focus that St. Paul advocates. It helps us to keep the focus on God's power to understand and forgive, God

who can give the growth even when we believe that we are far beyond this stage.

You will be entering an area of ministry with some special and great expectations. You are expected to be pastor of laity and clergy, with the ability to balance these two areas of pastoral expectations. The expectations will also extend to your family.

Your clergy will lay claim to what they perceive as their special privilege to access, as the laity will want to embrace you as their own and may not want to subscribe to any special privilege for any other group.

Love them all. For you will need the special support that each group can provide. You will have to accept and put to good use the wisdom that is there in both groups.

On this day of your consecration, just imagine that you are packing a kit to take with you on this new and exciting journey. Maybe like returning to your place of birth and nurturing, Barbados.

Just ensure that in your kit are the following essentials for the Episcopal ministry:

Humility – To remind you that you can only plant and water, but God and God alone gives the growth.

Compassion- That allows you to embrace all of God's children with his love, and reinforce the conviction that we all stand before God as his children in need of his grace

Wisdom – that helps you to make those critical decisions in your ministry that will keep the message of the Gospel the message of Jesus Our Lord high above all others.

An active vibrant prayer life – The foundation that helps you to keep it all – the good times and the bad times, the failures and the success the frustration and the joy and satisfaction – keep it all anchored to God, convinced that his grace will always be sufficient for you.

May God pour his richest blessings upon you as you step into this exciting and challenging area of ministry.

Step into this area with confidence and with hope with the assurance of the guidance of the Holy Spirit. Step out with the words of our text as a constant reminder of how you should understand your ministry.

Keep close to hand these words of Paul that no doubt helped him in his ministry and can surely help you:

What then is Apollos, what is Paul, servants through whom you came to believe.....I planted, Apollos watered, but God gave the growth.

Go forth in this new ministry Peter, go forth to plant and to water, to strengthen the cause of Christ, but never forget that it is God and God alone who gives the growth.

May God continue to grant you the growth in your ministry.