



THE EPISCOPAL CHURCH

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Presiding Bishop and Primate

May 1, 2008

*A Letter to The Episcopal Church
In this season of Pentecost 2008*

My brothers and sisters in Christ,

As we come to the end of Eastertide and the feast of Pentecost, we shift to an awareness of God present with us in Holy Spirit. The early church marked that gift as inspiration, fire, and language - the breath of ever-new life and the burning desire for ongoing relationship with God. That gift of Holy Spirit keeps us lively and moving, bears us into new territory and challenges unsought.

In this as in every age, we face issues of identity, vocation, and mission as members of the Body of Christ. Entering the long season of Pentecost brings our focus to how we, too, will follow Jesus inspired by Holy Spirit. I would like to offer a few reminders about identity, vocation, and mission that I shared recently with the people of the Diocese of San Joaquin:

- 1) Jesus is Lord. In the same sense that early Christians proclaimed that Jesus, not Caesar, is Lord, remember that no one else - not any hierarch, not any ecclesiastical official, not any one of you - is Lord. We belong to God, whom we know in Jesus, and there is no other place where we find the ground of our identity.
- 2) We are all made in the image of God. Even when we can't see that image of God immediately, we are challenged to keep searching for it, especially in those who may call us enemy.
- 3) In baptism we discover that we are meant to be for others, in the same way that God is for us. This means that God's mission must be the primary focus, not anything that focuses on our own selves to the exclusion of neighbor. For when we miss the neighbor, we miss God.
- 4) None of us is alone. We cannot engage the fullness of God's mission alone, nor know the fullness of God's reality alone. Together as members of the Body of Christ, we can begin to try. And the Spirit, burning fire, inspiring breath, and speaking in many tongues, is present in that Body, empowering and emboldening and strengthening our work. Thanks be to God who continually makes us new.

Your servant in Christ,

Katharine Jefferts Schori