



THE EPISCOPAL DIOCESE OF FLORIDA

Lord Jesus Christ, you stretched out your arms of love on the hard wood of the cross that everyone might come within the reach of your saving embrace: So clothe us in your Spirit that we, reaching forth our hands in love, may bring those who do not know you to the knowledge and love of you; for the honor of your Name. Amen. (Book of Common Prayer, p. 101)

Dear People of the Diocese of Florida,

Please be assured of my incredible gratitude for your selection of me to be your Bishop Coadjutor-Elect. As I was praying the morning of the election, the Lord led me to contemplation on the collect for mission quoted above from the Morning Prayer rite. I was particularly struck by the phrase “hard wood”. We have all endured “hard wood” over the last year as we have given and worked to reach this important moment in the life of the diocese. Nothing has been easy about this Bishop election process. At times it has been really hard.

Our trials and sufferings are nothing in comparison to the “hard wood of the cross” which Jesus endured for us. That is not to minimize our trials, but to see that in our brokenness, sufferings, and hardships, we serve a Risen Lord who can sympathize with us in our weakness. Therefore, he invites us to draw near to his throne of grace at the foot of the cross and in the mystical communion of this body and blood given for us. He is our mercy to help in our time of need.

This is what makes possible Christian unity. Jesus himself is our peace. Jesus stretches out his arms of love on the hard wood, to gather us to himself from our hardships into his saving embrace.

And here’s the gift! As he draws us to himself, he also draws us to one another with the goal of uniting all things in Him. Jesus himself is our peace.

Any election, by its very nature, is a contest that unavoidably divides us into different groups with majorities and minorities as we support our desired candidate and our desired outcome. Our most recent election had particular tension. One person reflected to me that “watching the election online was like watching my parents fight.” Hard wood.

Now is time to reassure that we all still love one another. I am so grateful for my colleagues and partners in the Gospel, Miguel Rosada and Beth Tjoflat who stood for election with me. I have grown to love and appreciate them as not only co-presbyters but as friends.



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My prayer for our diocese is that we would find our gathering place in the gracious arms of Jesus who reaches out to all of us with his unconditional love and pulls us in toward one another by wrapping us in the royal clothing of his holy and renewing Spirit. Beloved, let us love one another. You are redeemed children of God, brothers and sisters in the family of God, co-heirs with Christ, and the kingdom of God belongs to you.

In that singular identity, mysteriously we are empowered with that same Crucified love of Jesus that we might become instruments of grace to a world that desperately needs it. It is for us to reach forth our hands in love to gather in the people of the world to Him.

As I am writing this, I am mindful of a world in desperate need of Christ's love and the care of God's people. Recent events in Colorado Springs and Idaho, and many other terrible acts of hate and violence that take place every day, demonstrate that human beings have such a capacity to be instruments of evil.

But, if we are unified as instruments of grace, we have the power through Jesus Christ to break through this hate and darkness, and lead people to love and generosity. We represent Jesus Christ to the World by our love.

I am looking forward to serving you, praying with and for you, learning with you how we can be the hands of love in our communities. Let us begin with love of one another.

Faithfully yours in Christ Jesus our Lord,

Charlie Holt+
Bishop Coadjutor-Elect