

Service of Installation

**The following sermon was given at Christ Church Cathedral, by the Dean,
the Very Rev. James A. Diamond, on Saturday, May 12, 2007.**

Grant us, O Lord, to know what is worth knowing, to love what is worth loving, to praise what delights you most, to value what is precious in your sight, to hate what is offensive to you. Help us to judge rightly between the things that differ and, above all, to search out and to do what pleases you through Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen.

Bishop Tom Breidenthal, welcome to your Cathedral! Your consecration was two weeks ago and now it has been my singular honor to seat you in the cathedra. You are the only bishop that we have seated as a new bishop in the fourteen year history of this cathedral. There were so many possibilities to play with this: “Knock three times in the middle of the day”, a host of knock knock jokes but we did not do any of them. We played by The Book and we present to you today the faithfulness of our one hundred ninety years of ministry in this place and our commitment to be the cathedral for this diocese these past fourteen years.

We could not have come to this day without the dedication, and the sacrifice, and the willingness to change that this congregation has offered to our diocese. For that gift of love, for the leadership of generations of laity, and for the guidance of my predecessors, I am grateful today.

In becoming a cathedral for this diocese and in this city we have become the public’s church. We understand our calling not only for the Diocese of Southern Ohio but also for the city of Cincinnati. The prophet Isaiah speaks God’s proclamation, “My house shall be a house of prayer for all peoples.” It is in that spirit that we open the doors of this cathedral for all who come to us desiring safety and sanctuary. This expansive ministry has led us to worship services that we have held in this place that do not vaguely resemble the *Book of Common Prayer*. But that is what is called for when the city needs to be at prayer. I believe that you come to us from the chapel at Princeton University with a profound appreciation of what a house of prayer for all people means to the community that it embraces.

Christ Church Cathedral has publicly committed itself to a ministry of reconciliation and, in this city at this time, to reconciling racial relationships within and beyond our walls. Following the racial disturbances of 2001, we here realized we had nothing to say to the city until we had examined the racism within ourselves. That period of internal listening and speaking gave new meaning to me of the words, “Do not bring us to the time of trial.” It was a trying period for all of us and that journey of awareness continues to this day. At that same time the city of Cincinnati asked this cathedral to host the collaborative process. People from all over the city gathered here to listen to one another

and to try to understand why race separates us so intensely and what it is we might do to reach towards one another. We also served as the home for the successful effort to repeal Article Twelve of the city's charter which had permitted discrimination against lesbian and gay people. We now offer ourselves to you as the public's church a welcoming, inclusive, and diverse congregation, a house of prayer for all people.

Saint Paul recognized power of diversity. In the lesson we heard from the sixteenth chapter of Acts, Paul wanted Timothy to accompany him because Timothy was the son of a Jewish woman and a Greek man. Paul's mission would include the creation of a bridge across cultures so that it would be possible to speak to many nations and Paul knew that Timothy's presence would signal Paul's awareness of how important it is for leaders to surround themselves with those who reflect the full breadth of the culture. Bishop, we look forward to your presence with us here in the Cathedral and your use of this cathedral church as the mother church of the diocese, a gathering point when we are to be at prayer and to be in council. It is also from here that you will speak an act across cultures carrying a message of good news and salvation. We support the wide embrace of your ministry and we hope to be a reflection of the multiple cultures that are woven into the fabric of modern society.

Bishop, it is honeymoon time. Everything you say, everything you do, the whole promise and hope that your new episcopate offers is a wonderful moment but it will not always be so. The words of Saint John's gospel are painfully honest. There is an inevitable conflict between the values of modern society, what John calls "the world," and the life of faith. Jesus constantly turned the values of the world upside down. The proud are scattered in the fantasies of their imaginations, the mighty are cast down from their thrones, the poor are exulted, the hungry are filled with good things, the rich are sent away empty, and the meek inherit the earth. Those in high estate with so much to lose in the coming dominion of God have through the ages hated those who proclaim such a notion of heaven. The possession of power and riches is not, in and of itself, sinful or evil because power and riches both can be used in the service of helping us all come into God's realm. It is our love of power and our addiction to wealth that seduces us away from a sanctified life. When the world knows that you can walk away from all the delights of material wealth it will hate you as it hated Jesus before you.

And then Saint John says something very curious. Servants are not greater than their master. We are much more familiar with the reminder, "I no longer call you servants but friends." That occurs just three verses before the gospel lesson for today. But that is not the word for this day. At the end of his teaching to the eleven, Judas had already departed on his appointed task, Jesus sets out a simple word of guidance. Servants are not greater than their master. He wants all of us to remember that time and distance do not erase the reality that we are not greater than Jesus and therefore what he did: his care for the poor and the outcast, his desire to feed and to heal, his commitment to reconciliation and peace, his obedience to God and his humility before humankind is our burden to bear but it is also our joy to complete.

My brother, Tom, I have seated you in the cathedra of this Cathedral church as the symbol of your teaching ministry but I cannot help but observe that today it looks very much like a throne. My prayer for anyone who sits in this chair is that he or she might not be seduced into seeing it as the seat of the powerful and the mighty because we know what Jesus thinks should happen to those who sit upon such a throne. So sit lightly upon that seat and from it offer the spiritual gift with which God has richly endowed you, the gift of teaching. Sit confidently in that seat as our chief pastor. You have already revealed to us a generous and a vulnerable heart. And come to rest in that seat for respite and quiet. We are your new parish and we will always welcome you home.

Think of the cathedra as a simple wooden chair, the kind that might have been set under a tree on the hills rising above the Sea of Galilee where a small band would gather to ponder the mysteries of the love of God. That is the essence and the purpose of this simple wooden chair and we are grateful to God that you have taken your seat among us. Amen.