

Grace to you and peace from God our Father and the Lord Jesus Christ.

***One Bread, One Body, One Lord of All, One cup of Blessing which we bless
And we though many throughout the earth, we are one Body in this one Lord.***

So we sang at the Eucharist last evening as we received what we are through grace and what we are called to be for the world—the Body and Blood of Christ. This hymn inspired the theme for this convention, a convention that embodies this truth through the presence of our partners and friends in Christ, the Rt. Rev. Oscar Stephen Mnung'a, bishop of our *diosisi rafiki*, which translates *friend diocese*, the Diocese of Newala. In addition to serving as Bishop of Newala, Bishop Oscar serves as Dean of the Province of Tanzania and President of the Christian Council of Tanzania, the equivalent of our National Council of Churches. We are also blessed by the presence of his wife Mama Agnes, and Sr. Helena Nogea of the Sisters of St. Mary. It is a joy to have them with us and it was a blessing to have Bishop Oscar preach at our Eucharist last night. I am sure you can see why those of us who traveled to Newala last year were so excited when we reported to you at our 2013 Convention. As I begin my pastoral address to this convention I wish to thank the Rev. Dr. Paula Harris, rector of St. Luke's Madison and chair of our Companion Diocese Committee along with all of the Committee's members, for all their work to make this visit come to pass.

I also wish to thank Diane Brown, Bob Heindl, Lee Klugiewicz, the Rev. Dorota Pruski and all the other volunteers who have worked so hard to make this convention come to pass. A special word of thanks is due to the new Executive Secretary of the Diocese, Deacon Marge Kiss, who faithfully over sees the minutes of this convention and gathered volunteers to stuff packets for our convention business.

Thanks is also due to the Nicholson House staff. This has also been a year of changes at Nicholson House. As you recall last year's budget only funded the position of Canon to the Ordinary for half a year. The Rev. David Pfaff, concluded his work on June 30 and went forth with our prayers as he discerns the nature and place of his future ministry. In the spring, we welcomed our newest staff member, Marlyne Udovich, Finance Officer. Marlyne has brought new energy and vision to the position previously held by Diane Blank, and she is already proving

herself to be an asset and blessing to us all. She is with us at this convention and I ask you to welcome her to the Diocese. I know you join me in offering thanks for the ministries and labors of the rest of the staff, Peggy Bean, Canon for Congregations, the Rev. Carla McCook, Bishop's Assistant for Formation and Ministry, Barbara Klauber, and Patty Jaffke.

Finally, allow me to conclude these prefatory remarks by giving thanks for and to my family, my wife Cindy and our daughters Lauren and Haley. I am grateful for their love and support as I go about this ministry to which God has called me.

At our banquet last evening we honored with the Bishop's Shield two persons, Charlie Bardenwerper, who has served tirelessly as Diocesan Historiographer for the last 17 years and Deacon REGS Scheeler, who was invaluable throughout the litigation surrounding the St. Edmund's property and now as we move to the sale of the property. Earlier this year REGS organized the re-interment of the cremated remains that had been interred there. I am grateful to the people of St. Alban's Sussex in helping us provide a new resting place in the St. Alban's cemetery as are the families of those whose remains were transferred to this new site.

Speaking of property, I am pleased to report that we have accepted an offer on the building that formerly housed St. Nicholas, Racine. I ask your prayers as we seek to complete this sale in the coming months.

Our decision to sell the property in Wautoma and move our camping ministry, Camp Webb, continues to bear fruit financially and spiritually. This year for the second year in a row Camp Webb was in the black. More importantly, Camp was over-subscribed weeks before the start and we had others on a waiting list. That financial fruit is I believe is the result of the fact that we have an excellent program at a top rate facility that teaches young people the Good News of Jesus that they are loved and cared for by a loving God and his Church. On my visitations I am told by children, youth, and parents what a great experience Camp was for them. You will hear from the Rev. Elizabeth Tester, Camp Webb Director later in this convention.

Last year I reported to you about my work in the founding of Bishops United against Gun Violence. I am pleased to report to you that our Body is over 100 bishops strong and that our Conference this year, reclaiming the Gospel of Peace

at which the Archbishop of Canterbury, the Most Rev. Justin Welby and our Presiding Bishop were in attendance, was a great success. As an outcome of the conference, I have formed a coalition of all the bishops in Province V as well as the bishops of Iowa and Minnesota who are working together to pass legislation that will require finger print background checks before one can purchase a gun. This simple change to the law has proven in Maryland and elsewhere in our nation to significantly reduce deaths by gun violence. How is this so? Fingerprint background checks reduce straw man purchases, purchases of weapons by those without a criminal record for criminals. You will be hearing more about this from me later this year. I will be asking for your help to pass this life-saving measure.

At the end of August, I wrote to you in response to the Report I commissioned from the Standing Committee acting in their role as Council of Advice to the Bishop. In that letter I stated that, I was grateful for the good work they had done in facilitating a conversation that in the past had been difficult to have in this diocese. I shared that it was clear to me from the Standing Committee's report, and from my engagement with many of you, that attitudes in the diocese had shifted from when I became bishop 11 years ago.

We are living in a time in American culture when civil marriage equality is becoming the norm. In June, this state's ban on same-sex marriage was declared unconstitutional. That ruling was upheld in the appellate court, and the decision on Monday by the United States Supreme Court not to hear the appeals to lower court rulings in Illinois, Utah, Virginia, and Wisconsin means same-sex marriage is legal in our state.

As chief pastor, I have to balance my own theological conviction with humility, and a willingness to create space for those who disagree with me. I must also consider what is best for the diocese. My personal position is that, given the disputed witness of Scripture and Tradition in this matter, I see the blessing of same sex couples by the Church as a pastoral provision, informed by modern insights into human sexuality and human development, not unlike the blessing of marriages of persons who have been divorced. Thus anticipating, the court's decisions, I have authorized clergy of this diocese to bless the marriages of same sex couples who are civilly married using a form I have set forth and guidelines for doing so.

Let us now turn to the business at hand.

Before this Convention come resolutions that while simple in language represent significant and important actions. The first amends the start of terms of members of Executive Council. By adopting this amendment, you will allow for those you elect today and in the future to begin their work on your behalf having attended and observed this body in action before taking office and empowering the current Executive Council to complete the necessary end of the year business and evaluate their common life before their terms end.

The second means that those who lead two important agencies of this Diocese the President of the Trustees of Funds and Endowments and the chair of the Commission on Ministry are no longer required to attend Executive Council and be a part of the determination of quorum. It also honors the time and labor they do on your behalf in these important bodies by not requiring them to attend 5 more meetings a year on top of the numerous meetings of the Body on which they serve. This resolution which comes at the request of the outgoing Chair of the Commission on Ministry, the Rev. Scott Seefeldt, also ensures that all who are empowered to do the work of this Convention between Conventions are elected by Convention.

The Third resolution provides for and clarifies a person to preside over Executive Council in case I am ill, unavailable due to pastoral or personal emergency or if there is a matter before the Council in which I must recuse myself.

I ask you to adopt each of these resolutions.

The fourth resolution is in regard to parish status for St. Mary's Dousman, it reads simply in its final clause St. Mary's Dousman is admitted into union with the Diocese. I know from reports following the preconvention meetings that some of you on reading this resolution were scratching your heads and going, huh? I thought St. Mary's was in union with the Diocese. Let me give you a most Anglican answer, Yes and no. Before I became your bishop, St. Mary's along with St. Bartholomew's, Pewaukee, St. Aidan's, Hartford, and Good Shepherd, Sun Prairie, entered in to a relationship with the Diocese through the Commission on Mission and Development as it was then constituted to redevelop these congregations in growing areas with financial assistance from the Diocesan budget. As part of this

process, each of these congregations accepted mission status in exchange which meant in part that the clergy in charge of these congregations would be appointed by the Bishop, the rector of the congregation, to serve as vicar.

St. Mary's, thanks to the faithful leadership of Scott Leannah and the generous and faithful labor and stewardship of all its members has now reached the point where this specific relationship is no longer necessary. In ten years their attendance has tripled, they have acquired land, built a new church building which will be paid off in full by April, have eliminated need for a financial subsidy from the diocese and are now prepared to elect Scott as their rector.

The resolution, which I ask you to pass, is an affirmation by this convention of all their labors together with the Diocese. St. Mary's serves as a model of cooperation and faithfulness in Mission.

The Commission on Mission and Development is working with the other congregations St. Aidan's, St. Bartholomew's, and Good Shepherd to bring them to a similar place. You will hear more about these efforts in Canon Bean's report later in the day.

The other business before our convention is the budget, a budget which reflects reduced income from congregations and keeps assessment levels as they have been since I became your bishop. It is a bare bones budget which maintains our historic commitments outside the Diocese to the General Church and our ecumenical and interfaith partners. I ask you to adopt it.

The business of the Convention is necessary work to order and undergird our common life. It is work done in the service of the life to which we are called, namely to be the body and blood of Christ in the world, to serve the world in Jesus name. It is that work to which I now turn

The question before us is, How are we to be the body of Christ in the world today? How are we to live out the truth that we are one bread, one body together?

It is no secret that the context in which we find ourselves is very different that it was when most of us were born. Most of us have faint memories of Christendom when Church membership and attendance were a part of the fabric of life for

most people, a time characterized by denominational loyalty and preference for Christianity in the public square. We had Christmas Break not Winter Break from School. Stores closed on Sundays. Soccer games if they took place at all and other sporting events were held on Sunday afternoons rather than Sunday morning.

Yes a lot has changed. But there is one thing that has not Jesus who is the same yesterday, today, and forever.

The answer to the question of how are we to live, how are we to be one body, one bread for the world is found where it always is found.. in HIM, Jesus, the model for our life in every circumstance and situation. He is the Way, the Truth, and the Life. The one who came that we might have abundant life.

These past few weeks in our Sunday Eucharistic Lectionary we have been reading from Paul's letter to the Philippians, the letter which contains these words, words from one of the first bishops to the Church.

²⁷ Live your life in a manner worthy of the gospel of Christ, so that, whether I come and see you or am absent and hear about you, I will know that you are standing firm in one spirit, striving side by side with one mind for the faith of the gospel, . . . If then there is any encouragement in Christ, any consolation from love, any sharing in the Spirit, any compassion and sympathy, ² make my joy complete: be of the same mind, having the same love, being in full accord and of one mind. ³ Do nothing from selfish ambition or conceit, but in humility regard others as better than yourselves. ⁴ Let each of you look not to your own interests, but to the interests of others. ⁵ Let the same mind be in you that was^[a] in Christ Jesus,

⁶ who, though he was in the form of God,
did not regard equality with God
as something to be exploited,
⁷ but emptied himself,
taking the form of a slave,
being born in human likeness.
And being found in human form,
⁸ he humbled himself
and became obedient to the point of death—
even death on a cross.

Paul, is telling his first hearers and us that our call to be the one bread, the one body begins with Kenosis, self -emptying. I think you would agree with me that

such life, a life with self-emptying at its center is the opposite of what we see displayed in the world in which we live.

Some of you have heard me tell this story before but it bears repeating. Some years ago Cindy and I were watching a Peter, Paul, and Mary concert on public television. Between songs Noel Paul Stookey, he's the tall one, commented, "When I was a boy we had Life magazine, it was about all of Life, then in the seventies, there was a new magazine People, people are a part of life there not all of life. Then in the 80's there was a new magazine called Us. Us is some of the people, it's us but it's not them. Then in the 90's the new magazine was Self, Self isn't us. I predict the next magazine is going to be called ME. It will simply be glossy pages that reflect back at the reader."

I have come to believe that Paul was a bit of a prophet. We see his prophecy fulfilled in the personal web page, myspace, Facebook, the Linked in Profile, and the epitome of narcissism, the selfie. Marketers and the world around us want to tell us it is all about us. As I have told many of you before If I have learned one thing in 30 years of ordained ministry. It is not about me. I also need to tell you, it's not about you either. Yes, Jesus died for us as if we were the only person in the world but we are not.

To be the Body of Christ, both as individual members and as the church means that we must imitate Jesus's example of self-emptying.

Self -emptying means surrendering power.

Self- emptying means setting aside privilege.

Self-emptying means putting our wants and needs for the greater good.

Most of us in this room have the privilege of being in the majority. Because of the color of our skin and the history of our nation, most of us have never experienced discrimination or racial profiling. Contrast that with the fact that almost 2 out of 3 children of color live in poverty and that African-American men are times more likely to be imprisoned than whites for the same crime. We have seen on our

televisions this summer the results of this state of being as we watched the events unfold after the death of Michael Brown in Ferguson, Missouri.

One of the things that I have become aware since my return to the Upper Midwest 11 years ago is how incipient Northern racism is. We delude ourselves with the story that our ancestors fought to free the slaves and end slavery, while we enforce an economic and opportunity segregation that insures that very little will change. I applaud efforts like the combined youth pilgrimage of Christ Church Whitefish Bay and All Peoples Lutheran in Milwaukee that have sought to bridge the racial divide. But we have a long way to go before Dr. King's dream that a person will be judged not by the color of their skin but by the content of their character is fulfilled. Over the next few months, I will be working with other bishops of this Church to make racial reconciliation one of the priorities of our common life in the coming years. I ask your prayers and support. I also ask you to seek ways both as individuals and as congregations to share in the work. It's not just a Milwaukee, Racine, and Kenosha problem. It's here in Madison and in every community throughout this state.

I also ask you to join me and the other members of the Wisconsin Council of Churches in our anti-poverty initiative that many of you learned about in our workshops yesterday. To be the body of Christ in the world means to serve the world in Jesus' name and work for the expansion of God's reign.

This call to kenosis is not just for our life outside the Church, it must also affect our life within the church as well. One of the questions that is being asked across the Church is what is God calling us to let go of so that we might be the Church he is calling us to be today. In some cases, that is buildings. I applaud the work of St. James', Milwaukee who have come to realize that their building has become a hindrance to mission and ministry and has put the building up for sale. Across the diocese we have 19th and 20th century buildings in 19th century locations housing congregations called by God to do mission and ministry in the 21st century. Some may be redundant. Ten miles is not as great a distance as it was in years past.

In other cases, it may be how we understand the concept of parish. We need to remember that the word parish is a geographical distinction as is diocese. A Parish is a geographical subset of a diocese that may have within it one or more church

buildings. Let me give you an example. Early in my ministry I was rector of Scott Parish, Orange County, Virginia. The parish church was Christ Church, Gordonsville and at one time the parish had within it two other churches, St. Mary's Somerset, and The Barbour Memorial Church, Barboursville. It was one parish in three buildings.

What I am beginning to wonder if this is a model that may help us in some of our communities. I am grateful for some of the steps toward such cooperation in parts of our diocese. But the work is slow, in part for some it is hard to let go of what they want or to what they have become accustomed. It is hard work as the people of St. Aidan's, Hartford and St. James, West Bend know well. I am grateful for their efforts. These conversations need to begin or continue in other places. Friends, we have seen the results of business as usual. It is not good. The definition of insanity is doing the same thing over and over again expecting different results. It is time for us to repent, to put on the mind of Christ, the mind of kenosis.

Dream with me. What might our diocese look like if our lives mirrored that of our Lord, the one we heard Paul speak of in his letter to the Philippians?

(PAUSE)

I believe it would be a diocese where each of us consider ourselves as a minister of the Gospel, a person called to serve everyone we meet in Jesus' name. We would see every human being as someone who Christ died for and we would look for Christ in them. It would be a community where the principal question would not be what do I want but what does God want. It would be a diocese that was less worried about receiving communion on Sunday and more concerned about being the Body of Christ for the world. It would be a diocese characterized by cooperation and flexibility.

The promise to us is that if this becomes true, then what happened to Jesus will characterize our life. What was the Father's response to Jesus's self-emptying? Paul writes

⁹Therefore God also highly exalted him
and gave him the name
that is above every name,

¹⁰ so that at the name of Jesus
every knee should bend,
in heaven and on earth and under the earth,
¹¹ and every tongue should confess
that Jesus Christ is Lord,
to the glory of God the Father.

I am convinced that if we imitate Jesus in his self- emptying we will share in his exultation, maybe not from the world, but from the one from whom it really matters, the Father, who through Christ has washed us clean from every sin and raised us to a new life making us a kingdom of priests to serve the world in Jesus name.