

The Very Rev. John Paul Downey

Reflections

First Reflection:

We ask you to provide your narrative providing some details of the Work History and Ministry Specialties sections of your Profile. Given the limitations of the CDO's Personal Profile's format, the Committee requests that you provide a narrative detailing the sections headed [1] Work History and [2] Ranked Ministry Specialties and Supporting Skill/Experience, and including references to related Continuing Education.

I believe my time of service in ordained ministry has fostered the depth that comes from stability as well as the breadth that comes from a wide experience of the Church. Stability has meant long service in one diocese, service that has included two small rural congregations in the Appalachian coal mining region of our diocese, followed by time in a county seat town parish, and then a long tenure at the cathedral in the city of Erie. Thus I have served in family, pastoral, program, and endowed congregations.

I was quite young when I became a Cathedral Dean, stepping into a highly conflicted situation with a demoralized and uncertain congregation. Together we have had our seasons, but we have developed and sustained a vital congregation, with God-centered liturgy and music, rebuilt facilities, a growing mission emphasis, and a remarkably young membership, all during years of economic struggle and population decline in our city and diocese.

This length of time in cathedral and diocese has also allowed me to be part of most everything that can be done in the councils and committees of the diocese, including the Standing Committee, Commission on Ministry (chairing both of these), Diocesan Council and its Committees, and teaching Theology, Liturgy, Preaching, and Anglican Studies in the Diocesan School for Ministry. All of this reached a high point when I was on the Standing Committee which was the Ecclesiastical Authority for a period of fourteen months when we were without a bishop. I served as the President Pro-Tempore of the Diocesan Convention in 2006 and of the Electing Convention in 2007. I also authored a substantial resolution passed overwhelmingly at the 2006 Convention which stated our loyalty to the Episcopal Church and our (then) new Presiding Bishop. This was important as the neighboring Diocese of Pittsburgh was at that time taking steps in the other direction. Our resolution was characterized in the press as "militantly moderate."

I have had the privilege of being a Deputy to General Convention since 1991, serving on the Ecumenical Relations Committee since 2000. Ecumenism is a major concern for me and I work hard at those relationships and possibilities. I also enjoy teaching at many levels in the church and community. I am often asked to mentor seminarians and new priests, and this, along with those who have been ordained from my congregations, provides great joy and satisfaction. Community involvement has been centered in board and advisory work, including the Erie Community Foundation, Nonprofit Partnership, and Brevillier Village (a Cathedral sponsored retirement

community). I am often asked to serve on panel discussions and am comfortable with the media. Active participation in the North American Cathedral Deans Conference has taken me across the United States and Canada and beyond. My wife Sharon and I are currently Co-chairs of the Conference.

Continuing Education for me has been varied and rich and I am an incessant reader. In recent years, I have participated in the Clergy Leadership Project and CREDO. My three trips to Jerusalem have shaped the core of my gospel witness. The most recent was during my 2008 sabbatical which began with Easter in Jerusalem, went on to Pentecost in Rome, and ended at Washington National Cathedral, in each case experiencing and reflecting on our Christian faith and the Anglican and Episcopal presence in those places.

Second Reflection:

The Committee requests that you provide a reflection on the opportunities you see for the Diocese of Kentucky in relation to your personal strengths and interests. We would like to know what opportunities for this Diocese stand out in relation to what you are good at and what you would enjoy doing in your ministry during the next decade.

The Diocese of Kentucky is comprised of 36 congregations, representing a wide range of sizes and contexts. The largest city is in one corner of the diocese while other congregations are found throughout a large region with smaller cities, towns, and rural areas. In this type of diocese, the bishop's ministry can and must be personal and pastoral, sensitive to these various contexts and, in fact, genuinely interested in and caring about them. I know this directly and deeply as it also describes the diocese in which I have served thus far. It is the type of episcopate I have been literally "next door" to and closely associated with for many years, with three very different bishops.

At the same time, the number of members and financial resources are a bit larger in Kentucky than Northwestern Pennsylvania. The two regions are remarkably similar but not identical. Thus for me there is a both a solid basis of the familiar and an attractive and interesting prospect of the new when I consider the possibility of serving as your bishop. If I may be so bold as to compare it to our professional baseball teams, it would be like moving from the AA Erie Seawolves to the AAA Louisville Bats -- a plausible move that I believe I am ready for.

I admire your success in maintaining the diversity of the Episcopal Church without being caught up in the worst of the "troubles" some in our church have been going through. Our diocese has navigated its way through recent years in a similar manner. I not only know this is possible, but I am passionately committed to it. We need all kinds of people and perspectives to have a healthy and vital church, but this only holds together when some of us, including some in major leadership positions, guard the middle ground of common conviction with both confidence and openness.

The next decade will challenge us to develop congregations and ministries that are faithful, missional, and sustainable while at the same time being open to new mission opportunities. I am hopeful and positive about this as I believe it is happening in many mainline congregations, including the cathedral where I have been Dean. If God calls me to become a bishop, I will undertake that ministry with this realism and hopefulness.

While acknowledging the difficulties of the episcopate, I think a bishop needs to generally enjoy and be happy in this ministry. And so I can say that I respect and appreciate different kinds of congregations and their various sizes, contexts, cultures and liturgical styles. I value envisioning and planning but know that there are no simple panaceas, that the unexpected often interrupts, and that the deeper things of our faith remain the most important factors in vital Christian life and work. Presiding at meetings, including large ones, is a joy for me, and I think I do it well and fairly. I enjoy long drives in the car, especially in beautiful country like Western Kentucky, an area I have driven through many times while my daughters were students at Sewanee. My wife is a graduate of Indiana University and the prospect of living in Louisville is a happy one for us, from its size to being in the heart of basketball country as well as the cultural opportunities in the city and the wider region. These convergences among others encourage me to enter this time of discernment, open to God's Spirit.

Ordinal Reflections:

In selecting a bishop, as in all things, the Church is guided by The Book of Common Prayer. In its liturgy for the Ordination of a Bishop, one finds questions reflecting specific beliefs and commitments required of a bishop-elect (BCP pp. 513, 517-518). Please provide a reflection on each of four themes found in these pages.

Theme I - Hearing and Accepting your Call as Bishop

Ordinal Questions: Are you persuaded that God has called you as bishop? Will you accept this call and fulfill this trust in obedience to Christ Jesus?

Please include: a description of when and how you became aware of your call to the office of bishop. If you feel especially called to this diocese, please write about that. Please also describe an experience in the past in which you sensed that you were being obedient to Christ Jesus' call. Who is Christ Jesus?

From seminary on, as I have served in positions of leadership, people have said that I might someday be a bishop. I try to live in response to God's call and thus I have been happy as a Cathedral Dean. In recent years, my opportunities and capacities for leadership have grown with enhanced responsibilities in the diocese, in the Cathedral Deans Conference, and in addressing the impact of the current economic challenges. Now, when people encourage me to consider a call to the episcopate I hear it with readiness. The fact that people I respect wanted to recommend me for Bishop of Kentucky is something I took very seriously and prayerful pondering of the profile along with other reading and conversations have led me to participate in this search with heartfelt openness.

My most profound recent experience of obedience to Christ Jesus' call came during 2006 when I considered whether I might be called to become bishop in my own Diocese of Northwestern Pennsylvania. It was widely expected that I would be one of the people in that process. After serious discernment, I became convinced that God was not calling me to enter the search process here and that conviction persists today. Ironically, this freed me to assume some of the role of the bishop over the next few months and I believe that I was genuinely helpful to our diocese in an uncertain time. Having experienced this kind of unexpected, even ironic, movement in my life before, I trust that the Spirit was and is stirring, whatever the future holds.

Christ Jesus is the "Word made flesh," the crucified and risen one who offers us the reconciling love of God. Guided by the Holy Spirit, the Church came to speak of this in the doctrines of historic orthodox Christianity, defined by the early councils. I am an unashamed believer in these doctrines. However, I do not think they are ends in themselves. Jesus did not come with the Nicene Creed saying "believe this." Rather, holding these doctrines keeps us faithful to Jesus, who *did* teach us to pray that God's Name be hallowed and that God's Kingdom come and God's will be done on earth as it is in heaven. The Lord's Prayer shows us that this has to do with justice, reconciliation, and peace and so the outcome of faithfulness to Jesus is not a religious arrogance that we have got it right and others are wrong, but rather a people who are seeking to love God and love their neighbors as themselves.

Theme II – Faith in and Faithfulness to Holy Scripture

Ordinal Questions: Do you believe the Holy Scriptures of the Old and New Testaments to be the Word of God, and to contain all things necessary to salvation? Will you be faithful in prayer, and in the study of Holy Scripture, that you may have the mind of Christ? Will you boldly proclaim and interpret the Gospel of Christ, enlightening the minds and stirring up the conscience of your people? Will you be merciful to all, show compassion to the poor and strangers, and defend those who have no helper?

Please include: a description of the spiritual practices or disciplines that sustain you. How does Holy Scripture inform your faith? How do you expect to be fed spiritually as bishop? Please write about a time in which you showed compassion to the poor and strangers or defended those who have no helper.

My spiritual practice is grounded in the disciplines and rhythms of the Book of Common Prayer, together with simple contemplation and the attempt to be a good steward of health and finances. A more detailed description of this can be found in the article "Spiritual Practices" on the Dean's Page of the Cathedral of Saint Paul website.

I have no hesitation affirming the ordination declaration that "I do believe the Holy Scriptures of the Old and New Testaments to be the Word of God and to contain all things necessary to salvation." That Word and those "things necessary" have to do with the offer of God's reconciling love through Jesus Christ. There is plenty of room for differing interpretations, exploration, argument, and changing of mind, but the "things necessary" will come through when we engage Scripture with open minds and hearts. I encounter Scripture primarily through praying the Daily

Office and studying the Sunday Lectionary, alone and with others, preparing for preaching, one of my passions and priorities.

These patterns of spiritual practice and engagement with Scripture are basic and can be adapted to the circumstances of a bishop's life and ministry. However, I also want to be open to new learning and new practices that might come along.

As for Scripture's call to compassion for the poor and stranger, the cathedral offers a monthly Sunday dinner, served with dignity, to the folks who come to our weekly food pantry. When I am able, I take time to sit at each table and talk with our guests leading to anything from banter about sports or the weather, to pastoral conversations and prayer. I have also been working to bring key religious leaders together to see how we might better serve, in ecumenical partnership, one of the most troubled neighborhoods of our city.

Theme III – Supporting Lay and Ordained Ministry

Ordinal Questions: As a chief priest and pastor, will you encourage and support all baptized people in their gifts and ministries, nourish them from the riches of God's grace, pray for them without ceasing, and celebrate with them the sacraments of our redemption? Will you sustain your fellow presbyters and take counsel with them; will you guide and strengthen the deacons and all others who minister in the Church?

Please include: a description of the ways you have gone about developing relationships with, and perhaps pastoring, the clergy with whom you serve or have served. How do you anticipate exercising your role in calling new priests? How have you supported and nurtured lay ministry?

I have been involved in the life of our diocese in many ways, often in roles related to the ordination process. And so I have been a teacher, mentor, and colleague. A GOE Reader for several years, I adapted the format of the General Ordination Exam for our diocesan examinations for local priests and deacons. I have been on staff with full and part-time assisting clergy and several people have been ordained deacons or priests from the congregations I have served. I have preached at ordinations and installations and Diocesan clergy seek my counsel or insight for practical and personal matters. I also have a collegial and leadership position with the Cathedral Deans Conference.

All of this would be brought to bear in my role in calling new priests. I think the bishop can actively encourage vocations by talking about it regularly and planting seeds with possible future ordinands and encouraging others to do the same. The bishop should maintain contact with seminaries and demonstrate a healthy respect for and even pride in the clergy and their vocation. When it comes to working with congregations in the search process, I believe the bishop can be supportive and involved, respecting the canonical prerogatives of congregations and their leaders and fostering mature responsibility in them. The bishop needs to know and take into account the

unique local circumstances, history, and capacities in considering a range of possibilities for clergy recruitment, formation, and deployment.

As for the laity, whether volunteers or professionals, I believe in treating them with respect as adults in an environment that encourages and supports initiative. I am more likely to offer suggestions or guidance based on what God seems to be doing than to try to get people to do something I want them to do, although there are times for a more directive approach. I am very aware of the demands on people's time these days and am deeply appreciative when they offer their time and talent for God's work. I also respect the fact that their lives and concerns extend beyond the Church.

Theme IV – Role in and Responsibility to the Larger Church

Ordinal Questions: Do you solemnly engage to conform to the doctrine, discipline and worship of The Episcopal Church? Will you guard the faith, unity, and discipline of the Church? Will you share with your fellow bishops in the government of the whole Church?

Please include: how you interpret the above, noting your sense of responsibility to The Episcopal Church regarding issues of human sexuality in matters of ordination, marriage rites, and Prayer Book revision. What other issues do you foresee as challenging to the Church and how do you expect to respond to them? Discuss your sense of the relationship you believe The Episcopal Church should have with the Anglican Communion.

I also strongly affirm the second part of the ordination declaration -- "I do solemnly engage to conform to the doctrine, discipline, and worship of The Episcopal Church." This is perhaps the clearest part of a bishop's responsibility to "guard the faith, unity, and discipline of the Church." However this responsibility extends further into matters that ecumenical theology calls "real but imperfect communion." As Episcopalians we find the core of "faith, unity, and discipline" in the Chicago-Lambeth Quadrilateral of Scriptures, Creeds, Sacraments, and Historic Episcopate. However beyond these, or even in the interpretation of these, we encounter differences, diversity, and division. Unless we believe one interpretation is exclusively right, the task of "guarding" will be both real *and* imperfect. A bishop strives to know the sense of the faithful within the diocese as fully as possible and relate it with the understandings of faith beyond the diocese. This is done through the legislative councils of the Church as well as the less structured but no less important relationships of bishops, presbyters, deacons, and all the baptized, within and beyond the formal boundaries of the Episcopal Church. "Guarding the faith, unity, and discipline of the Church," is an ongoing task with gains and losses, stubborn stumbling blocks and unexpected new possibilities.

And so on to Human Sexuality. Whatever our views, the objective fact is that we are in a time of discernment that has not reached its resolution. An honest, realistic, and pragmatic acceptance of this fact is my primary approach to these matters. My deepest aspiration is that, both personally and as a leader, I can be trusted as someone who is seeking to be faithful to Christ through this

time; fair, respectful, open to learning from others of all points of view. And I would hope, if I were the Bishop of Kentucky, that these values would characterize the diocese.

Like your Bishop and Deputations, I voted for resolutions C056 and D025 at the recent General Convention. I believe they are honest statements reflecting the best we could do to state the broadest ground of common conviction, reaching toward full participation in the Anglican Communion and full inclusion of our gay and lesbian members while recognizing that we are not of one mind. I am open to further developments based on these resolutions, respecting and beginning with the discernment, policies and practices currently in place in Kentucky.

Ordination is a diocesan process and so again here I would see my role as leading Christ-centered discernment, respecting the councils of the diocese as the context within which the bishop serves. I would not be inclined to authorize or officiate at same-sex blessing rites until a wider theological consensus has been accomplished and received and I am willing to participate in and lead such a consideration. Meanwhile I would give the utmost respect to pastors as they seek to “provide generous pastoral response to meet the needs of members of this church” (C056), hoping that they would trust me enough to share their concerns. I am not at all ashamed that The Episcopal Church is one of the places these important matters are being addressed, however imperfectly. It is part of our unique vocation as an historic church with democratic governance.

The economic and mission challenges before us make full Prayer Book revision unlikely in the foreseeable future. I would support the use of authorized *Supplemental Liturgical Materials* (*Enriching Our Worship and some 1928 Prayer Book texts*) where congregations believe they would strengthen their faith and mission. I am less supportive of creating or locally revising liturgical texts beyond the possibilities already in place, but I would be willing to discuss it with those who feel there are compelling theological and pastoral matters involved.

Emerging issues will probably have to do with the challenges of being mainline and Episcopalian Christians in a changed and changing culture in which the resources that have supported church life as we have known it will be diminished or stressed. New models of congregational life and leadership, including ordained leadership, will be called for. We may make some well intentioned mistakes along the way and we will need the grace to learn and move on. What does vital congregational life, evangelism, and social mission look like in this environment? Ultimately deep theological matters are implied, challenging us to look within as well as beyond ourselves. People will want to be part of congregations with authentic faith, God-centered worship and earnest mission efforts to make a difference in the world. Episcopal Churches of all sizes are capable of being such congregations.

The Constitution of the Episcopal Church states that we are “constituent members” of the Anglican Communion. This remains true, despite the recent troubles. Our communion with some of the Provinces is broken or impaired to various degrees, but we have also developed or are on the way to developing other full communion relationships. I hope it will remain clear that we value all these relationships and want to maintain and deepen them while being honest and trusting our vocation in The Episcopal Church. As for the proposed Anglican Covenant, I support

the General Convention resolutions that commit us to that process. The final text of the Covenant has only recently been published and I believe it deserves serious and careful consideration. The next few years will lead to a range of responses in The Episcopal Church and other Provinces. While it is not yet time to have a fully-formed view of the Anglican Covenant, I expect the outcome will most likely be “real but imperfect.”