



Bishop Jay Magness and the Rev. Suzanne Warner

Former canon consecrated a bishop

The Rev. Dr. James “Jay” Magness, former canon to the ordinary in the Diocese of Kentucky, was ordained and consecrated the Episcopal Church’s sixth bishop suffragan of federal ministries on Saturday, June 19 at the Washington National Cathedral.

Preaching at the service, Bishop Ted Gulick said his former canon was the “hardest working man I have ever known” and that “the Episcopal Church needs Jay Magness to do

this job.”

Chaplains, bishops and officials involved in military and prison ministries from across the United States and the Anglican Communion participated in the service led by Presiding Bishop Katherine Jefferts Schori, who was the chief consecrator.

Bishop Gulick was also a co-consecrator, and two other members of the Diocese of Kentucky community participated in the service: Mike Hutchins, Bishop Gulick’s assistant who served in the Navy with Magness, and the Rev. Ed Lane, the deacon serving St. John’s Congregation at Fort Knox. Hutchins was one of the bishop-elect’s presenters, and Lane was a chalice bearer in the procession. Hutchins also carried the diocesan banner, which was created by Hollis Real of St. Paul’s Church in Louisville.

The other co-consecrators with Bishop Gulick were Diocese of Central Pennsylvania Bishop Nathan D. Baxter, Diocese of Washington Bishop John Bryson Chane, Bishop Richard Graham of the Metropolitan Washington D.C. Synod of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America, Diocese of Southern Virginia Bishop Herman Hollerith IV and Magness’ two predecessors Bishop George Packard and Bishop Charles L. Keyser.

Also participating in the service were House of Deputies President Bonnie Anderson and international representatives of three Anglican bishops who hold similar positions and ministries in their provinces: Anglican Province of New Zealand Bishop of Wellington Thomas J. Brown; Anglican Military Ordinate for the Anglican Church of Canada Bishop Peter Coffin and Anglican Bishop to the Defence Force from the Anglican Church of Australia Len Eacott.

Bishop Gulick was well positioned to explain in his sermon why his former canon was “made for this moment, for this day, for this ministry.” The two have known each other since the Magness family joined St. Stephen’s Church in Norfolk, Va., where Gulick was rector, and later worked together for four years between 2004 and 2008 after Magness retired as a captain in the U.S. Navy’s chaplain corps.

Recalling a magazine story about an Iraq War veteran who “suffers the tortures of the damned” as he lives with severe posttraumatic stress disorder, Gulick noted, “Today we make a bishop who will be with chaplains who deal with individuals like this every single day of their ministries. It was a good thing that the Episcopal Peace Fellowship has enveloped us in prayer. This ministry costs like no other!”

The new bishop is well prepared to meet the challenges of the despairing and “death-dealing” world that these chaplains enter, according to Gulick. “Jay’s priestly vocation can be traced back to a moment during his service in Vietnam. ... After manning a machine gun, he looked down at his hands and asked, ‘What have I become?’,” said Gulick. “That question led him to a chaplain, later to seminary and to the vocation of priesthood... and soon after his ordination it became clear that his priesthood was to be exercised in service to those captured by the same arresting question—‘What have I become?’ And since Easter is Easter, the question can always be transformed into ‘What might I begun?’”

As a military chaplain, Magness devoted the bulk of his ministry to “helping people in the Marine Corps and Navy figure out who they have become and who they might become.” Supporting “those who lie on the edge of despair even as they continue to serve and risk their lives” in war zones and those at home with ministries that have “their own localized horrors with which to contend” require, he said, “such a belief in the resurrection that Easter becomes like oxygen—the only thing that allows us to breath.” For chaplains, he observed, the Apostles Creed phrase that is too quickly recited by many — “He descended into hell” —is at the core of the faith and experience of the chaplains Magness will serve.

“None of us in this church could be here today, at this occasion, if we did not believe that hell has been hallowed and defeated. ... We are here as those who know that we must turn the other cheek, forgive until 70 times seven, and go the second mile. Easter has seared these words into our hearts. ... Yet, we also know that this world is still not the kingdom of God, and is prone to violence which robs and destroys God’s creatures,” said Gulick. “Sometimes standing up to that violence requires the loss of life.... Those caught up in such reality must be the first obligation of our prayers and our best pastoral care.”

Throughout his vocation, Magness has exemplified a ministry faithful to proclaiming the resurrection, always with compassion, humility and integrity, and, as Gulick stated, “The Episcopal Church needs Jay Magness to do this job.”

The full sermon, highly recommended, is published at www.episcopalky.org. Also available is a copy of the service bulletin.