

Anglican Diocese of the Living Word | Pastoral Address  
Missions Conference and Synod 2022 | Souderton, Pennsylvania  
The Rt. Rev. Julian M. Dobbs L.Th, Th.M, D.D

In the name of God, the Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit. Amen.

***Be watchful, stand firm in the faith, act like men, be strong. Let all that you do be done in love.***<sup>1</sup>

As a young lad, I was forded the great privilege of attending an Anglican boys boarding school from the age of 9. This was an expensive commitment for my parents who both sacrificed significantly for me to have this opportunity. My parents believed that education, respect, formation, opportunity and a valuing of order and tradition were values they wanted to gift and impart into their young son.

It was here, at King's School and later at King's College that my commitment to follow Christ began to focus and my formation as an Anglican converged, setting the course for the future determined for me by God. It was here at King's, worshiping Christ often twice on a Sunday, using the daily office from the Book of Common Prayer 1662, that I began to wrestle at age eleven, with what I come to know as a vocation to serve God in Holy Orders.

Singing in the chapel choir, enamored by the hymns of Watts and Wesley, I would often be transfixed during worship on a verse of Scripture that was inscribed on the northwestern wall of the Chapel of the Holy Child.

***Stand fast in the faith, be strong.*** 1 Corinthians 16, verse 13. What an outstanding choice of scripture to inspire young boys. *Virtus pollet* – the school motto, virtue prevails, become men, be servants, be leaders, ***Stand fast in the faith, be strong.*** This is part of the formation that has shaped some of the DNA of my own episcopacy. As a disciple of Christ in any form of leadership or ministry in the church of this generation, 1 Corinthians 16, verse 13 has a notable sense of urgency, ***Stand fast in the faith, be strong.***

In this pastoral address today, I want us to consider from Scripture what are the foundational exhortations that will enable us to stand fast in the faith in our context across the Anglican Diocese of the Living Word, in our nation and beyond our borders. You ask me, why is this important? I would say to you, as we listen and talk about the issues confronting North America and the world, it appears that the Bible is no longer in vogue. So let us go to the Bible and find out what it says for us today, in our context.

In the final chapter of his first letter to the Corinthians, the Apostle Paul breaks into his final instructions and gives his final greetings with five short, staccato commands, or imperatives that would later be inscribed, in part, upon that northwestern wall of my school chapel.

Look at it again. It is a wonderful text. *Be vigilant... Be watchful, that is, stand firm in your faith, be strong, be courageous. And let all that you do be done in love.*<sup>2</sup>

It is interesting that each of the five commands pre-supposes some problem, some difficulty, some responsibility, or temptation within the Corinthian Church which makes the commands necessary.

## 1. Be watchful

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<sup>1</sup> 1 Corinthians 16:13, ESV

<sup>2</sup> 1 Corinthians 16:13, ESV

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*Keep awake* is the exhortation from Paul. The implication here is that we have enemies 'out there' and we cannot afford to relax our vigilance. It seems today, that no believer can ever afford to disconnect, because frankly we do not know when the crisis is going to come and when we will find ourselves on the ropes. Things change, things change in states, in countries, things change in workplaces, things change in families frighteningly quickly and we can find our backs against the wall. Stand up at work for some inconvenient point about honesty or integrity and suddenly your boss says, you are not performing quite as well as you were and maybe the time has come to move on. Tell your parents you are having to make some changes as a result of a Christian commitment and suddenly there is an icy coolness that creeps into what you thought was a solid relationship.

Be watchful! There are real wars taking place today in the realm of ideas. Real wars attempting to control idea-shaping institutions, congregations, seminaries and denominations – and biblical truth—a prize far more precious than any army has ever contended for—is at stake.<sup>3</sup>

At the center of this attack against Christ, his word and his faithful followers is a subtle, wicked, unscrupulous, very powerful archenemy called Satan. He is an adversary who prowls around seeking someone to devour.<sup>4</sup>

He uses politicians, pastors, priests, prelates and anyone he can entice.

One politician recently said in a speech to our nation which advocated for and unreservedly supported and advanced transgenderism,<sup>5</sup> that parents of transgender children should be encouraged to affirm their child's identity as one of the most powerful things they can do to keep them safe and healthy. How could such advocacy be safe and healthy when 82% of transgender individuals have considered killing themselves and 40% have attempted suicide.<sup>6</sup>

Transgender individuals are not the enemy. They are loved by Christ. But be watchful, for we are wrestling against the cosmic powers over this present darkness, against the spiritual forces of evil in the heavenly places.<sup>7</sup> People of God, there are real wars taking place today for the control of our minds and our bodies. And if politicians are vulnerable – Satan will attack there. If priests and bishops depart the faith once for all entrusted to the saints – Satan will attack there.

Jesus speaks of Satan as a wolf in the clothing or the disguise of a sheep. And he creeps up unnoticed when leaders are at their most vulnerable, when their guard is down.

Be watchful - be vigilant. That is the exhortation from Paul in these verses. For when we lose ground to Satan, it is a tough fight to reverse the trend and bring about the required course correction.

In their 2021 statement to the Church, the bishops of the Anglican Church in North America reminded the faithful that, 'while questions pertaining to human identity are ancient, a certain vividness around personal identity has been introduced into our current cultural conversation.

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<sup>3</sup> Dr. Brad Littlejohn

<sup>4</sup> 1 Peter 5:18, ESV

<sup>5</sup> <https://nypost.com/2022/03/31/biden-says-trans-people-made-in-image-of-god-during-video/>

<sup>6</sup> <https://pubmed.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/32345113/>

<sup>7</sup> Ephesians 6:12, ESV

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Our society has collapsed into a sexual world view which attempts to redefine the image of God in humanity as predominantly one of sexual orientation and behavior.<sup>8</sup>

In the liturgy of the Consecration of Bishops, a bishop commits himself, with all faithful diligence to banish and drive away from the Church all erroneous and strange doctrine contrary to God's Word and both privately and publicly to call upon others and encourage them to do the same?<sup>9</sup>

Therefore, I believe that it is my responsibility as your diocesan bishop to provide direction and speak clearly as the Church navigates these crucial and important matters.

The bible is clear on matters of sexual identity. God created man in his own image, in the image of God he created him; male and female he created them.<sup>10</sup> Therefore, any confusion of the sexes is a distortion of God's created order. Some Christians have great difficulty with these biblical foundations. They will often point you to the experience of a much loved family member and tell you how they have been significantly influenced by someone who identifies him or her self in a way that is inconsistent with their biological sex.

While all Christians should show compassion and empathy when possible to the personal experiences of others, the Anglican Diocese of the Living Word cannot and will not recognize personal experience as revelatory. We believe that our identity must be grounded in the truth about creation which is revealed in the Scriptures and in God's Son, our Savior Jesus Christ.

This biblical truth is under attack today within our culture and from within the evangelical church. As a result, I have appointed a task force in the diocese, chaired by The Rev. Matthew Kennedy, to help us wrestle with what it means to be created male and female in the image of God. I have asked the task force to prepare guidelines to assist us in our ministry with individuals who are already in our congregations or come to the diocese in the future and are wrestling with sexual identity.

In their report, which the clergy will receive tomorrow, the task force says this, 'God is the author of all good things. The world that He has made includes men and women and our Lord said that from the beginning God made human beings "male and female" (Matthew 19:4). Yet this is a cultural moment when there is increasing confusion about the significance of this order and about whether Christians should think about being male or female as something that is given and fixed, or as something that is to a substantial degree malleable and self-chosen.'

Thank you Matt and the members of your task force, for your focused work.

Let me tell you why this is so important. The Holy Scriptures have been given to us by God and as a result, the word of God written is extraordinarily precious. The bible tells the world what it does not wish to hear. We should not expect to be embraced by those whose thoughts and deeds contradict the truths of our faith. Nor should we seek to make our faith more palatable, lest the salt lose its savor. As Dr. Carl Trueman has written, 'Accommodating the world's demands is a fool's errand.'

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<sup>8</sup> <https://anglicanchurch.net/sexuality-and-identity-a-pastoral-statement-from-the-college-of-bishops/>

<sup>9</sup> The Consecration of Bishops, ACNA BCP 2019

<sup>10</sup> Genesis 1:27

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I urge you to establish a framework of discipline in your life that has regular and robust biblical study and reflection. We build our beliefs and ethics, not from the loudest or the most appealing voices in the public square, academia or the corridors of power; we build our beliefs and ethics from a robust engagement with Scripture.

This is why I urge you to participate in a weekly bible study group in your congregation to study the Bible and build accountable relationships with other Christians. We need faithful friends! Friends who will love us. Friends who will encourage us. Friends who will pray regularly for us and friends who will bark loudly like watch dogs when they perceive in us the first glimmerings of compromise. People of God, be watchful!

#### 2. Stand firm in the faith.

Staying awake, keeping our guard, maintaining our vigilance – yes, indeed! Paul adds (vs.13) ***Stand firm in the faith.*** Stand firmly planted against all the pressures to conform. Stability is a much desired quality in almost every sphere of our lives.

About 6 weeks ago, I was visiting Holy Cross Anglican Church in the Historic Third Ward in Milwaukee, Wisconsin. As I waited for the plane to depart on my return journey, the pilot informed the passengers that our flight was delayed in order to reconfigure and stabilize our aircraft. The plane I was on was a small aircraft and it required the crew to accurately compute the center of gravity so that the plane would appropriately level off in flight.

Some days later, I sought the wisdom and experience of U.S. Airforce pilot, Colonel Karen Love to explain the situation to me. Karen told me the center of gravity ensures the plane flies within its specified parameters. Without proper balance, the plane might be nose low or nose high upon leveling off at altitude. She said, the pilot must be cognizant of aerodynamic balance and stabilization to ensure maximum flight fuel and course efficiency.

It seemed to me that Karen was saying... the plane needs to be stable!

Paul exhorts us to be stable. Aerodynamic balance! Maximum flight fuel and course efficiency! Stand firm, stand fast in the faith. Do not deviate off course.

This past year, three of our warriors who stood fast in the faith completed their earthly race and were called home by the Lord.

The Rev. Canon G. Llewellyn Armstrong was rector at Resurrection Church in Brooklyn New York. He was a faithful minister of the gospel who served in ordained ministry for over 50 years. He stood firm for Christ against the doctrinal error and drift of The Episcopal Church and did not deviate off course in his proclamation of the gospel. We give thanks to God for Llewellyn's life and ministry.

Earlier this year, the man who I have described as the 'senior statesman' of our diocese died suddenly while visiting Nigeria with his wife. Dr. Joseph Nosiri served multiple terms on our standing committee. He would occasionally call me with his signature most gentle and yet firm instruction... to which my only response was to say, 'Of course, Dr. Nosiri, I will attend and action your request forthwith!' It was Dr. Joseph Nosiri, dressed in his customary cap with cane in hand who in this very building moved the 2019 synod motion to restructure our relationship with the Church of Nigeria, resulting in what is now the Anglican Diocese of the Living Word.

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Just six days ago, we buried Archdeacon Patrick Malone. Patrick was a courageous presence in the formation and development of our diocese and a brave voice in provincial governance. He was instrumental in the development and training of men called to Holy Orders, several of whom are actively ministering across our own diocese and beyond - a number of whom are present today. We will miss the privilege of partnering in Christian ministry with this faithful and devoted disciple of Christ who is now at home in the presence of the Lord.

We give thanks to God for these three men who stood firm in the faith and extend our love and condolences to their families and congregations.

*[Would you please stand for a moment of silence to pay your respects to God for these three brothers and give thanks to Him for the faithful ministry they shared amongst us.]*

*MOST merciful Father, who hast been pleased to take unto thyself the souls of these thy servants. Grant to us who are still in our pilgrimage, and who walk as yet by faith, that having served thee with constancy on earth, we may be joined hereafter with thy blessed saints in glory everlasting; through Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen.]*

Most of us admire people who have a stable character, a stable personality and stable convictions. I believe that 'stability' was one of the attributes that Jesus admired the most in John the Baptist. In Matthew chapter 11, Jesus speaks to the crowds concerning John: **"What did you go out into the wilderness to see? And He gave three possibilities. A reed shaken by the wind? Did you go out to see a person who is swayed by public opinion and blown about in the wind? What then did you go out to see? A man dressed in soft clothing? Someone living in a king's palace? What then did you go out to see? A prophet? Somebody who lives under the authority of the word of God. In those three options you have everybody in this room. Every one of us is one or other of those three descriptions. What is it that rules your life? Is it public opinion from the outside? Is it your own pleasures and passions on the inside? Or is it the word of God from above?**

The two Books of Homilies [which are a gift to us all today and are beautifully being rediscovered in the Anglican Church] are valuable in a multiplicity of ways and show how Anglican doctrine shifted during the Reformation. These homilies were intended to raise the standards of preaching by offering model sermons covering particular doctrinal and pastoral themes. I strongly commend the Books of Homilies to you.

The "Homily on The Reading of Scripture" states that, '...as drink is pleasant to them that be dry, and meat to them that be hungry, so is the reading, hearing, searching, and studying of Holy Scripture to them that be desirous to know God or themselves, and to do his will.'<sup>11</sup>

Stand firm, do not deviate. For when the Church deviates from the word of God the consequences are catastrophic!

On October 14, last year, I received a very early text message from our Director of Communications, the Rev. Marc Steele. The information Marc sent me was personally painful and the consequence for the church was, in that moment, unfathomable! My friend and

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<sup>11</sup> <http://www.anglicanlibrary.org/homilies/bk1hom01.htm>

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confidant, bishop and former keynote speaker at this missions conference and synod had converted to the See of Peter, the Church of Rome.

After spending his entire adult life within the Anglican Communion—including thirty-seven years as an Anglican bishop, Michael Nazir-Ali was received into the Ordinariate of the Catholic Church at Our Lady of the Assumption and St. Gregory Church in London on October 31, last year.

In Michael's own words, this was a 'dramatic step'.

In a recent article, Michael wrote this, 'One problem with the Anglican Communion was its lack of unity based in apostolic continuity. Each time an "agreement" was reached on important issues and accepted by the respective communions as consonant with what they believed, some part of the Anglican Communion would take unilateral action that cast doubt on the strength of the agreement.'

Michael wrote, I had often boasted that Anglicanism, although reformed, had by divine providence retained both the sacred deposit of faith and the sacred ministry.

He cites the apparent lack of authority, the ordination of women as priests and bishops, the ordination of individuals in active homosexual relationships, the breakdown of the discipline of marriage [especially amongst clergy and bishops] and a lack of clarity concerning personhood and the protections due to it at the earliest and latest stages of life as indicators which "epitomized a tendency within Anglicanism to capitulate to the culture rather than sound a prophetic voice within it."

'A tendency within Anglicanism to capitulate to the culture!' That's interesting!

One of the many reasons why I am so sensitive to wokeness and this pattern of capitulation within the Anglican Church is because I am, and many of you are, refugees from a church that lost her way when she began to succumb to appeals for compassion, tenderness and a capitulation to culture as the justification for dismantling the faith 'once for all entrusted to the saints'.<sup>12</sup>

I am a refugee from a church that deposed the late Dr. J.I Packer from the ordained ministry. I am a refugee from a church that put our own assisting Bishop William Love on trial for believing the bible. And I am a refugee from a church which just three days ago reaffirmed its commitment to the murder of unborn babies and said, 'As Episcopalians, we have a particular obligation to stand against Christians who seek to destroy our multicultural democracy and recast the United States as an idol to the cruel and distorted Christianity they advocate.'<sup>13</sup>

Brothers and sisters, when doctrine goes bad, so to do hearts, minds, churches, nations and eternal destinies. That is why this matters.

As I read the scriptures and stand on the shoulders of the Oxford Martyrs who were burnt at the stake for their belief in Christ alone, I personally could not make the journey to the See of Peter

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<sup>12</sup> Jude 3

<sup>13</sup> The Rev. Gay Clark Jennings, House of Deputies president

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made by our brother Nazir-Ali; but his words about the Anglican Church should serve as a warning to all of us in this diocese, in this nation, at such a time as this. If you capitulate over matters of apostolic continuity [matters pertaining to the gospel] if you capitulate over such things and yield to the world, the consequences are catastrophic! C.S. Lewis wrote, "Enemy-occupied territory---that is what this world is. Christianity is the story of how the rightful king has landed, you might say landed in disguise, and is calling us to take part in a great campaign of sabotage."<sup>14</sup>

Brothers and sisters, stay awake, keep your guard, *maintain your vigilance – stand firm in the faith.*

### 3. Act like men.

Before anyone takes offense and critiques Paul as a dry old misogynist, let us take a look at his third admonition. **Act like men.** Once again, the clear implication is that there is some situation that might be tempting the Christians of Corinth to be cowards. They may be threatened by some danger, challenged by some heavy responsibility, tempted to be cowardly. Paul uses the Greek word **andrizomai** and it is the only time it is used in the New Testament. It is a strong word. It is a powerful word. It is a word of command. Paul is writing to the Corinthian church here and they like us, are feeling the pressure of cultural identity. Paul exhorts this church to act like men, to have courage, not to be timid, or alarmed at enemies, but to be bold and brave. This is an exhortation not only for men, but also for women. **Andrizomai** – have courage! And there it was on the chapel wall in my early days of Christian formation. Act like men.

Courage is not something that regularly appears in the in the conversation and discipline of many North America Christians. With respect, being a Christian in North America today does not always require a whole lot of courage. But brothers and sisters, as the clouds around our nation begin to gather and the powers of darkness extend their influence, we the followers of Jesus Christ in this generation must ready ourselves to act, where necessary, with courage.

In 2017, the New York State Department of Financial Services mandated that employers cover abortions in their employee health insurance plans. Following the order, a diverse coalition of religious groups that includes our own Sisters of St. Mary, asked the New York state courts to protect them from this regulation that would force them to violate their deepest religious convictions about the sanctity of life. But the New York state courts refused. The Sisters and others with them have asked the U.S. Supreme Court to step in and protect the right of their ministries to teach and serve without being forced to fund abortions. That's courage! Mother Miriam, we praise God for your **andrizomai**.

Keep Mother Miriam and the Sisters in your prayers. I am thankful that Bishop Bill officiates at Holy Communion each Tuesday morning with the Sisters at their Greenwich, New York convent – by the way – aren't you thankful to God that Bishop Bill and Karen Love, courageous warriors for Christ and the gospel have become such a special part of the Anglican Diocese of the Living Word!

As Christians today, we need to ask ourselves profound questions about that remarkable point of intersection between faith and courage.

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<sup>14</sup> C.S. Lewis, Mere Christianity

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We see this convergence in the Old Testament. Moses had led the children of Israel through the wilderness for 40 years and in spite of the frequent complaints of the people who murmured against him, he persevered. But in Joshua chapter 1, Moses is dead and the leadership of the children of Israel fell to his young and comparatively inexperienced lieutenant named Joshua. He had heard the people complain against Moses, he knew how discontented they were, he himself had been one of the 12 scouts that had been sent on that reconnaissance operation of the land of Israel. And he had heard with his own ears the other scouts say, *No, we can't conquer these people. There are giants in the land. There are fortified cities in the land, we are not able to do it.* Joshua had heard all that, he knew how cowardly the people were, he knew their rebellious heart. How could he lead them into the promised land? And yet God said to him, ***Have I not commanded you? Be strong and courageous.***<sup>15</sup> Andrizomai - there it is again! Act like a man!

All over the world, Christians need great courage today. Courage to belong to what will increasingly be a minority movement. Although there are approximately 2.1 billion people nominally or actually Christian in the world, we as Christians, are religious minorities in at least 87 countries and in many of those countries, Christians are under pressure. Just last month I read that China has banned the name Christ . . . the Chinese government says the name of Jesus causes incitement. A pastor in Ireland who denounced Islam was prosecuted under the Communications Act after making his remarks when preaching in his church. Brothers and sisters, we need courage to refuse to be bullied into conformity to the crowd. We need courage to swim against the stream. Courage to resist the pressure to be politically correct. Courage to resist the pressure of wokeism. Courage to defend and proclaim the gospel of Christ crucified when it is increasingly unpopular in the church and courage to preach and declare this gospel once for all entrusted to the saints. The courage we need comes from Christ. He will sustain us.

*As we will sing in a moment:*

What is our hope in life and death? It is Christ alone, Christ alone!

What is our only confidence? Our souls to him belong!

Who holds our days within his hand?

What comes, apart from his command?

And what will keep us to the end? The love of Christ, in which we stand.<sup>16</sup>

A very important book on preaching was written in 1877 by Philips Brooks. Let me quote from him, *Courage is the indispensable requisite of any true Christian ministry. If you are afraid of men and are slave to their opinion, go and do something else.*

1 Corinthians 16, ***Be watchful, stand firm in the faith, act like men.***

#### 4. Be strong.

Is this Paul's exhortation to brawn and biceps? What is going on in this Corinthian church requiring the great apostle to sound a clarion call for strength? The Greek adverb Paul uses here means not so much to be strong, but to be strengthened. Here is an exhortation that recognizes our weakness and an acknowledgment that the resources we need to stand firm, to act like men will never be found in ourselves, they are in Christ alone! They are only in him.

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<sup>15</sup> Joshua 1:9

<sup>16</sup> Song by Keith & Kristyn Getty, Matt Boswell, and Matt Papa



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Paul writes to the Ephesians, ***For this reason I bow my knees before the Father... that according to the riches of his glory he may grant you to be strengthened with power through his Spirit in your inner being, so that Christ may dwell in your hearts through faith.***<sup>17</sup>

It was this reality and experience of inward strength that enabled Paul to write to the Philippians, ***I can do all things through him who strengthens me.***<sup>18</sup>

It is this strength in Christ which characterizes so much of the ministry in this Anglican Diocese of the Living Word.

On Palm Sunday, Brenda and I declared Hosanna to the Son of David at Resurrection Anglican Church in Clifton Park, New York. David and Cathy Haig serve this congregation that left almost everything temporal to plant a new congregation which meets for worship in the local town hall. In order to provide for his family and the ministry, David drives for Uber, sharing the gospel with his passengers before he returns home to prepare his preaching and serve the congregation. How does he do it? In the strength of Christ alone.

Our diocese is served by 117 ordained deacons and priests who are devoted to the mission and ministry to which Christ has called them. 21 of our 43 rectors or senior ministers in this diocese are bi-vocational (meaning they have a second and sometimes a third job). We have among us prison chaplains, hospital chaplains, college chaplains and military chaplains. The mission and ministry of this diocese is supported by amazing clergy spouses, many who are working full time in order to enable the ordained ministry of their spouse to be fulfilled. How is this all accomplished? In the strength of Christ alone.

Would you please stand and honor our faithful clergy and spouses who give so much of themselves to the glory of God alone.

Together with our dedicated lay people, ***Be watchful, stand firm in the faith, act like men, be strong.*** It is not your strength. It is never about you. It is always, only, ever about Him! *It is His strength, in the power of His spirit, in your inner being, in order that Christ may dwell in your heart through faith.*

Let us consider the final of Paul's exhortations – because without this, we are done, in fact, without this we are truly done. We can be watchful, we can stand firm, we can act like men, we can be strong, but without this final exhortation we are nothing... so tighten up your belts and listen up! Look back at our text.

#### 5. Let all that you do be done in love

Ordinarily, when you talk to leaders there is an emphasis is on drive, on ambition, on initiative, on innovative thinking, even if it is at the expense of others in order to get to the top. In Christian service, everything that is done is to be done in love and this once again is so counter intuitive in our self-absorbed society in North America. We still appear concerned to speak the loudest and talk the most. We are Americans! I know... but authentic Christian ministry is impossible without love.

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<sup>17</sup> Ephesians 3:14,16

<sup>18</sup> Philippians 4:13

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Love seeks the highest welfare of the people we are called to serve. Love seeks that welfare, love serves that welfare, love sacrifices for that welfare. And that seeking, serving, and sacrificing are three essential foundations of love. It was of course, to this same Corinthian Church that Paul wrote his great hymn of love in chapter 13, ***If I speak in the tongues of men and of angels, but have not love... I am nothing. I am a noisy gong or a clanging cymbal.*** That is what you are Christian if you are without love. American or not – you are nothing without love.

There was this fractiousness within the Christian Church in Corinth. And I sometimes wonder if we are not similarly fractured in the way we speak, respond, write, tweet and post. I am pleased for us to have conversations about the prayer book of 1662, 1928 or 2019. Debate about clergy underdressed in cassock and surplice or overdressed in alb and stole? To ash or not to ash on the first day of Lent. Holy Eucharist, Holy Communion, the Lord's Supper or Mass. Priest or Presbyter; Father or Reverend? Substitutionary atonement or penal substitutionary atonement? Have the conversations yes, but ***let all that you do be done in love.***<sup>19</sup> Let us not be naive, my friends, true love is neither easy nor automatic even to those who claim the same Lord and Savior.

You say to me, Bishop, we have got to fight hard for truth. I would say to you, fight unswervingly. The gospel is at stake! You say to me, Bishop, we have to love the least, the lost and the lonely. I would say to you, you love them with all your heart, love them as Christ loves them. But both of you take note: Paul seldom entreats love without adding a complementary responsibility to maintain the truth. And he seldom talks about defending the truth, without urging us to defend it in love and gentleness. Remember, love is patient, it is kind, it is not easily provoked.<sup>20</sup>

In this text before us today Paul writes, stand firm in the faith and let all you do be done in love. Love and truth are inseparable here. Paul magnifies this for us in Ephesians 4 verse 15, where he writes that we are to ***speak the truth in love. Speak the truth.... in love.*** Some of us are great champions of the truth and we have very sensitive noses that can smell heresy 26 miles away, our ears begin to twitch and our nerves begin to tighten and our muscles ripple as we roll up our sleeves and prepare for a fight. I can see some of you already getting excited! This is a zeal for the truth. These are the watchmen on the wall and we need them.

Then there are the great champions of love. Let us just love one another and it's all going to be ok, just so long as we love. Well, that's very 1960's knotted beige bandana around your head with a guitar by the camp fire singing kumbaya. Loving Jesus requires us to love his word. Those two things are inseparable. Listen to Jesus... If you keep my commandments, you will abide in my love. And more from our Lord's lips to our ears... You are my friends if you do what I command you. Loving him requires, from the lips of Jesus, an action, a doing of what He commands. And that's where the rubber hits the road.

Listen my friends, truth is hard if it is not softened by love and love is soft if it is not strengthened by truth.

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<sup>19</sup> 1 Corinthians 16:13, ESV

<sup>20</sup> 1 Corinthians 13

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I know I have been conditioned by almost 20 years of ministry with persecuted Christians who are being harassed, arrested, interrogated, fined, imprisoned and even killed because of their commitment to Jesus Christ and their desire to share or spread the faith. As a survivor of the 1950's Mau Mau crisis in Kenya, once put it, *"When they come for you at night and threaten to tie a sack over your head and drop you in the river, then you know whether Jesus Christ means everything to you or whether he means nothing at all."*

Love Him yes – with all your heart and keep his commandment, no matter what the cost.

Here then are five foundations of Christian ministry: Be watchful. In light of the cunning, unscrupulousness of our arch-enemy, be watchful. Stand firm in the faith against the pressures of false teaching in the church. Be courageous in the face of danger, discouragement and difficulty. Be strengthened in the grace that is in Christ Jesus and do everything you do in love.

Could you not be the Christian, could we not be the diocese that embraces not just the first of these exhortations, not just the final exhortation, but all five of them and model for the church what it truly means to *be watchful, to stand firm in the faith, to act like men, to be strong and to let all that we do be done in love.*

Ten years ago next month, a small group of us, representing 19 Anglican congregations, gathered at the former site of Bishop Seabury Anglican Church, then in Groton, Connecticut.

I called that event, 'catalyst'. That event was the catalyst for what is before you today. 43 congregations, 6 church plants, 117 clergy, hundreds of dedicated lay leaders, missions in Haiti and most recently in Ghana all committed to transforming North America and beyond with the love of God through the biblical, missionary and faithful mission through the Anglican Church.

At catalyst in 2012, I said this about our mission for Christ: We are not called to hold the fort, we are called to storm the heights! The Church is on a mission, it has a cause. The purpose of the church is to fulfill the Great Commission. We do not grow in Christ for our own sake, but for the sake of the cause!

For the sake of the cause!

The most enduring image of the Centennial Olympic games in Atlanta in 1996 was that of a four-foot, nine-inch, eighty-seven-pound gymnast named Kerri Strug being carried by her coach to the medal platform to receive her gold medal along with the rest of her team. What led up to this moment was drama at its highest.

The American women's gymnastic team held a thin lead over the Russians and the contest had come down to the last event, the vault. The first four women on the U.S. team did well, but then the fifth member of the team faulted her landing on both attempts. Because the team could only discard the lowest two scores, Kerri became the key to winning the event and because the vault was the last apparatus, the key to winning the gold medal.

On her first effort Kerri suffered a fall. The entire crowd grew silent, sensing the medal slipping away. But it was worse than a poor first try. Kerri had twisted her ankle, tearing two ligaments. She didn't know whether to go for it, but in the end, she said she just whispered a little prayer asking God to help her out.

### The Bishop's Pastoral Address

Missions Conference and Synod 2022 | Souderton, Pennsylvania

The Rt. Rev. Julian M. Dobbs L.Th, Th.M, D.D

Repeating “I will, I will” to herself, she charged down the runway, vaulted twisted through the air, and then landed on an ankle so badly sprained that it could only hold her upright for a second. But that second was long enough for her to guarantee the first Olympic gold medal ever won by an American women’s gymnastics team. She scored one of the highest scores of the meet.

When it became known what she had done and people saw that she had to be carried to the platform, even the men became misty-eyed. When asked why she did it, she expressed her commitment not just to the competition, but to the team. They were on a mission and she wanted to fulfill her part – for the sake of the cause – for the sake of the cause.

And so, ten years on in our journey, the team is stronger, the foundations are firmer, the vision is clearer, the trajectory is forward, we are on the sunrise side of the mountain and it is all for the sake of His cause!

I am more excited about the Church’s future than I have ever been. Today’s world has yet to see what the Church of Jesus Christ can really be and do. I am so proud and so humbled to be a bishop with you in this great cause.

For Christ alone, Christ alone!

Who holds our days within his hand?

What comes, apart from his command?

And what will keep us to the end? The love of Christ, in which we stand.<sup>21</sup>

So let us ***Be watchful, stand firm in the faith, act like men, be strong and let all that you do be done in love.***

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<sup>21</sup> Song by Keith & Kristyn Getty, Matt Boswell, and Matt Papa