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The Convocation of Episcopal Churches in Europe

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A PASTORAL LETTER TO THE PEOPLE OF THE CONVOCATION OF EPISCOPAL CHURCHES IN EUROPE

Dear All,

Last Monday, August 22, I received a phone call from the Rev. Carlye Hughes, the co-chair of the Committee to elect a Bishop of New York. She informed me that after due consideration, the committee wanted to invite me to stand for election for Bishop Coadjutor of New York. A coadjutor is a bishop elected to succeed the diocesan bishop when he or she resigns.

I replied that I needed time to consider this great honor; that I needed to talk with God and my wife, in that order. The Diocese of New York comprises the island of Manhattan, the Bronx and Staten Island, as well as the seven surrounding counties. With some 203 congregations, including the Cathedral of St. John the Divine, a diocesan and two assistant bishops, 550 priests and deacons canonically resident, their invitation was not only a great honor but gives me serious pause to consider!

I then spent the next day in prayer, and in conversation with my wife and daughter, as well as my mentors. It then seemed good to accept the nomination, and I have done so. The official announcement was released on Monday August 29 (see dioceseny.org). The presentation of the candidates to the diocese will take place on October 10-15, and the election is scheduled for October 29, the date of their next convention. Finally, the election of the Bishop coadjutor-elect of New York will be subject to the approval of the diocesan bishops and standing committees of the Episcopal Church, a process that will require several months, to complete sometime in 2012.

This election process is fairly quick, in fact, compared to other such elections. I recognize that the idea of such a short timeline naturally raises concerns in people's minds for the well-being of the Convocation. It has been almost ten years now since my consecration in Rome. I wish to say that these have been very good years for me and Melinda, and should the Diocese of New York choose someone else, I shall be very happy to continue to serve as your bishop-in-charge. Otherwise, if I were chosen Bishop Coadjutor of New York, I would work with the Presiding Bishop and the Council of Advice to plan an orderly transition in 2012, working closely with Convocation leaders to identify any areas that may need special attention during such a time. I note that Convocation parishes and missions seeking rectors/vicars should have all finalized their search processes by that time (except for the Cathedral). For the Cathedral, I am preparing to appoint an Interim Dean with very serious credentials...a seasoned leader who will be able to help steer them through 2012.

Being part of the election process in New York calls me to reflect on all our hard work together. Ten years ago, we were considering the Convocation's first ever mission plan, Mission 2000. Six years ago we decided on Mission 2006. Now, this labor of growing into a diocese is coming to fruition. We have engaged a deliberate process for mutual ministry, which is now consistently producing strong new leaders and much-needed programs. We now have many more resources for mission and ministry than we did ten years ago. There are some rough edges, of course, and there is still much work to do. But we have made great progress together in forging a jurisdiction that works to meet the needs of our congregations that they cannot meet for themselves.

This nomination is, therefore, is an affirmation not solely of my own ministry, but also of yours, all of you. Whatever the outcome of the election, I am very confident that the Convocation will continue to blossom. The future is bright for the Episcopal Church in Europe.

Toward that end, your Convention meeting in Florence next month will work on and approve a third strategic planning process for 2012. No matter what the future holds, the Convocation will be praying and dreaming together to discern God's will for the years to come.

I told Michael Vono and Bill Franklin when they were asked to stand for election for bishop, that if they accepted, they were agreeing to be part of a process that helps the church find the leaders it needs. This meant that if they accepted, whatever the outcome, they had already won. This is now how I feel. Please pray for Melinda and me, the Convocation, and the people of the Diocese of New York as we consider what God has in store for us all.

You know I always say, "the future belongs to God."

It does!

Yours in Christ,

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