

Dear beloved of the Diocese of Florida,

Grace and peace to you from God our Father and the Lord Jesus Christ! It was a great privilege to be with you throughout the Diocesan Pilgrimage and Meet and Greet, and I give thanks for the hard and faithful work of the Transition Committee and the many communities that welcomed us. I continue to be so grateful for the opportunity to discern with you and learn more deeply about the ministries and life of the Diocese of Florida. The breadth of the life of the Diocese is an inspiration and a true gift of grace. Thank you for your hospitality, and, even more so, thank you for your faithfulness to the gospel of God and the life of grace in Christ Jesus.

During the Meet and Greet, you may have heard me reference the 12th chapter of St. Paul's letter to the Romans: "Be devoted to one another in love. Honor one another above yourselves." This charge comes in the midst of Paul's teaching on the marks and habits of the followers of Jesus once gifted new life in Christ. Paul is seeking unity as the body of Christ that holds within it substantial diversity. Paul's ardent hope for healing and unity is anchored in his own transformative experience of the risen Jesus. This is the same hopefulness, and joy, that I experienced in you throughout our pilgrimage!

This same hope is evident in the ripples that radiate from the question posed by Jesus in the Gospel according to Matthew: "Who do you say that I am?" The hope in Peter's proclamation is straightforward and profound. In many ways, it is the question that gets to the heart of who we are and how we walk through the world. Who is Jesus to you? As I reflect on this question and your witness of Christ, an old hymn comes to mind: "Lord of all hopefulness, Lord of all joy, whose trust, ever child-like, no cares could destroy, be there at our waking, and give us, we pray, your bliss in our hearts, Lord, at the break of the day." In our knowing and trusting Jesus, we set the anchors of our hearts deep into the life-giving grace of God. Do not be anxious. Trust in the Lord. Truly, it is the break of a new day in the Diocese of Florida, and your journey of faithfulness sings of Jesus as the Lord of all hopefulness, the Lord of all grace.

Beloved, this is your witness to one another, the wider church, and the world: to know Christ and to make Christ known. You have a joy that springs from God's grace and a hope that is found in God's promises. Walk together, believing in a world that does not yet exist, proclaiming the healing grace and reconciling love of God. The Holy Spirit is alive in the Diocese of Florida as you walk into the next chapter of ministry together. I am excited to see your journey unfold.

A dear friend once told me that all things done in prayer will be blessed or redeemed. This is a posture grounded in the Holy Spirit, trusting in the movement and presence of God. God is with you. The Lord walks in your midst. God's presence is closer than the very air you breathe, closer than your own heartbeat. From you, the people of the Diocese of Florida, to the nominees, our families, and our parishes, we are bound together in love and covered in prayer. Therefore, as you gather, hold fast to what is good, rejoice in hope, and be devoted to one another in love. Carry the blessing and exhortation of St. Paul: "How beautiful are the feet of those who bring good news!" Beloved, abide with God, proclaim the hope you have in Jesus, and be beautiful!

Peace,

The Rev. M. Dorian Del Priore+