

A Special Letter to all "Friends of St. Peter's"

The Vicarage,
Roydon,
July 9th 1974

"The Great Synod of York, 1974"

I came home yesterday from this historic occasion - the meeting of the General Synod of the Church of England at which we repeated, in a new context, the opening Declaration of Magna Carta - "Ecclesia Anglicana libera sit" - "The Church of England shall be free" - free now to choose her own spiritual leaders, her Bishops, who, for over a hundred years, have been appointed by the Prime Minister of the day, with the help of a Civil Servant. By 270 votes to 70, the Synod passed this Resolution:

"That the General Synod affirms the principle that the decisive voice in the appointment of Diocesan Bishops should be that of the Church".

Ever since November 1960, when I put forward a motion for the reform of method of appointing bishops, by means of a committee of enquiry of members of the Houses of Clergy and Laity of the then Church Assembly, (it was carried by a large majority, and I was asked to serve on the committee, but it was blocked by higher sources, and never allowed to meet!), I have made this matter one of my chief concerns, because I am convinced that the health of the Church has suffered gravely from this scandal. I believe the motion which the York Synod passed is a great step forward, which will bring new life and health to the whole Church, and the effects felt in every parish, as the years go by.

By a happy coincidence, this General Synod at York also sent down, for consideration in the Dioceses, the possibility of instituting, for the whole Church of England, "A Service of Blessing a Child". This was a direct result of a Report entitled "Baptism, Thanksgiving and Blessing", produced by the Christian Doctrine Commission of the Church of England, who invited me to give evidence both on the doctrinal basis of Infant Blessing as against Infant Baptism, and to tell them what has been happening at St. Peter's in this respect.

These things, especially the first, may seem very remote to our daily lives, but I am sure you will agree that they have their importance, because for us Christians principles are of supreme concern: they are the only foundation worth building on! And I want to say how grateful I am for the loyal support you have given me in these and in more parochial matters. Also, without the decision your Church Council made on your behalf, to undertake the expenses of my work as Proctor, the voice of St. Peter's would never have been heard in the upper Councils of the Church! The latest instance of this was the sending out of a letter to all members of the General Synod, - Bishops, Clergy and Laity, which, I have no doubt whatever, had a significant effect on the great result to which I have referred. This little Church, re-built on its Saxon foundations by Earl Fitzwalter, who led the Barons to Runnymede for the signing of Magna Carta, has, by Divine permission, played a formative part in this new Charter of the Church's Freedom. Let us give thanks for the privilege which has been ours!

And now just a short personal note. I shall be 65 next year, the retiring age for the clergy. I have consulted with our Bishop, and he has agreed that I should vacate my office of vicar on June 30th next. As you will understand, this has been a big decision for us to make, and we have not made it lightly, but we are persuaded that it is right. The torch must be handed on! When the time comes, it will I know be a sad wrench for us, but at least that time is not quite yet! Also, this early decision means that the future of St. Peter's can be thought and prayed about at leisure, and I do ask you to let it find a constant place in your prayers, as it will in ours. We have had a very fruitful "partnership in the Gospel", and please God the future will be more fruitful still! Thank you once again, in the Name of our Lord, for your prayers, your friendship and your support in so many ways.

Yours in His Service,

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