

*“In all that you do, you are to nourish Christ’s people from the riches of his grace,
and strengthen them to glorify God in this life and in the life to come.”*

- from the Ordination of a Priest, the BCP

Dear Friends,

Last week in our EFM seminar group, the subject of just what it is that priests are supposed to be doing came up during our discussion. Everyone had slightly different takes on just what it should mean, and I did as well. When asked, I replied that I believe the chief work of a priest is to equip the saints (that is, those gathered in the weekly community of faith) for the work of the ministry, as Paul so eloquently states it in the letter to the Ephesians. My ministry is to see that *you* are prepared to go out into the world and be all that Christ desires you to be.

Everything else: the buildings and grounds, the finances, who is serving what at the coffee hour – all that is important to me, but in reality? They are important in so far as those things help drive us toward our goal of bringing the kingdom of God into this present realm. And when those things lead us *away* from that? Well, then it might be time to rethink those things. So when the Vestry meets to figure out the details of all we do and all we wish to do, my real job is to step back and try to see how each ministry, each word, each deed, and every dream fits into who we are as Christians and how we might be Christ’s hands and heart and voice to a world in need of transformation.

I have been giving this particular thought lately, as this March 24th marks the 30th anniversary of my ordination to the priesthood. Thirty is an important “marker” for priests because after thirty years of continuous, full-time parish ministry one is fully vested – and ready for retirement! Now for me, I will not be fully vested until May; it has to do with the unpaid weeks I had between my parishes in California and Oklahoma. No, I am not ready for retirement quite yet, but what it does mean is that anything else is the proverbial “icing on the cake”.

It also means I have been thinking much lately on this ministry that has been entrusted to me. How well have I done? What could I – or should I - have done differently? In the years still ahead of me, what might I wish to accomplish?

In my Desk Calendar for the week after I was ordained, I had written the following: *Plan for the acolyte meeting.....get the notice out for the liturgy meeting....buy food for Saturday’s brunch... work on the prayers of the people... plan for Wednesday’s Youth Mass, potluck and Youth Group meeting... attend Tuesday’s clergy luncheon... write thank you notes (for the ordination)... check on the cross for Good Friday... contact Hawaii about the Youth Mission Trip... find out about the next regional Confirmation.....*

Some of these things I had no recollection of at all. Some brought back fond memories. It also reminded me of how little has changed in the thirty years that I have been at this. Technology may change, politics may change, and society may change. But what it means to be a follower of Christ? And what it means to be a parish priest? Those possess that constancy that keep us anchored and focused on the path God has laid out before us. I believe may be ready for another thirty years!

Peace,

Mother Lisa+