

Cathedral's 200<sup>th</sup> Anniversary

November 17, 2024

Mark 13: 1-8

The Rt. Rev. Dr. Bonnie A. Perry

*I propose to show that we are called to be the soul of the city and the heartbeat of our diocese. This is a call and a challenge to embody Jesus of Nazareth's hope for our world, so that the people who hear this sermon, will understand that they have what they need to begin this work and that by continually attending to Christ's call the path will become clear before us.*

Come Holy Spirit and fill our hearts with hope and courage for the living of these days. In your Blessed Name we pray. Amen.

Good Morning!

*"As they came out of the temple, one of the disciples said to him, 'Look Teacher, what large stones and what large buildings.' Then Jesus said to him, 'Do you see these great buildings? Not one stone will be left here upon another; all will be thrown down.'...When you hear of wars and rumors of wars do not be alarmed; this must take place...this is just the beginning of the birth pangs." (Mark 13: 1-2,7,8)*

*The beginning of the birth pangs...*

This city has embodied the promise and the peril of our country. This city was the last stop before freedom on the Underground Railway of Hope. We know all about stones being cast down and buildings being razed. This city was an incubator for redlining and racism. Detroit has been both a container of hope and a receptacle of despair. The faith communities of St. Paul and later the Cathedral church of St. Paul have born witness, participated, and resisted the trials and the triumphs of this city, this city built on a river connecting the Great Lakes of the world.

This city. This Cathedral. This that is us.

Five years in, I am still new here. I have much to learn. But what I know, is that we matter. You matter. This place of God matters. We have here all we need to carry on the work of becoming the soul of our city and the heartbeat of our diocese.

You. God. Us. Me. We. All of us here and all who we are yet to meet outside our doors, together, with the Spirit, we have in our history, in our past, and in our midst, here and now, we hold the very building blocks of our transformation and Christ Jesus' hope for our world.

As I look into this community of faith, I see four places, four aspects of our history, historical genes if you will that are essential building blocks of our future DNA as we prepare to go forward into this next chapter, this next lifetime of our Cathedral.

When this iteration of the community of St. Paul's was being built, in 1908 when the cornerstone of this magnificent edifice was placed, the leaders of this community, chose Mary Chase Perry Stratton, founder of Pewabic Pottery to design, create and install our most amazing cathedral tile floor. As you all know, Pewabic pottery was a woman owned

business a rarity in 1903, a business that had only been in existence for some five or six years when the Cathedral commission was offered, some 12 years before our constitution was altered and women received the right to vote. This commission, for our Cathedral, was not only tile-making it was groundbreaking. From its cornerstone, this place has trusted women's creativity and leadership to be a part of our foundation. Let us continue to lean into this gift of respecting and entrusting all of God's people, respecting and entrusting leadership to all of God's people: male, female and fluid genders alike.

Secondly, "Since 1831, when St. Paul's purchased it's first organ this community has had a tradition of excellence in music." (Cathedral Church of St. Paul, website). The men and boys choir began in 1834, the girls and women's choir in 1917. (Again, the inclusion of women and girls when many Anglican churches only had men and boys choirs.) Past and present and no doubt in our future the stunning praise set to music in this place will continue to feed and nurture our parched and thirsty souls. Our program for young choristers, through the Cathedral Choir School of Metropolitan Detroit is unparalleled. And from the outside it looks like an awful lot of fun, free of charge, mixed with serious responsibility, intellectual challenge and spiritual devotion. These choristers', these young people, add to the life and energy, the width and range of our music. Every time I listen to our choir and choristers, young and old, offer the prayer you all say before processing into worship, my heart is touched. Thank you. Your voices fill me and feed me when we pray with music together. Going forward, this is my hope, this amazing music and even more.

In 1922, Dean Warren Rogers, stepped out, much to the consternation of some and transformation of many and began in partnership with WWJ to broadcast the services from here on the radio. After the microphones were installed, you can imagine what the naysayers had to offer. "Some said it was not in keeping with the dignity of the church, or it cheapened the service to have it broadcast so freely. Still others declared that it would make it much easier for people to remain away from church and contribute thereby to the growing moral and religious laxity." (Cathedral website archives)

"To which the dean replied, 'It is the duty to preach the Gospel unto every creature.'" He continued on, [he saw] "the radio as a means of reaching a large part of the unchurched population of America, by means of a broad and varied program that only a cathedral could provide to break down the prejudices of people toward the church." (Cathedral Website.) That year, the first year they began to broadcast from this sacred sanctuary there were more than 172 people confirmed at the Cathedral.

Friends, let us continue to lean into technology. I love the new flat screens in Barth Hall and the gallery. I wonder, what other technological advances might we embrace? Developments that no doubt some will say, cheapen us, as they did 100 years ago, but we know better now. I envision a few flat screens here in this sanctuary, maybe we could do close captioning of the service, or simultaneously translate into Spanish, during our services? We could have flatscreens here, just like they have at the National Cathedral, and at the Cathedral in Canterbury. We risked it before, its in our DNA now.

Lastly, in this vastly unsettled time in our country, I want to remind us of those days during the Detroit Uprisings when this place, when we became central to our city, offering food and essential supplies. We have a wonderful historical marker out front which tells a bit of the story. I called the Rev. Bill Roberts a priest of our diocese to give me something of an eyewitness account of that time.

He said it was amazing. Bishop Emrich, having done ordinations the Saturday before was on vacation in Vermont with very limited access to communications. Bishop Crowley was around. But it was on the second day of the uprising that Bill Logan Canon for Outreach on the Diocesan Staff got together with a Roman Catholic priest, Bill Cunningham and leaders from the Jewish Community and other protestant denominations and created the Interfaith Emergency Center to bring emergency supplies and food to people affected by the uprising.

Some of you will remember there were curfews and the grocery stores were burned out and closed so the only way people could get food was through the food that the Emergency Centers got into the city and then distributed to various congregations throughout the neighborhoods. Bill Roberts said he remembers he started on Monday morning here at the Cathedral and fell asleep on the phone Wednesday night talking to trucking company on the East Coast trying to talk them into bringing food here to our Cathedral, so we could get it to all the folks in need.

Bill said he remembers that he and the Dean of the Cathedral Leslie Warren were up on the roof of the Diocesan center, and Leslie Warren said, that it reminded him of Coventry Cathedral when it was being bombed. Just when he said that, an armed personnel carrier came out of the old police precinct and rotated it machine gun and pointed toward the roof. Bill and Leslie hit the deck at the same time.

Taking risks, creating partnerships, being a nexus for collaboration and transformation in times of crisis is in our DNA. In this time in our country, we are needed to be people who create safe havens, places of hope and care, offering what we have for the well-being of others. We've done it before and I long for us to be the people who continuously and audaciously live out our faith in tangible ways.

Looking for and welcoming all types of people into our leadership, reveling in our tradition of excellence in music and expanding our repertoire to continue nurturing our souls and touch the hearts of those who have yet to walk through our doors, seeking out new ways to use technology to expand our reach, and to be people who see a need and create the partnerships and use our resources to make a difference; this is what I long for in this community of faith.

Today as we give praise to God and celebrate our two centuries of amazing ministry, I deeply desire that we who are gathered here, know in our souls that we are called to risk and dream and dare to make a profound difference in our world. It is our call from God, it is our history, it is our DNA.

For such as a time as this are we called. There will be birth pangs, but we will not be alone.

Amen.