

**A reading for Morning Prayer services on May 6, 2018,  
at Christ Church, Spotsylvania.**

*The following is excerpted from a sermon given by then Assisting Bishop Ted Gulick at the 2011 Diocesan Convention. The topic was selected for today as our parish retreat is being held at Shrine Mont this weekend, and the diocese has designated today as Shrine Mont Camps Sunday.*

Come, Holy Spirit, come. Come as the light, reveal. Come as fire and burn. Come as the wind and calm. Convince, convict, convert us until we are wholly yours. Through Jesus Christ Our Lord. Amen.

“I did not call you servants. Servants do not know what the master is doing. I have called you friends because I have made known to you everything I have been told by my father.” (John 15:15)

Her name was Mrs. Loving – great name – and I remember her table laden with ham and fried chicken and homemade rolls and vegetables from her abundant garden. She was a member – I bet she was the matriarch – of Good Shepherd of the Hills in Boonesville, Virginia. And every day she fed our youth mission team from St. Stephen’s, Catlett. The year was 1963 or 1964. Up the mountain, further up the hill, were some amazing women, all dressed in black. I found them very exotic. They were deaconesses who cared for our children in this diocese, some victims of the drug thalidomide, little boys and girls without limbs who would locomote on flat stretchers with little wheels on them.... And those ordered women dignified them on that mountain in this diocese. They treated them as God’s children who bore God’s image.

David Wayland was the young, 20-something priest. He was in love with Jenny, and they were courting in front of the teenage mission team. All of us were there to do a vacation Bible School for the children in that mountain missionary outpost. And in the course of that summer I learned several things: Christian faith was about being the hands and the heart of Jesus Christ. Ministry like David Wayland’s and those deaconesses’ involved that mystery where devoted service is also a kind of perfected freedom, as the Prayer Book says, by the way...

Like the disciples gathered around Jesus, I began that summer to learn the “inside scoop” that Jesus shared with his friends then and with his friends today. I think that summer that I began to learn what the Father was up to. I began to get a “God’s-eye-view” of this hurting world that God still trusts us with.

So what is this God’s eye-view? I know you know the story... (about the) baby boy, Moses, who was allowed to grow up, flee to the desert and in front of a bush, a bush burning with missionary flames, God let Moses in on the inside scoop: “I have seen the affliction of my people in Egypt, I have heard their cries on behalf of their taskmasters, I know their sufferings and I am coming down. I am moving into this. And I am moving into this, Moses, through your cooperation with me, your co-mission with me.”

About 1,300 years later, this seeing, this hearing, this knowing and this coming-down love became fleshed out in Jesus of Nazareth. He saw the blind beggar and the beggar began to see. He heard a Roman centurion’s cry that someone would help his servant, and the servant was healed. He knew that Martha and Mary were in pain at their brother’s death and he came down and moved into this hurting and aching and broken and yet ever-so-loved world. And on the cross in a spectacle of suffering love, he took on death, defeated it, released his spirit and empowered his friends to live in their lives in these terms. To see and to hear and to know and to move into situations where presence and compassion transforms and heals.

Those deaconesses on that mountain in this diocese were seeing as God saw. They were hearing their children’s cries as God did. They knew those children’s sufferings, and they moved into their lives and in doing so they taught a 16-year-old boy something of God.

When David committed himself to mountain missions, he was seeing and hearing and knowing and moving in, and he taught me something of God’s inner life, of God’s missional love, and what a life of cooperation with the missional heart of God just might look like. I found it irresistible. Later in my life I saw the same lived reality with Nellie Moomaw, who made my birthday cake every summer from 1965 to 1970. She and Wilmer were mother and father and God to all of us who came to Shrine Mont to learn to see as God sees, to learn to hear as God hears, to know as God knows and to move into the world as God moves. They poured out their lives into our lives.

And if there is one point I want all of you to know today and to please remember, only one thing I want you to remember from his sermon, and that's this: it takes a diocese to raise up a missional Christian, then and now. It takes a diocese, gathered under an evangelical shepherd like our bishop, who sees as God sees and hears as God hears and knows as God knows and moves in and inspires us to do so. It takes a diocese.

The mountain mission tradition of this diocese is wonderful, but not more wonderful than what's going on in Santa Maria (in Arlington) or what's going on in St. Gabriel's in Leesburg, meeting in a middle school (these are our Spanish speaking parishes). St. George's (Camp) in 1968 was great, but certainly not greater than the art, music and drama camps that will happen this summer (at Shrine Mont).

You see, I think we come to (Diocesan) Council in order to become catholic. To experience God's church larger than our own local expression. To hear how God's movement into this world might just happen without our humble cooperation and to realize that we need each other's vision, each other's perspective and experience. And we need especially each others' costly yet freeing obedience to Jesus Christ, Lord, God and wonder of wonders, friend, the friend who is always offering us the inside scoop as long as we are willing to surrender our limited vision.

I owe a tremendous debt to the Diocese of Virginia. What faith I have in me is pure gift from missional folks who knew the inside scoop and told it to me. What pure joy to live that faith now with you again today in this holy now! Amen.