

Linus, Palm Sunday, 2019

Dear Ones,

Hélène and I write to you one more time to wish you all a huge Thank You!

Last weekend showed the world just who you are. The Ordination and Consecration of Bishop Mark was a spectacular liturgy. Dean Lucinda, the Vestry, and a cast of thousands (well, almost) undertook the work of making it all happen, and it was superb. The preacher was excellent. The choir was glorious, as always. The new Bishop took charge at the Eucharist, looking and sounding very much like he belongs behind what is now his altar. And Archdeacon Walter propped me up when necessary, as he has since February 1, 2017...

The reception, with food from all over the Convocation's six countries, served with such flair, was one of those unforgettable moments that we have shared so often around food and drink.

When I was consecrated in November 2001, it took place in Rome because the then-Presiding Bishop did not seem to think it important to consecrate the new bishop in the Cathedral. The Convocation was not taken very seriously then, you see. You have erased any last doubts about who and what you are: a missionary enterprise in Europe undertaking your share of God's mission with serious intent and real results. All the bishops and the archbishop assembled, including our Presiding Bishop, as well as ecumenical guests, were deeply impressed.

Besides that very emotional moment when I fulfilled my almost 18-year goal to deliver the Convocation crozier into the hands of the second elected Bishop in charge, hearing the hymn that Bishop Jeffery and I wrote in 2006 sung with such assurance — and with a new descant by Stefano Vasselli, the musician at St. Paul's, Rome — was a powerful moment for me and Hélène. And for +Jeffery and Anne as well!

As for Friday night, what a party! As on the morrow, the food was amazing, the drink delightful, the servers numerous, the Cathedral nave beautiful... Hélène and I were deeply honored with all your gifts. Bishop Mark surprised and delighted me with his presentation of a first edition of Gertrude Stein! Felicity Handford and Anne Swardson embarrassed us with their encomia. And what can we say about the Whalon Fund for the Creative Arts? Thanks to Christoph Herpel for the lovely plaque, which will hang on our wall permanently. And we feel great gratitude to the Board of Foreign Parishes, all of whom were in attendance. But in particular, thank you, each of you, who contributed to help start the Fund, so that our present congregations — and all the ones to come — can find help to adorn the Word and Sacraments with beauty. (And a special thanks to Felicity, for so much...)

Hélène and I will never forget.

(Please feel free to keep contributing, however!)

Over the past weeks, we were showered with gifts. The Cathedral threw a champagne reception for us on my last visitation, March 3 (not to mention Dumond Chavanne's ordination to the diaconate). All Saints, Waterloo, provided us with a mountain of Belgian cheeses, as well as other local delicacies, which are delicious but have done our waistlines no good. Neither will the magnum of champagne from Saint-Esprit, Mons, delivered with a huge card, that we shall drink to celebrate the sale of our home, hopefully soon. From Christ-the-King, Frankfurt, came another care package, filled with delicious items from Carol Hunter's kitchen, from the region, and of course, a bag of seven different herbs to make Grünesauce! So we will diet another day! Many thanks to Monica Müller-Römer. And St. Paul's, Rome, honored us with a Peter Rockwell bronze of their patron saint's Damascus Road experience. And our stein with the Munich skyline will help quaff all that beer... And so on.

Most of all, wherever we have gone over the past year, you have showed us your love and affection, which is of course the gift that truly lasts: “Love never ends,” as the Apostle wrote.

Finally, I need to thank three special people who have helped me over the years in the office: Laurence Moachon (her wonderful Magazine Anglican!); Vicky Millet; and of course, Sophie Plé. No one is ever better than their staff, right, Walter?

Hélène and I send you all our love in Jesus Christ. From afar we shall be watching and praying for you and Bishop Mark and Judy, as the adventure of the Episcopal Church in Europe continues, loving and serving God “as faithful witnesses of Christ our Lord”.

To the Holy Trinity be the glory.

Yours ever,

Pierre & Hélène Whalon