

## The Call of Bishop

Kevin G. Thew Forrester

I am aware that being elected as Bishop in Northern Michigan means that I am called forth as a Bishop for the Church universal. I have taken quite seriously my Priestly call to gather the parish community around the altar of Christ to celebrate the sacraments of the Church. I also now receive with humility the call to the Episcopacy and the duty of oversight, as I am entrusted with the sacred responsibility “to guard the faith, unity and discipline of the Church.”

I realize that I am on a journey within a new order and there is so much to learn about conserving the sacred heritage of our tradition within a world where change for the mere sake of change often carries the day. The “wonderful and sacred mystery” of the Church lies greatly in its sacramental capacity to hold in trust our Catholic tradition in all of its wisdom. I also acknowledge that this same Catholicity requires of me a collegiality in all that I do in the name of the Church.

It is without hesitancy that I can lead my diocese in confessing faith in the one God, in Jesus, our Lord and Savior, and in the Holy Spirit, “the Lord, the giver of Life.”

## Our Lives in Christ Jesus

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Many years ago the theologian Karl Rahner, SJ, wrote that “Christology is the end and beginning of anthropology.” What he meant by that, I believe, is that to be truly human is know that Christ is the source of our life, our love, our hope. We are created in Christ, we live in Christ, we return to Christ.

My life begins and ends in Christ. Jesus of Nazareth incarnates in full the Christ. The gospels reveal to us the holy way of Transfiguration as the very path of our own discipleship. Lent itself is a season reminding us that the very purpose of life is to empty ourselves of everything but Christ, following in the footsteps of Jesus, and thereby tasting the grace of salvation. Jesus, the Transfigured One, is our Savior, because he is the Life-Giver. Jesus is the font of life revealing to us the eternal forgiveness of the Father, breathed into us in creation and baptism. Jesus incarnates and reveals that the path of salvation is the path of oneness with God in the Spirit. Jesus offers salvation because he embodies God’s life, even to his death on the cross where he can pray with a peace that passes all understanding, “into Your hands I commend my spirit.” We are not faced with a choice between salvation and life. To live truly can only mean to live in Christ and to taste God’s saving presence therein.

Because Jesus receives everything and gratefully returns everything – his heart, his soul, his mind, his strength – he is empty of everything except the Presence of God. This is a Christology of utter *kenosis*. Jesus in his Transfiguration is fully revealed as he always is – the Christ, empty of everything but the Spirit. We, as disciples, are called to the same life of transfiguration, so that through and through, in the end, it is only Christ who lives in us and we are dead to all else. This transfiguration, I believe, is our baptismal life: “As many of you as were baptized into Christ have clothed yourselves with Christ. There is no longer Jew or Greek, there is no longer slave or free, there is no longer male and female; for all of you are *one* in Christ Jesus.” In the end, we come face-to-face with God and know that it is no longer “I,” but God who lives in me holding us forever as one-in-Christ, Life-giving salvation.