

“Intercession as Remembering”

In returning to the Church of the Holy Communion, I was pleased to get reacquainted with the late Si Hill, a beloved minister and deacon here for most of his adult life. I have fond teen-age memories of Dr. Hill — preaching, teaching and leading worship. I recall his humor and his strong, faithful presence.

Over the past decade I have also been blessed as a priest to work side by side with deacons, sharing with them the ministries of worship and pastoral care. In the Episcopal church a deacon has a primary ministry of serving those in need, assisting bishops and priests in proclaiming the Gospel and administering the sacraments. Simply put, deacons remind us of the importance of bringing the needs of the world to the church.

There is no greater honor in this world than to go before God in prayer with those in need on our hearts. It is an honor often given to a deacon, when she or he leads the Prayers of the People in celebrations of the Holy Eucharist. Since we currently have no deacon serving at Holy Communion, lay persons are empowered to lead our prayers, although we all share in the responsibility of praying for one another.

As I reflected on how we might learn together what it means to become more fully a community of intercession and prayer, I thought of Ormonde Plater. He is a man well-known in the Episcopal Church as a deacon's deacon. A liturgical scholar and former president of the North American Association for the diaconate, Plater has served as a deacon at St. Anna's Episcopal Church in New Orleans for over two decades.

This is some of what he says about the importance of the Prayers of the People in his book *Intercession: A Theological and Practical Guide*:

“All the various meanings of intercession come together in the activity of remembering. We tend to think of remembering as a mental excursion into the past: one ‘remembers’ the Christmas of one’s childhood. Its theological meaning, expressed by the Greek term *anamnesis*, refers to breaking out of the limitations of time and space.

“Christians celebrate the Eucharist because Christ commanded, ‘do this for the remembrance (*anamnesis*) of me.’” By remembering the mighty acts of God in and through Christ, Christians experience the presence of Christ. Time and space vanish as we find Christ in our midst.

“God remembers. In the Eucharist...we ask God to remember the church and various persons, and we pray for our inclusion with all who have gone before. Remembering means not forgetting (*an-amnesia*); it makes us able to have a past. Having a past means having a present and a future, having a history. By remembering us, God gives us a past and a future, a history” (pp. 9-10).

My friends, God calls to be a community of remembering. Let us remember to bring our prayer needs and requests to this our parish church family – in writing, by telephone, over the internet or by offering them in worship. Let us love one another by praying for one another – privately and publically, silently or aloud — as often as we can remember. And let us give thanks to our everloving God, who always remembers and who never forgets us.

The Rev. Tom Momberg