
HOLY CROSS DAY - ORDINATION OF LISA WOJNA AND JORDAN GIGGEY - 14 SEPTEMBER 2023

Lisa and Jordan, I am so excited we have arrived at this night of your ordination to the priesthood, and to the diaconate. On the one hand, this evening is the end of a long journey for both of you. This has been a long time coming for both of you, and this is an evening of celebration and joy. On the other hand, this evening is only the beginning, the beginning of a journey in which you are giving yourselves to Jesus Christ to be workers in the vineyard of the kingdom, to be ambassadors of reconciliation, to be proclaimers of the Gospel, to be living icons of the mercy and love of God. Thank you for answering this call of Christ. I am excited to work with both of you in the years to come, and to see how Jesus uses you to bring hope and healing to your communities and the people in them.

The ordained calling is a challenging path, and one of the gifts I pray will be a blessing for you in the years to come is this Feast of the Holy Cross. For many of us who have been doing this for a while, our ordination feast day becomes very dear to us. The feast takes on special significance as the years go by and we annually remember the day of ordination. You are being ordained on the feast day of the Holy Cross, and every year you will have the opportunity to remember and meditate on your calling. This feast day is particularly profound because at the heart of it is the cross of Jesus Christ, the great sign of God's love for the world where Christ died for the sins of the world and reconciled the world to God.

Unfortunately, this day we call Holy Cross Day has an admittedly awkward history. The story goes back to the year 326 after the Roman emperor Constantine issued a proclamation tolerating Christianity in the Roman Empire. Before that, the faith had been persecuted. Constantine's mother was named Helena and she became a Christian at this time at the age of 63. Like many of us, she had a burning desire to see the Holy Land, the places where Jesus lived and preached and healed. At the time, there was no clear road map to these places. Helena is the one who created the map. But most famously she claimed she found the actual cross of Jesus Christ on which he died. This is extremely doubtful of course, but the feast day remains to remind us of the centrality of the cross to the Christian faith.

Paul writes in his letter to the Corinthians "we proclaim Christ crucified." This is our Gospel. Paul reminds us in this reading that there are many people who would ask why. Why put at the heart of our faith a person who was humiliated, laughed at, scorned, beaten and degraded? The recipient of the

brutality of humanity. Why not the great leader who conquers our enemies, the great leader who is smarter than everyone else, or inspires everyone? Why the broken Christ on the cross? The simple answer is love, but more specifically, love in a broken world. Love in a broken world is the wisdom and challenge of the cross because this is the kind of love that heals the human heart. This is the love that reconciles.

Lisa and Jordan, as you live out your vocation, this day will remind you that ministry is cruciform. And I don't mean this negatively. The cross reminds us of what is so good and amazing about the God we worship and what is life-giving about the ministry that we do. And you need to hold onto that. The cross shows us the heart of God, God's deepest character. It is love for a broken world. Love is about deep spiritual connection, about belonging, about being personally valued.

The whole Christian Gospel is about God wanting to share life together with us, about belonging to one another. But it is not just a story of living life in God in heaven where everything is perfect, but right here, right now in our broken, hurting, violent, destructive world. The cross is the story of God wanting to heal the world through love. The cross is what love looks like in a broken world. Love in a broken world is cross-shaped because love to broken people is hard, it is sacrificial. But it is also healing.

To see Christ on the cross is to say that God's love does not only shine in perfect places to perfect people. God's love goes to the darkest corners to bring hope and healing and goodness and mercy. God is always the shepherd going to the margins. We go to the cross because it shows us that we don't have to hide from God in our failures, and shame, and sin. Whatever we hide from other people, we don't have to hide from God because God is already there. God knows inside God's own heart your pain... and has compassion.

It has been well said that there has always been a cross in the heart of God long before the cross of Calvary was constructed and remained in the heart of God long after the cross was taken down. God's love for us is eternal.

Now I know you will do great ministry. I am ordaining you because I have great confidence in you. But I also know you will struggle. It is part of life. There will be seasons of slogging through. Please remember in the cross that you are not alone. Bishop Kallistos Ware puts it like this:

This is the meaning of Jesus our Saviour. He is the one who walks always beside us when we are at the extremity of our strength, who is with us in the wilderness of ice or the furnace of fire. To each of us, at the time of our

greatest loneliness or trial, this work is said: you are not alone. You have a companion.

TO DO MINISTRY, YOU NEED TO HOLD ON TO THIS TRUTH THAT YOU ARE LOVED AND MADE WHOLE IN CHRIST. THERE IS NO OTHER WAY. RETURN TO THIS TRUTH AGAIN AND AGAIN AND AGAIN. YOU ARE BELOVED CHILDREN OF GOD.

The cross is also about ministry, for we are about love in a broken world. You are ministering to human beings. And human beings are amazing. People love and give and write music and invent amazing things; they will surprise you with their insight and depth of commitment. Communities are amazing. I love people. But people also get sick, lose their temper, grieve, make bad decisions, get frustrated, lose their jobs, don't follow through, disappoint you, do terrible things, hurt themselves, hurt others. And you will be called to love them, and it will hurt. It will be cross-shaped because love to broken people is hard; it is sacrificial. But you also have to remember that you don't save people. That is Jesus' job.

The cross also reminds you that the church is broken. We are coming out of a hard history where we know well that our church has not lived into the values of the Kingdom of God. We have run residential schools, we have denied the LGBTQ2+ community full inclusion, and we have often in history been a church of the wealthy and powerful; I could go on.

And so, we also remember the truth that the cross leads to resurrection; today we are in a profound and exciting time of reformation, and we see glimpses of God transforming our beloved church. Today at the back of the cathedral we have just such a sign, installed yesterday. This beautiful stained glass, designed by artist Brenda Malkinson in consultation with the Ven. Travis Enright and Indigenous elders. It is a swirling medicine wheel with the four quadrants representing medicines of this land: rat root, sage, sweetgrass and cedar. It shows that the church can be of this land and of this place, with the medicines of this land and prints of the animals of this land. A beautiful icon of renewal.

Jordan and Lisa, you are part of this renewal work of God, called to be ministers. May the Lord bless you richly as you take up this mantle.