

A Non-Network Church in the Diocese of Albany and the Episcopal Church

The Most Reverend Katharine Jefferts Schori, Presiding Bishop and Primate

St. George's Kalendar

November 2006

“Katharine, receive this pastoral staff, the symbol of your authority as Presiding Bishop, Primate and Chief Pastor of the Episcopal Church, and lead us as we walk in the way of Christ. May Christ the good shepherd sustain you as you carry it in his name.”



Welcome

**The Most Reverend Katharine Jefferts Schori,
Presiding Bishop, Primate of the Episcopal Church USA,
The Episcopal Diocese of Albany and St. George's Episcopal Church!**

A sermon by The Most Reverend Katharine Jefferts Schori, 26th Presiding Bishop of the Episcopal Church on the occasion of her investiture at Washington National Cathedral November 4, 2006.

Where is home for you? How would you define your home? A friend in Nevada said to me just before I left that he had thought I would only leave Nevada to go home, and in his mind, that meant Oregon. But in the six years I spent there, Nevada became home. The state song is even called, “Home means Nevada.” And for a place filled with folk who have come from elsewhere, that is quite remarkable—all sorts and conditions of rootless people trying to grow new roots in the desert.

So where is home for you? Des Moines or Anchorage or Taipei or San Salvador or Port au Prince?

What makes it home? Familiar landscape, a quality of life, or the presence of particular people?

HODOS

Some people who engage this journey we call Christianity discover that home is found on the road, whether literally the restless travel that occupies some of us, or the *Hodos* that is “The Way” of following the one we call the Christ. The home we ultimately seek is found in relationship with creator, with redeemer, with spirit. When Augustine says “our hearts are restless until they find their rest in thee, O Lord” he means that our natural home is in God.



The great journey stories of the Hebrew Bible begin with leaving our home in Eden, they tell of wandering for a very long time in search of a new home in the land of promise, and they tell later of returning home from exile. And eventually Israel begins to realize that they are meant to build a home that will draw all the nations to Mount Zion. Isaiah’s great vision of a thanksgiving feast on a mountain, to which the whole world is invited, is part of that initial discovery of a universal home-building mission, meant for all. Jesus’ inauguration and incarnation of the heavenly banquet is about a home that does not depend on place, but on community gathered in the conscious presence of God.



In “Death of the Hired Man,” Robert Frost said that “home is the place where, when you go there, they have to take you in.” We all ache for a community that will take us in, with all our warts and quirks and petty meannesses—and yet they still celebrate when they see us coming! That vision of homegoing and homecoming that underlies our deepest spiritual yearnings is also the job assignment each one of us gets in baptism—go home, and while you’re at it, help to build a home for everyone else on earth. For none of us can truly find our rest in God until all of our brothers and sisters have also been welcomed home like the prodigal.

PEACE!

There’s a wonderful Hebrew word for that vision and work—*shalom*. It doesn’t just mean the sort of peace that comes when we’re no longer at war. It’s that rich and multihued vision of a world where no one goes hungry because everyone is invited to a seat at the groaning board, it’s a vision of a world where no one is sick or in prison because all sorts of disease have been healed, it’s a vision of a world where every human being has the capacity to use every good gift that God has given, it is a vision of a world where no one enjoys abundance at the expense of another, it’s a vision of a world where all enjoy Sabbath rest in the conscious presence of God. *Shalom* means that all human beings live together as siblings, at peace with one another and with God, and in right relationship with all of the rest of creation. It is that vision of the lion lying down with the lamb and the small child playing over the den of the adder, where the specter of death no longer holds sway. It is that vision to which Jesus points when he says, “today this scripture has been fulfilled in your hearing.” To say “*shalom*” is to know our own place and to invite and affirm the place of all of the rest of creation, once more at home in God.



You and I have been invited into that ministry of global peace-making that makes a place and affirms a welcome for all of God's creatures. But more than welcome, that ministry invites all to feast until they are filled with God's abundance. God has spoken that dream in our hearts—through the prophets, through the patriarchs and the mystics, in human flesh in Jesus, and in each one of us at baptism. All are welcome, all are fed, all are satisfied, all are healed of the wounds and lessenings that are part of the not-yet-ness of creation.

THE JOURNEY

That homecoming of *shalom* is both destination and journey. We cannot embark on the journey without some vision of where we are going, even though we may not reach it this side of the grave. We are really charged with seeing everyplace and all places as home, and living in a way that makes that true for every other creature on the planet. None of us can be fully at home, at rest, enjoying *shalom*, unless all the world is as well. *shalom* is the fruit of living that dream. We live in a day where there is a concrete possibility of making that dream reality for the most destitute, forgotten, and ignored of our fellow travelers—for the castaways, for those in peril or just barely afloat on life's restless sea.



This church has said that our larger vision will be framed and shaped in the coming years by the vision of *shalom* embedded in the Millennium Development Goals—a world where the hungry are fed, the ill are healed, the young educated, women and men treated equally, and where all have access to clean water and adequate sanitation, basic health care, and the promise of development that does not endanger the rest of creation. That vision of abundant life is achievable in our own day, but only with the passionate commitment of each and every one of us. It is God's vision of homecoming for all humanity.

HOMECOMING!

The ability of any of us to enjoy *shalom* depends on the health of our neighbors. If some do not have the opportunity for health or wholeness, then none of us can enjoy true and perfect holiness. The writer of Ephesians implores us to maintain the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace—to be at one in God's *shalom*. That is our baptismal task and hope, and unless each of the members of the body enjoys *shalom* we shall not live as one. That dream of God, that word of God spoken in each one of us at baptism also speaks hope of its realization.

HEALING AND WHOLENESS

The health of our neighbors, in its broadest understanding, is the mission that God has given us. We cannot love God if we fail to love our neighbors into a more whole and holy state of life. If some in this church feel wounded by recent decisions, then our salvation, our health as a body is at some hazard, and it becomes the duty of all of us to seek healing and wholeness. As long as children live exposed on the streets, while seniors go without food to pay for life-sustaining drugs, wherever peoples are sickened by industrial waste, the body suffers, and none of us can say we have finally come home.

HOPE

What keeps us from the tireless search for that vision of *shalom*? There are probably only two answers, and they are connected—apathy and fear. One is the unwillingness to acknowledge the pain of other people, the other is an unwillingness to acknowledge that pain with enough courage to act. The cure for each is a deep and abiding hope. If God in Jesus has made captivity captive, has taken fear hostage, it is for the liberation and flourishing of hope. Augustine said that as Christians, we are prisoners of hope—a ridiculously assertive hope, a hope that unflinchingly assails the doors of heaven, a hope that will not cease until that dream of God has swallowed up death forever, a hope that has the audacity to join Jesus in saying, “today this scripture has been fulfilled in your hearing.”

And how shall that scripture be fulfilled in our hearing? In the will to make peace with one who disdains our theological position—for his has merit, too, as the fruit of faithfulness. In the courage to challenge our legislators to make poverty history, to fund AIDS work in Africa, and the distribution of anti-malarial mosquito nets, and primary schools where all children are welcomed. In the will to look within our own hearts and confront the shadows that darken the dream that God has planted there.

That scripture is fulfilled each time we reach beyond our narrow self-interest to call another home.

That scripture is fulfilled in ways both small and large, in acts of individuals and of nations, whenever we seek the good of the other, for our own good and final homecoming is wrapped up in that.

God has spoken that dream in us, let us rejoice! Let us join the raucous throngs in creation, the sea creatures and the geological features who leap for joy at the vision of all creation restored, restored to proper relationship, to all creation come home at last. May that scripture be fulfilled in our hearing and in our doing.

Shalom, chaverim, shalom, my friends, shalom.

[Congregation responded: *Shalom*]



CONSIDER THIS ABOUT SHARING

If we give what's leftover, the Church neither feeds us spiritually, or anyone else.

If we give "dues," the church will be not more than a "club" to us.

If sentimental preservation of the past is our reason, then the church will be like a museum.

If we give out of obligation, we will always resent what we have to do.

BUT...

If we give out of compassion for those whose needs are greater than ours, our needs will seem so much smaller.

If we are thankful, the church will reflect the measure of our gratitude.

If love leads us to selfless giving, the church will become the place where we discover the joy of Christ's presence.



St. Paul summed up the basic principles of Christian Stewardship when he wrote at Corinth: "I seek not yours, but you!" (2 Cor 12:14) Jesus gave a similar interpretation of it when he said: "Seek ye first the Kingdom of God and its righteousness, and all these other things shall be added unto you." (Mt 6:33) Both Jesus and Paul were appealing for a total dedication to the cause of the Kingdom.

Don't eat alone this Thanksgiving!

**Join Us! The St. George's Family
Where No One Is A Stranger**

Thursday, November 23, 2006

10:00 a.m.

Worship in the Lady Chapel

10:30 a.m.

Festive Thanksgiving Brunch

Call 374-3163 and let us know you are coming





Needed for the Holiday Parade Float

Parade Date: Friday, November 24, 2006

**Green Paint
Bed Sheets
Imitation Flowers**

Please bring to the Parish Hall or Parish Office, **ASAP!**

Schenectady's 37th Annual Holiday Parade

This year's theme "Golden Years of Hollywood"

Each year the parade can be seen on TV Channel 16 during the month of December

