

Episcopal Charities Tribute Dinner

Cathedral of St. John the Divine

Tuesday, November 29, 2011

Bishop Herbert A. Donovan's Remarks

Thank you, Bishop Sisk and Karen. Thank you especially, Bishop, for the wonderful friendship that's been mine and yours. And thanks too, for my fellowship with the other bishops of New York: Your two predecessors, Paul Moore and Richard Grein; Assistant Bishop Don Taylor; Suffragan Bishop Catherine Roskam (Dear Cathy, we will miss you so much as you head for retirement in a few weeks); Drew Smith (who's come to us from Connecticut); and Andrew Dietsche (bless your heart), our Bishop Elect.

Thank you, Episcopal Charities and thank you Chair Doug Mercer for the good friendship that we've had. Thank you, too, to Episcopal Charities' former Executive Director David Shover. (You're out there somewhere, I think.) And thanks to the present Executive Director Mary Beth Sasso, and her associate, Sam Smith. It's been a wonderful relationship with you—it's been wonderful to know your work.

I think about words that John R. Mott, the great ecumenist, sent to a conference that he could not attend because he was well into his nineties and was dying. They asked him for a word: "What would should you say, Dr. Mott?" And he said to them, "Tell them to go forward. The best years lie ahead." That's my word for Episcopal Charities on this night.

Mary's and my New York heritage is something that we've loved. I am a New Yorker for 18 years now. We warmed up living next door in Montclair for ten years. We came to New York as often as we could. Then we were in Arkansas for ten years. A phone call came in late fall, 1992. The voice on the other end said, "This is Dan Matthews. I am the Rector of Trinity Church Wall Street." As if I didn't know it! And your words, Dan, as best I remember, were, "I've got a crazy idea." The crazy idea was that we would leave Arkansas and come to New York, and I would be the Vicar at Trinity. It was a great four years of work, with a staff and parish members we still love and see, as we have tonight.

And then, into retirement, with all kinds of interesting things to do at the General Seminary, College for Bishops and so on. But Dan decided that I'd flunked vicarship, so after five years or six years of retirement, he called me back so I could do it some more. I was back for one more year, with the privilege of seeing Dan into retirement, which he did so beautifully, and

then welcoming a new Rector and a new Vicar.

Another New York experience was centered at this place, with the search committee for a new Dean. Jim Bacon is out there somewhere, and Mary Jane Brach. You haven't served on a committee until you've served with those two—never a dull moment! When James Kowalski came onto the job, he looked at me one day as he talked to some parishioners and said, "If I don't do a very good job here, blame him. But if I succeed, give him some credit." Jim, the thing we never told you was that our actual message to the Bishop and the trustees was, "We think the call ought to be to the Reverend Dr. Ann Brewer [Dean Kowalski's wife]! And tell her she can bring along whomever she'd like."

Our New York journey goes on, now as consultant to the presiding Bishop. Thank you so much, Chuck, for that wonderful message from her. Working with Charles Robertson is such a privilege for me. And working with other marvelous persons there, like Stacy Sauls. We didn't think we had enough Bishops around, so we borrowed—no, we stole—Stacy, the Bishop of Lexington, and he's our Chief Executive Officer now. What a joy it is to be in that office, but the one special thing for me, Chuck, is working for you—you, the Assistant to the Presiding Bishop, and my dear friend.

I can't end without thinking about so many special folk in these New York days, in the church's mission in these parts, the person who welcomed me, like my assistant at Trinity Church Wall Street, Angelica Roman-Jimenez; Cindy Spoor, who worked with Mary and me on Special Projects for Trinity, with Mary and me; Margaret Nodine and Arlene Bullard in the Bishop of New York's office; and Sharon Jones, Ednice Baerga, and Su Hadden in the Presiding Bishop's office. A final word of thanks is to you, Mary Donovan, for taking this journey with me; thanks too, to Episcopal Charities—I so appreciate that you honored Mary Sudman Donovan tonight. I can never thank you enough, Mary. Finally, thanks goes to our two daughters, Mary Ellen Marino and Jane Donovan, and our two grandchildren, Madeline, and Alex. Would you please stand so they can see you?

Also with us in spirit (we talked to them on the phone) our two sons-in-law, Herman and Frank, and our son and daughter-in-law in Tokyo, and our newest grandchild—his Japanese nickname is Zinji. Zinji sends his love, too.

God bless you all. We thank you, more than we can say.
