Rio Grande Homily 2020

The Right Revd. Carl Walter Wright

-The diocese of the Rio Grande is meeting again in convention! The thought occurred to me that one thing we Americans love to do – especially the Episcopalians- is to CONVENE! We love to convene!

*PAST*

-We have a long and rich history of convening. Let me remind you. We Convened in colonial times to agree on safety and security of our colonies. Convened to argue about taxes, glebes and tariffs. Convened to “host” the Boston Tea Party. Convened to fight again British oppression.

-Similarly, in parallel fashion, the church convened back then:

* In 1783, in my home Diocese of Maryland, we convened for the first time to reorganise ourselves. Since we were no longer Church of England, we came up with the name of Protestant Episcopal Church;
* and at the same time and place 1783 our *Methodist* Episcopal brothers and sisters decided to go their separate ways and so began American denominationalism which persists to this day and FROM which we still have not recovered.
* You will also recall that our first General Convention of the Episcopal Church was 1789 – and that Bishop William White of Philadelphia was the first Chaplain to the Continental Congress. And that’s why we adopted the bicameral model of governance: House of Bishops and House of Deputies, patterned after the Senate and the House. Hard to believe that our next General Convention, we think, in 2022 will be our 80th!

-We love to convene.

*PRESENT*

-NOW, this weekend we are convening in a most unusual way. Seems like all of our meetings these days are virtual. But we are blest that technology enables us to convene all the same…and will no doubt change the way we do the Lord’s business for ever.

-But, let me offer this! OUR convening is not simply arguing issues of the day or passing endless resolutions about things. There’s another, deeper meaning to our convening: I convening is Holy. I think of us as a “Family Reunion.” When we people of faith come together, prayerfully, on one accord, NOT a secular convention. It is Communion with one another in Christ, NOT posing and posturing. It is seeking God’s Will, not ours.

-I fairly certain those earliest meetings of our Church were not simply strategy sessions, but reunions of Anglican brethren (the sisters and minorities and the rest of us would become full-fledged members of the family latter)…But like those fathers of our faith, “we are family,” with apologies to Sister Sledge! “We are Family!”

*FUTURE*

-My prayer for THIS convention, as with all of our councils and conventions, is that we are obedient to God’s invitation, when He says: “come now and reason together saith the Lord. Though your sins be as scarlet, I will make them white as snow.”

-Finally, there’s a reason I started this meditation with our early American roots. Barely 2-weeks from now we have another form of convening that is crucial to the success of this Republic. It is our Christian duty to vote. No matter who wins the presidency, we need not fear because God is on our side. But we do need to exercise our God-give right to VOTE. Very Important.

-This comes with my gratitude and thanks to Bishop Michael and all of the Rio Grande sisters and brothers. With my PRAYERS for a fruitful and visionary convention. My blessings to you all:

“God be with you till we meet again.

By His counsels guide uphold you.

With His sheep securely fold you.

God be with you till we meet again.”

*AMEN*