

Views: Creation and Convulsion



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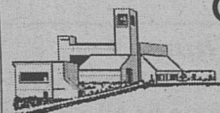
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8:00 Holy Eucharist & sermon
9:15 Holy Eucharist & sermon with children's choir
10:15 Education for All Ages
11:15 Holy Eucharist & sermon with full choir

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Monthly gatherings combine potluck supper, fellowship, program, and informal worship opportunities.
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The Episcopal Church Welcomes You

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Let me report some reactions and impressions from V. Gene Robinson's consecration as Bishop Coadjutor of the Episcopal Diocese of New Hampshire. I'm tempted to weigh in on the ensuing conflict within my church, but I won't. Not much.

There is a vocal minority of individuals, some of whom live in dioceses that are deeply aggrieved. One of these is based in Albany, New York. And there are people in that diocese who are so uncomfortable that they're making a rather long trip, into Vermont, to worship. That's a sad situation. Meanwhile, back to the Whittemore Center.

As Joe (my partner) and I walked toward the arena, we started to notice something. There were a lot of gay or lesbian priests. We're talking can't-miss-them, quite well dressed, and obviously with a partner. As noted in most reports, the security was impressive (and looked expensive). The Phelps gang are no fun at all any more. Or maybe this was, for them, more serious business than being part of the spectacle of a gay pride event. I liked their old signs a lot better. They now seem a very grim lot, drawn together only by their unshakable certainty that they're going to heaven (and most of the rest of us are not).

We sat in the end zone and the sound wasn't so good (although it did afford a clear view of the flags of New Hampshire, the US, and — yes — Canada). But we were close to the processions. First, it was banners from each church and church-related organization; but then of the many bishops and other clergy. I knew some (I used to work for the former Bishop of Arkansas, Herb Donovan; and I know our bishop, Tom Ely).

Of course I recognized Barbara Harris, the first female bishop. Her gorgeous vestments were a proud, saturated blue. I was reminded of her tart observations in that day's *Boston Globe*: the white men in power are not pleased; that's the issue. Being a black woman (who didn't go to seminary), she knows the score. Seeing her, and knowing some of her story was, for me, a catch-in-the-throat moment.

I nearly missed seeing the man himself, this cause of strife and schism. He's a little guy (and has joked about this). It was all so moving, though, I had trouble singing the familiar hymns. Could this really, finally, be happening?

Everybody knew there could be at least a moment of ugly-

Larry Rudiger

ness. As part of the ritual, the Officiant invites anybody present, knowing of reasons the consecration should not proceed, to come forward. The three statements were pre-arranged and have been heavily reported. The most notorious, Rev. Earle Fox, has a well known obsession with gay sex and feels compelled to talk about it whenever he

the kneeling Robinson. Presiding Bishop Griswold's hands cover Robinson's head. Others are reaching forward. Others still had their hands clasped (in prayer? I assume so). Ultimately, though, it's the tender humanity of this act, amid all the spectacle, that mattered.

Amidst the music (lots of high-church Ralph Vaughan Williams) I couldn't help but laugh a bit during the hymn "I sing a song of the saints of God." It was written, for her children, by (I'm not kidding) Lesbia Scott. We sang it to the tune "Grand Isle," as in Vermont, composed by Rev. John Henry Hopkins, Jr., who retired there (his father was our first bishop). It's an earnest and sturdy children's hymn that teaches an important lesson: we're surrounded by saints. But the charm of its text brought a light touch to an often otherwise heavy day:

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thinks it'll score a point for his side. He's ridiculous and sad (and, as a woman sitting near us opined, seems to have issues), but he and his ilk are still a menace. I can't pretend he didn't bother me.

In the defining moment, all the other bishops present gathered in a sort of huddle. In laying their hands on the candidate they are — literally — making her or him a bishop. It's like a wedding, a baptism, a funeral: things, from that moment on, are different. We agree to believe it's magic, and it is.

I've seen a powerful overhead photo (another advantage, I guess, of being in a hockey stadium; follow the link below to see it on the internet). It was taken just as the fifty or so Bishops were moving toward

And one [saint] was a doctor,
And one was a queen, [!]
And one was a shepherdess on the green: [!!]
They were all of them saints of God — and I mean,
God helping, to be one too.

As my church convulses in its ongoing creation, it's an idea worth remembering. ▼

Larry Rudiger was confirmed in the Episcopal Church in Oklahoma, where he grew up. He and his partner are members at St. Paul's Cathedral in Burlington. On the Internet, overhead photograph of Gene Robinson's consecration: <http://newark.rutgers.edu/~Lcrew/gallery/vgr/>