



**The Anglican Church of
St. John the Baptist, Cobble Hill**

The Sixth Sunday after the Epiphany ~ Year A

An address given

on Sunday February 13th, 2011,

at St. John the Baptist, Cobble Hill, BC

by

Archbishop Andrew S. Hutchison

Some reflections on leadership

We have received a pastoral letter from my successor, the Primate of the Anglican Church of Canada. So I begin by reading it to you. (*Read on Sunday, but not included in this transcript*). The Primate is asking us, and the whole Church, to offer prayers today for the people of Egypt.

The land that has played such an important part in history has come to a critical moment in its journey. Since ancient times Egypt has been ruled by powerful dictators and autocracies, as have so many smaller nations in the region. So much so, that many people in the West have thought that liberal democracy was simply not in the DNA of Arab peoples. Well events of the past few weeks have proven otherwise, as people of every walk of life in Egypt have come together in peaceful protest to demand the end of tyranny. Do we, perhaps, hear an echo of Moses demanding of the Pharaoh, “Let my people go!”?

The first sign of a new-found freedom is that the self-styled President has resigned. It is by no means clear what the next few steps might be for this great nation of 80 million people. And so we pray that wisdom and peace will prevail as the people move forward into an uncharted and uncertain future.

The question of leadership becomes a matter of utmost importance. About five years ago I was in China, where I met with a member of the Central Committee of the Communist Party. One of the memorable things he said to me was, “With nearly 25% of the world’s population in China, our first concern must be stability; civil disobedience and public protest cannot be tolerated”. And that seems to be a principle that has prevailed in Egypt for generations, with powerful support during the last 30 years from the United States of America. A certain stability has been achieved in the Middle East, assuring the flow of oil to the West, and the flow of traffic through the Suez Canal; but it has been done at the cost of the freedom of millions of Arabs. Enormous wealth is accumulated by the few on the backs of the many. It is hard for us to imagine that in a country with billions of dollars flowing into it from the West, some 50% of the population live on \$2.00 a day or less; nearly 40% are illiterate, and over 25% are unemployed. But a well equipped and well financed military and secret service maintains order under the direction of a tyrant.

Well, that’s one style of leadership, and it has been all too familiar in the evolution of human history. There are those who would advocate as an alternative a theocratic regime – that is,





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bringing whole nations under strict religious laws – specifically *Sharia Law*. But the dangers of religious extremism and fanaticism are all too evident. We need look no further than Afghanistan for a most obvious example.

Jesus presents us with a radical alternative in the 20th chapter of the Gospel according to St. Matthew.

You know that the rulers of the Gentiles lord it over them and their great men exercise authority over them. It shall not be so among you; but whoever would be great among you must be your servant, and whoever would be first among you must be your slave.

Servant leadership – a concept that we continue to be challenged by – a concept that implies the best use of power is in giving it away; that is by empowering others, enabling people more and more to realize their potential; in other words, to set them free. Literacy, health, and employment are fundamental ingredients of such an agenda. And needless to say, such an agenda will fail unless there is broad mobilization and collaboration of resources within the society. It is the beginning of the end of the old order in Egypt, and it was achieved on the anniversary of another beginning of the end of an old order – the day that Nelson Mandela walked out of his confinement. So let us pray for Egypt in this new chapter of its long journey.

There are also new stirrings among us here at St. John's. We have just had the Annual Meeting, and have elected officers and councilors to lead us in the next chapter of our life together – helping us to realize our potential as a parish, as we explore what it means to be a Hub church in mission.

A scene from the Book of Numbers comes to mind. The Israelites were on their journey through the wilderness to the Promised Land. The journey had not been easy, and to say that they were discouraged is understatement. They began to complain, and even to long for the way things had been back in Egypt. Moses was beside himself, feeling the pressures of leadership, and wondering how to meet the demands of his people. He took his distress to the Lord in prayer, and this was the Lord's response.

Assemble seventy people – leaders in the community of faith. Let them take their stand with you before the Tent of the Presence. I will come and speak with you there. I will take of the Spirit which I conferred on you and will put it upon them, and they will share with you the burden of caring for the people; then you will not have to bear it alone (Numbers 11)

So it is for us in our time. At various points in our journey we assemble representatives of the community bring them here (as it were) to stand before the *Tent of the Presence* to share the leadership among us, bringing their many and various gifts to help us on the next leg of our





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journey towards realizing our potential as God's Church in this place. May the Spirit of God be upon them and sustain them in their diverse leadership tasks. And may they know, as was said in the second lesson that "*We are fellow workers for God*" (1 Cor.3)

Amen.

Archbishop Andrew S. Hutchison

