

Christ Church Cathedral, Ottawa

January 1, 2005

A sermon by

*The Most Reverend Andrew S. Hutchison
Primate of the Anglican Church of Canada*

It has become tradition for the Primate to speak on this occasion in the Cathedral Church of our nation's capital, just a short distance from the seat of our national government. It is my privilege to be here for that purpose for the first time as the 12th Primate of our Church.

In the 16th century, Francis Bacon, Lord Chancellor of England referred to the 4 pillars of government as "religion, justice, counsel and treasure." He did so at a time when the Church of England had been established as a state religion – as it still is. Whereas that was never the case in Canada, The Anglican Church of Canada has preserved in its public worship the State Prayers, and continues to pray for the Head of State, and from time to time elected officials by name.

Both John A. Macdonald and Wilfred Laurier have said in their own way that Canada is a difficult country to govern, and that has certainly been the experience of successive governments since. The nation spans 7 time zones, and a remarkable variety of culture, history and language. Added to those difficulties in modern times is the responsibility of global and international issues, and the judgment of our appropriate involvement in global concerns and issues, both within and between other sovereign nations. The prayers of the people of Canada for those we elect to exercise leadership on our behalf in such matters are foundational to the well being and responsible development of this country, and of our collective role in the community of nations.

We gather on the first day of the year, celebrated as the Feast of the Circumcision, or the Naming of Jesus. In that ceremonial custom, the newborn child was dedicated to God, and as St. Luke reports, he was given a name revealed by an angel – Jesus, meaning literally, Jehovah saves. Of him the prophet Isaiah foretold:

*Unto us a child is born:
Unto us a son is given:
and the government shall
be upon his shoulder:
and his name shall be called
Wonderful, Counsellor, the mighty
God, the everlasting Father, the
Prince of Peace. Of the increase
of his government there shall be
no end. (Is. 9:6)*

Would that such government could be fully revealed among us, as natural disasters overwhelm us, and human corruption leads to devastating conflicts among us. We long for God's kingdom of justice and peace for which Jesus taught us to pray – "Thy kingdom come, on earth as it is in heaven." The source of much of the evil in the world remains a mystery, and yet it was into such a world that the Saviour was born, beginning life as a refugee in flight for his life, and ending it a victim of its corruption and evil. In other words, he lived fully into the depths of human experience and the cry of the human heart. As the author of our second reading said:

*"though he was in the form of God,
(he) did not regard equality with God
as something to be exploited, but emptied
himself ... and being found in human form,
he humbled himself, and became obedient
to the point of death – even death on a
cross."*

The author of divine justice initiated the kingdom through service, redemptive suffering and sacrifice, and it is that ethic which continues to govern Christian hearts in actions both personal and public. Of the increase of that government there shall be no end. For that is the way that leads to the realization of the promised Kingdom. Many who are called to public office, I believe, begin with at least something of that vision before them, and our prayer is that it not be lost, but rather be strengthened and refined by experience.

We can be profoundly thankful for a number of accomplishments of those in public service this year.

Bill C9 demonstrates Canadian leadership in opening access to affordable medicines for millions of people in the world's poorest countries. While we might have preferred the list not to be limited, Canada has given the world a clear lead, which we hope will be widely emulated.

We are grateful for the Government setting aside April 7th as a Day of Remembrance of the Rwandan Genocide. But we pray that every possible step will be taken to assure that the scandal of free nations standing by will not be repeated.

We commend the government for signing the Kyoto Accord to reduce deadly greenhouse gases, and encourage the quest for further international agreements.

We commend the government for maintaining a Cuban policy independent of the U.S.A. and urge them to offer to mediate in negotiations between Cuba and the U.S.A.

We commend the government for its peace keeping endeavors in the world, particularly its commitment in assisting the rebuilding of Afghanistan. But we are concerned that our forces be adequately supported with the means to accomplish their goals. It is understood that one reason for the DART team not yet being deployed is that we do not have transport for them, and must rent it from other nations whose equipment is in demand by others.

The General Synod of our Church has called upon government in the name of Gospel values to act boldly on a range of issues, domestic and international, including:

- Vigorous advocacy of human rights in Sudan and Columbia.
- Access to affordable housing for Canadians
- Making good on our commitment to eliminate child poverty.

- The implementation of a merit-based appeal process for refugees.
- A review of gambling in Canada and its impact.
- A declaration of Indigenous Rights consistent with that of the U.N.
- The American ballistic missile defense programme.

In all these we recognize our own responsibility and use our best efforts to collaborate. We recognize as well that all those involved in government at any level are men and women like you and me, worthy of our respect, and of our support in their best efforts.

It was Richard Hooker, distinguished 16th Century Anglican theologian, who said:

*“He that goeth about to persuade a multitude,
that they are not so well governed as they
ought to be, shall never want attentive and
favorable hearers.”*

A more challenging exercise of our public responsibility, and a more faithful one I believe, is to encourage those who serve in their best efforts, never losing our critical function.

Most particularly at this time we urge our leaders to act boldly and compassionately on our behalf in the face of the devastating effects on the Tsunami in South-East Asia. Truly it is a disaster of global proportions that underscores our vulnerability before the forces of nature. Canadians young and old, community groups, charitable organizations and every sector of Canadian society have responded. We appreciate the leading example of our government in its early financial commitment. The need will be long term, as well as immediate, and we pray that Canada will be there for the long haul. I have been in touch with the Primates and Moderators of all the Churches in the region, assuring them of our prayers and support. We continue to monitor the situation through our Partners in Mission Programme, and through the PWRDF, which has made an initial response, and continues to receive funds from across the Church. You in this cathedral should know that your Diocese has responded with a cheque to the Primate's World

Relief & Development Fund in the amount of \$10,000, and invites you to follow their example to the best of your ability.

A global crisis always contains within it a glimmer of hope. Is it the light of Christ that shines on in the darkness and will never be extinguished? Whatever it is, it unlocks human hearts, and leads us to generous acts of personal sacrifice for others. And in that response is the hope of more generous collaboration in less critical times, and the hope of setting aside of costly conflicts that pale in the light of the present catastrophe. Pray that it might be so. Pray for the coming of the Kingdom of justice and peace. Pray for those who govern in the meantime, that they may build upon the four pillars – (true religion, justice, counsel, and treasure) – a society worthy of the promised governance and peace inherent in the name Jesus.

As we begin a new year, I am profoundly aware that we in the Church have problems and challenges of our own to be addressed. But I believe we address them with a new and more hopeful tone. We have a new framework for mission and ministry, new committees, councils and boards for a new triennium, a new headquarters in Toronto, a new Primate, and a new spirit of collaboration within the House of Bishops. Pray that God will keep us faithful in our mission. Pray for those who govern, and pray for the Church.