



A Message from the Bishop Elect

December 19, 2007

In the short season of Advent we live in the expectation of God's greatest gift to us in the Son, the Christ, the Incarnation of God's all-encompassing love. Making Advent's waiting and reflecting a priority can be challenging, with the allure of family reunions, the holiday break from work and school, and the markdowns at malls and online stores. Even in our church settings, we struggle to balance our Advent experience with planning for the festive celebrations of Christmas and Epiphany. So little time to ask and ponder and test these questions: How is God's love manifested in my life? Where have I encountered Christ this week? Am I open to God's call? What is God calling me into? How should I respond to God's call?

Hope and expectation also characterize this interim period in episcopal ministry in the Diocese of Chicago. The twelve weeks between the election November 10 and my scheduled ordination as your 12th diocesan bishop on February 2, provide us with a rich opportunity for exploring what this call might mean for the ministry we share in northern Illinois. Who are we as the people of God? How are we serving our mission of representing Christ in the world? What opportunities do we have for making God's love manifest in our churches and communities? These are some of the questions I will be asking as we begin this journey together, and ones I hope you will be asking each other.

I am humbled and blessed by your decision to elect me your bishop, and profoundly grateful for the vision and ministry exercised by Bishop Persell these past nine years. The Diocese of Chicago is an exciting and healthy place for ministry, blessed by the leadership of your bishops and dedicated staff, and the faithful engagement of the vision by congregations and agencies. Bill and Nancy have earned our gratitude for a job well done.

You have shown yourselves to be an immensely welcoming and caring community to Lisa and myself, and we are deeply thankful for the many ways you have reached out to us. It was great meeting many of you during our week in the diocese earlier this month, and we look forward with great hope and joy to Epiphany when our journey together begins in earnest.

We have wonderful news to share. God is in love with us, each and every one of us, and nothing can separate us from the love of God in Christ. By water and the Holy Spirit we have been made members of Christ's own Body. May the Peace of Christ be with you as we enter into a new year in God's mission field.

In Christ,

Jeffrey D. Lee
Bishop-Elect of Chicago