



The Rt. Reverend Rachael Parker

Diocese of Brandon

Anglican Church of Canada

403 - 13th Street, Brandon, MB, R7A 4P9

Phone: 204-727-2380 Fax: 1-844-725-7533

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My Dear Siblings in Christ,

As I share with you this Pastoral Letter we are celebrating the Feast of the Epiphany. I also write these words after a weekend in which the world has been rocked by the news that one sovereign nation was attacked by another. My words are not meant to carry any political leanings, nor to suggest how any of you should be reacting to what has happened in Venezuela.

As I am sure you are all aware, there are many people who are hopeful for the possibilities that regime change might mean for their beloved country. There are also many people who awoke in the night to bombs, chaos, and uncertainty as their world has been turned upside down. The impacts of this weekend's realities will have long-lasting and far-reaching implications for both Venezuela and The United States of America, and indeed for all of North America, and the world.

While our own Diocese of Brandon may seem insulated and removed from the new realities of the people of Venezuela, and Americans, we can never allow ourselves to become complacent in our call to prayer, compassion, and ongoing hope for all of God's people. Whenever there is chaos, uncertainty, domination, greed, threats, and insecurity for people in their own homes and homeland, as Christians we are called to pray that God's will might be done, peace might reign, and the very compassion and love of Christ might prevail.

On New Year's Day, our Primate Shane Parker preached at the Cathedral in Ottawa. He spoke before the actions in Venezuela. He spoke of our call as Christians in the Anglican Church and how we are called to live out our call to follow Jesus. His words seem prophetic. They were for the Anglican Church of Canada and the present we are living in, the future we are facing. However, his words spoke to me powerfully as I read them following Saturday night's attacks. I share with you a part of his sermon: *"For us, the name of Jesus means deep communion with one another as followers of Jesus. For us, the people, clergy and bishops of the Anglican Church of Canada, lifting up the name of Jesus also means selfless, courageous and steadfast acts of compassion, justice, advocacy, mercy and peacemaking. It means building up our ministries and missions that serve the most vulnerable people, the oppressed, the victimized, wherever they are in this world. Critically, it means standing alongside every group or government or person of goodwill who also seeks to bring compassion, justice, mercy and peace to others. For us, the name of Jesus means deep communion with all human beings and with the earth itself."*

Our Primate's words speak directly to our individual congregations throughout our vast and beautiful Diocese of Brandon. They also speak directly to us as we struggle to comprehend the

The Right Reverend Rachael Parker, 8th Bishop of Brandon
Email: Bishop.Rachael@brandon.anglican.ca

trajectory our world, our hemisphere, currently seems to be following. In our own locales and contexts, we must seek to bring compassion, justice, mercy and peace to others. It is within our ability and our mandate to do this work right where we are. Not one of our churches is secluded from the deep need for these works. It is our responsibility as parishioners, clergy, and bishop to attend to these needs so close to home.

We are also called to work for compassion, justice, mercy and peace in God's world. We cannot succumb to the lie that what is happening is "over there" or "not our business." The people of Venezuela, the people just like you and your families, who awoke on Saturday morning to bombs, fires, chaos, and confusion, are in need of our care. This we can provide through prayer. I commend to your specific prayers – as church communities and as individuals – The Episcopal (Anglican) Diocese of Venezuela; The Rt. Rev. Cristobal Leon Lozano (bishop provisional of Venezuela), the clergy and people of the Episcopal Church in Venezuela. We must also pray for the leadership and people of The Episcopal Church of the United States of America as they continue their work and ministry in a divided and confused country. Our Anglican brothers and sisters need our prayers, and they need to know they do not walk, serve, or hope in Christ in solitude. Our role now is to pray.

I commend to you the following prayer. Please share it with your congregations, neighbours, friends. Together let us raise our voices in hope for those who are simply seeking to find stability and peace in the days and weeks which lie ahead.

O Lord of peace, justice, and humanity, we ask for Your powerful and gentle Spirit to move into the hearts, minds and actions of all those who have power. May they be moved to exercise such power as lifts up and encourages. May those whose hearts have been hardened by power be so transformed by Jesus' transforming love and sacrifice that they will find Your heart becoming theirs.

We pray for the people who find themselves powerless. Inspire them with courage to speak. Infuse them with hope to continue. Fill them with Your enduring and emboldening love that they may see hope incarnated in themselves and their neighbours as they see Your Son Jesus Christ walking in their midst, encouraging them to continue in the promise that Your Kingdom will come on earth as it is in heaven.

In Christ's holy, gentle and powerful name we pray. Amen.

May God bless you as you pray for those in the world around your community and for those in communities further away. Our call is to pray and pray we must.

+ Rachael : Brandon

Bishop Rachael Parker

The Right Reverend Rachael Parker, 8th Bishop of Brandon
Email: Bishop.Rachael@brandon.anglican.ca