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THE WHOLE ARMOUR OF GOD

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RLN exists to explore issues at the intersections of faith and life. In doing so we solicit and publish a range of opinions, not all of which reflect the official positions of the Diocese.

We acknowledge that we meet and work in Treaty 1, 2, and 3 Land, the traditional land of the Anishinaabe, Cree, and Dakota people and the homeland of the Metis Nation. We are grateful for their stewardship of this land and their hospitality which allows us to live, work, and serve God the Creator here.

RLN welcomes story ideas, news items, and other input. If you want to be involved in this media ministry, please email the editor.

Cover: [Nik Shuliahin](#)

The Whole Armour of God

Photo: [Jonathan Kemper](#)

As you will read shortly, the armour of God is described by Paul in the sixth chapter of Ephesians, verses 10 to 18. Unlike those in biblical times, armour is not something we see incredibly often, but there is a powerful metaphor that is still relevant today. Even though we do not see armour all the time, we know what it's for: protection and security. Though literal armour is often cumbersome, hot, and expensive, it is a necessary means of safeguarding one's life.

Likewise, having a faithful relationship with God is not always easy, and can be pushed aside or shaken, especially in times of great distress. Soldiers would train in their armour to get used to its weight, thus being able to function effectively whilst still being protected. If they did not do this, the thing that is supposed to help keep them safe would end up hindering them more than helping them. Do not just put on your spiritual armour when the going gets tough; wear it every day. You will get used to the weight and be stronger because of it.

As we approach our episcopal election, I encourage you to stand firm in fidelity, trust in the grace and mercy of God, and don your spiritual armour daily. Pray that our future bishop will do the same.

This issue begins with a farewell from Bishop Geoff. He reflects on the journey that he has shared with all of us during his time as Bishop in the Diocese of Rupert's Land, and how we can look to the future of the Church with hope. Before we welcome our new bishop, I invite you to sit for a prayerful moment with Bishop Geoff's farewell message and continue to pray for the future of the Church.

Next, Bishop Rachael Parker writes on what the armour of God means for us all, and what it means for our future bishop. She writes that this kind of armour is not something we should take on or off as it suits our mood, but that it should be one which is integrated into our skin. Just as we can never be dry from the waters of our baptism, so, too, can the armour of God never leave us.

Following this, Marcel DeGagné tells us about his search for what the soul is within each person, and how this sparked his journey to become a spiritual care provider. He believes that regardless of faith or creed, each of us has a 'Burning Ember' within us — a unique presence which is integral to each of our lives.

After this is the Convening Circular for the 120th Session of Synod, which most notably includes information about those who are currently nominated to be our next bishop. You will find the candidates' answers to some questions, CVs, and short video interviews, among other pieces of valuable information.

Then, Bishop Don Phillips connects the famous passage from Ephesians about the armour of God with its Old Testament roots. He also explores what it means to live this out in our daily lives, and how our future bishop should do the same.

Lastly, Durell Desmond's poem "The Angel and the Demon" encompasses themes relating to temptation, resilience, and salvation. Overall, the Demon could be taken as a metaphor for any one who has made mistakes and is looking for redemption, while the Angel could be taken as a metaphor for Jesus.

Peace be with you; I hope you enjoy.



CINNA BARAN

Editor of Rupert's Land News



Photo: Cinna Baran

Thank You and Thank God — a Farewell Letter

GEOFFREY WOODCROFT

Dear Disciples, Friends,

Everyday I pray with thanksgiving for the episcopal ministry we have shared. Filled with the capacity and yearning to offer and share thanksgiving as a way of life, we have journeyed in a joyous and meaningful relationship in God, and in communion with one another and the world.

Everyday I am overwhelmed by the out-pouring of pastoral kindness and support you offer. Thank you for your generosity, kindness, and beauty. I know and feel the prayers. I cherish the messages and random meetups while shopping, at the eye doctor, etc. Thus, I live and breathe gratitude for our shared discipleship.

My placement within the Church has come to an abrupt ending, but an ending that is complete, and with infinite possibilities for today's disciples. We are Jesus' people and a distinct continuation of God's people journeying through time as leaders, healers, and lovers for the world. Jesus' people see clearly God at work in the world God created, which implies that disciples reach into the world anew everyday.



The Church as we have known it is slowly disappearing — that is to be expected by all disciples. Imagine those gathered around and devoted to the earthly Jesus, how they surely were challenged to leave behind what they had known and practiced, to embrace the exciting direction to which God had moved them. Even a cursory glance at Hebrew and Christian testaments demonstrates how God challenges folks to continue the exciting journey for the sake of God's world.

God shall speak to you through one another, if you listen. God shall empower you to call one disciple to be re-placed into the ministry of episcopal leadership. While this call happens, all of you continue to share the Church's episcopate in the world, that is to actively listen and engage as Jesus did for all people. God shall lead you to be courageously listening in conversations in and outside of the Church that illuminate God's eternal presence, especially among those whom the church lost in the past.

The recent COVID crisis and the presence of fear amidst economic, social, and mental unrest that bombard us daily, I believe are also to be reckoned as God's call for the Church to do what we have always been taught to do, and that is to reach selflessly toward the innumerable people so cruelly affected by this present era of unrest. The Church has something to say to those who are now threatened because of race, sexual identity, religious belonging, lack of economic stability, and so on, and that is "God loves you, and we know that because we love you. Come to us, you who are heavily weighed down by oppression and hatred, and we will give

you shelter, rest and hope!" Not only that, we know that there is no greater love than to lay down one's life for another, and we shall indeed live that out in the face of threats upon the health of the human family, particularly that of our local community.

Your new leader must be equipped with your leadership, as God has called that leader through you. Leading lives of over-the-top gratitude will lead each of us in that purpose, and to God's eternal new beginning(s). Love one another, greet one another with a Holy kiss, and never shy from commending the faith that is always within you. I have seen God at work and in Word through you; I shall be ever-thankful for that unique and particular experience.

May you be blessed in the Holy and Undivided Trinity.

In Christ's love,

+ Geoffrey Woodcroft



GEOFFREY WOODCROFT

Bishop of Rupert's Land



Photo: Erik McLean

David's Clothes

RACHAEL PARKER

Later this month we will gather to choose your next Bishop of the Diocese of Rupert's Land. (I say “we” because I will be joining you as a prayer partner and observer for the Synod.) At that time, we will be recognizing and acknowledging the priest whom God has known would be a bishop from before they were in their mother's womb. All the nominees have been preparing for this day throughout their entire vocations. They have faithfully been adorning themselves, with the Spirit's guidance, in the vestments of Christian leadership for the roles they have been fulfilling and those yet to come.

While only one of the nominees will be selected, each of these priests have been gently — and not so gently — preparing for this crossroads of ministry for a very long time. They have ministered to their people. They have prayed through celebrations and grief. They have laughed with joy, cried out

in sorrow, and quite possibly the most telling task — they have had to face off against spiritual enemies in their pursuit of preaching and living Gospel Truth.

As a bishop I can attest to the many times in my own ministry as deacon, priest, and bishop when I have felt the weight of responsibility of being the “David” up against the “Goliath.” So often I have been forced to my knees, begging God to clothe me better than David was that I may be able to withstand what is surely coming. The answer is invariably, “you are already clothed as you need. Have faith.” In that faith I have always found that the whole armour of God has been given to me as is needed. That armour is not something I can slide down to the local clothing store and purchase. It isn't even something I can look online for a Christian supply store to have delivered. Indeed, it is right before me — in my own prayer closet.

There is a great irony in the truth that the most powerful vestments (or clothing) that we can wear as Christians is not the most expensive, best-stitched, enduring coverings we have in our closets. The most powerful vestments we have

are those in which we are vested in our Baptisms. Through that initiating sacrament we are washed clean of all the old “skins,” and we are given a new “skin” within which we carry every single gift of God which we will need along our own particular journey. As we are anointed and marked with the sign of the cross, sealed as Christ’s own forever, we are garmented in the whole armour of God once and for all.

It would be lovely if we could honestly say that we wear the entire armour of God all the time. However, we just don’t. We get distracted. Sometimes it’s just too cumbersome. Other times they feel unnecessary. (Beware *those* times!) Truth be told, most days we treat like a hot summer day. We only don the bare minimum and hope for clear skies. We have those seasons in our lives when we treat our faith, and the tools (vestments) God provides us more like seasonal clothing. When the summer and good times approach, we hang the heavier, more cumbersome things in the closet until winter. When the air chills off and we can feel the temperature plummeting, we pack up the lighter things and drag out the heavy. The same can be said in our spiritual lives. Times are good? Prayer and study might get set aside just a little bit. Times get tough? We hit our knees and get serious. The key is that the clothing we need – that whole armour of God – has always been right there, within reach. The question is do we remember to reach for it?

During this month of May, we are all preparing for our “summer” closets. We are choosing what to keep close at hand and what can be tucked in the back for a while. Unlike the weather patterns of Manitoba that make the “summer closet” a questionable endeavour, as Christians we should never tuck those vestments we received at baptism away. Quite to the contrary, they should be the garments we dress



Photo: [Karthik B K](#)

in every single day. They may seem cumbersome at first but soon we will begin to recognize them as second skin. We will become so accustomed to their protection, truth, wisdom, courage, strengthening of faith that we won’t know how to live without them. And when that realization kicks in, then we will know that we are ready, willing, and able to face whatever “Goliaths” may cross our path.

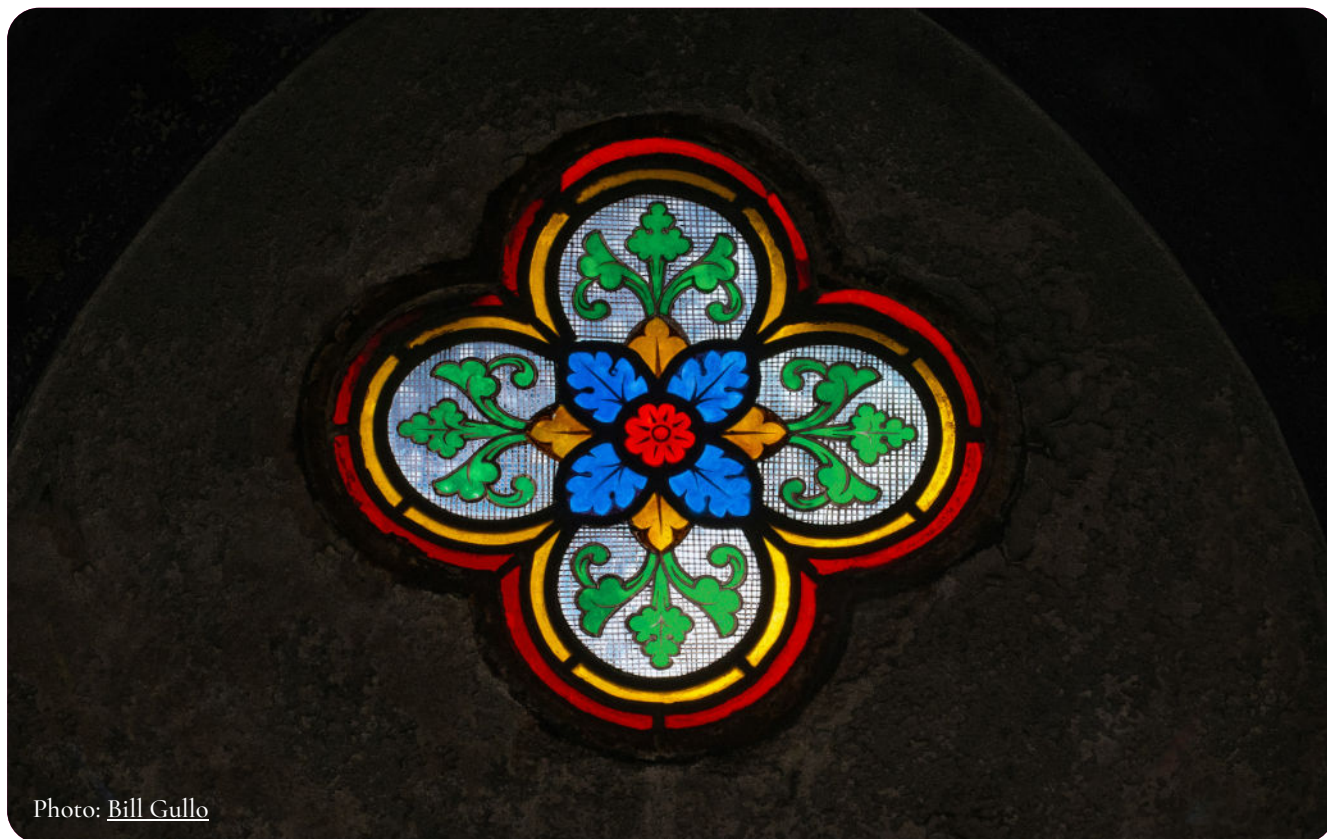
Your whole armour of God is a gift that is not only for you though. Yes, it has the benefit of guarding and protecting you, but it is also provided to you that you may protect and guard others. Who, you may ask, are you currently tasked with protecting and guarding? The nominees for your Episcopal election!

There are seasons in all our lives when the adversary will come calling. We don’t often speak of such things in the Anglican Church, but it is to our peril that we don’t. Why else would God go to such lengths to provide us with the whole armour of God’s self were it not that we would find ourselves in need of defense from an adversary? We know from experience that we all have those seasons of doubt, confusion, and even outright attack when we fall on our knees calling for God’s mercy and protection.

You are all called, in this season, to wear the whole armour of God on behalf of each of those priests who are discerning, and being discerned, whether they are called to become a bishop, and hence a frontline soldier in a world in which the adversary is well at work. It is a known fact that as we open ourselves the most to hear God’s word and



Photo: [Karthik B K](#)

Photo: [Bill Gullo](#)

feel God's call, we become even more vulnerable to the attacks of our enemies. Each of your nominees have laid bare their souls in a sincere desire to serve their Lord. They have been called to lay down their personal armour that they might be truly seen and known by all of you, that you might be best able to discern God's will about them. In doing so, they have made themselves so very vulnerable, and they have entrusted you with the responsibility of surrounding them in prayer and presence with *your* armour of God. That is your role in the days and weeks ahead.

On May 31st, you will pray together knowing you are protected by the whole armour of God, and you will corporately, with each of the nominees, become very vulnerable in God's presence. You will be open to the movement of the Holy Spirit. When the day is over and God has called the name of your Bishop-Elect, in their hearts they will reply, "Here I am, Lord. Send me." And when that has been done, they will understand that the armour which has been protecting them will shift. They will become armour-bearers whose role will be to protect all of you, with God's help. As bishop they will discover that there is no summer or winter closet. They will indeed feel the weight of

that new armour, but it will not be a hindrance. It will be a privilege as well as a responsibility.

As the days leading up to your Episcopal election pass by, become aware of the whole armour of God which adorns you. Throw open your arms that you might better protect these servants of God who are placing themselves within you with a great deal of necessary vulnerability. Grant them the gift of knowing that those who they might soon lead and protect are, in this moment, willing to protect them. Adorn yourselves in the whole armour of God and serve as you are all called to serve. And may God bless you all.

**RACHAEL PARKER**

The Right Reverend Rachael Parker was elected as the 8th Bishop of Brandon on November 25, 2023, and consecrated on March 18th, 2024, the Eve of St. Joseph. She holds a BA Honours in English Literature from Brescia University College and a Master of Divinity from Huron University College.

The Burning Ember

MARCEL DEGAGNÉ

Photo: Marek Piwnicki

There have been times in my life when I was faced with situations that called into question who I was. These periods of confusion, suffering and difficulty prompted me to look for answers.

I was asking myself a lot of questions and reproaching myself for not having done my best, for having been weak and not having had the strength and faith to face up to these obstacles. I asked myself what I should do. Am I capable of facing the obstacles or should I turn and run away? Do I blame myself or others?

This way of reacting to similar situations had become a troubling and repetitive habit. Even today, I have to remain aware of these automatisms. Aware of this tendency, I decided about ten years ago that it was time to embark on a process of personal spiritual and mental healing. Among other things, this research revealed that I was a compassionate person who wanted to help others. I pursued this discovery and began training in spiritual care.

My training period was very enriching, and I was able to recognise parts of myself that I didn't know. One concept in particular was an epiphany. I was struck by the idea that every human being is animated by an indispensable presence, unique to each of us. I identify it as a 'Burning Ember'; an ember that strengthens and stimulates the life of each person.

This source of life within the person was not a foreign concept to me, but what was unique was that the burning ember had a more universal significance. My Christian beliefs taught me that the soul is the presence of God within me, but I wondered what existed in those who did not share this belief. What drives a person who has no religious tradition or who doesn't believe in a higher power.

Convinced that everyone has a source of life within them that they can draw on to get them through difficult times, I've come to understand that every human being has a part of themselves that makes them tick. It's a deep and essential part of being human that gives us life and our reason for being.

As a provider of spiritual care, I have a responsibility to accompany people on their journey. But how can I encourage them to discover their Burning Ember? Religious or not, a person's spirituality exists. Atheists have told me that what gives them life and strength is nature, the universe, love and compassion.

A lit ember is needed to start a fire. That fire needs nourishment to grow and give life. The human spirit is no different. Once we have discovered our own burning ember, we need to feed it. We need to feed the fire so that it becomes bigger than the obstacles in front of us.

But it seemed to me that the concept of the Burning Ember was incomplete. What could stimulate a person to seek it out? If we believe that our lives are happy, serene and peaceful, why would we need to look for it? My training in spiritual care and my own experience of suffering gave me the beginnings of an answer.

It's in moments of distress, sadness, fear and loss of control over our lives that people start to wonder how they're going to get through. I call these moments "sparks". A "spark" is what triggers the need to look for what gives us the ability to heal through suffering.

No one seeks or wants to suffer. We suffer in many ways, physically, emotionally, mentally and spiritually. It's part of our lives. It's inevitable, but suffering doesn't have to be purposeless. Suffering can be the spark that prompts us to seek our centre, our burning ember. Once discovered, a fire can ignite our being and grow stronger, bringing with it the courage and life needed to overcome obstacles.

I'm always impressed by the strength and courage shown by people who are prepared to use their own inner fire to grow despite the obstacles. It's a humbling experience.

All human beings are created for life. I'm also convinced that every person possesses this fundamental strength, this ember that lights the fire of life. I also believe that suffering, although painful and sometimes debilitating, can lead us to seek our own personal truth. The journey is neither simple,



Photo: [Marek Piwnicki](#)

nor easy, nor immediate. But when a person is accompanied by someone who assures them of their presence, their listening, compassion and their support, it is possible to overcome and prosper. For me, this is the primary mission of spiritual care.



MARCEL DEGAGNÉ

Marcel DeGagné is Roman Catholic and has been a member of St. Andrew's on the Red parish since 2010, the same year he married his wife, Gayle Gessner. He has worked as a Spiritual Care

Provider in a personal care home and is a member of the Canadian Association for Spiritual Care (CASC).

Convening Circular

[The Convening Circular](#) contains an alphabetical listing of the nominees for Bishop, their CV, a photo, a link to their video interviews, and their responses to questions posed by the Search Committee.

Along with answering four out of six additional questions, each nominee was asked to respond to the following question: Our Diocesan Profile outlines who we are and what we are needing from our new bishop. What has prompted you to explore this opportunity — what intrigues you? What is your sense of call to be our bishop? What prompts concerns for you? Why you? Why us?



DONALD DAVIDSON

My interest in this opportunity arises from a profound and persistent sense of call. From the moment I learned of Bishop Geoff's illness, I was moved to pray daily — for him and for the

Diocese of Rupert's Land. Over time, those prayers began to stir something deeper. Despite my initial reluctance, I sensed I was being called to offer myself for discernment in this moment. When someone later approached me, unprompted, to nominate me, it felt like God's nudge to stop hiding and listen.

Reading the diocesan profile was like hearing my own ministerial heartbeat echoed back. The emphasis on collaborative leadership, fresh vision, building trust, and honest pastoral presence — even in difficult seasons — resonates deeply with the work I've loved most in ministry. I believe the gifts I bring, combined with the strengths already present in the Diocese, can help cultivate a renewed sense of purpose and possibility.

Why me? Because I believe God is calling me to walk with you, not ahead of you, as together we discern where the Spirit is leading. Why you? Because I see in Rupert's Land a community ready for bold faith, honest conversation, and Spirit-led growth. I would be humbled to journey with you.

The Convening Circular for the 120th Session of the Synod of the Diocese of Rupert's Land

May 31st, 2025



For the Election of a Bishop for the Diocese of Rupert's Land



EDMUND LALDIN

I was discriminated against in my native country because of my religion, ethnicity and lower middle-class background. The veil of being a cerebral and rational person became my persona

and way to isolate deep pain. However, the Liberation theology and examples of my mentors taught me to accept and use the pain productively. Thus, advocating for change and cultivating and nurturing a culture of inclusion became my personal and professional focus. Unfortunately, the discrimination followed me to Canada as I faced racism within the church and the society. In my ministry, I have tried and succeeded (in most situations) to create a racially, culturally, theologically, liturgically, and ethnically diverse community. Our diocese is diverse and committed to justice for everyone. However, we are in silos with windows — aware of the other and working towards unity in diversity. A greater appreciation of each other and the various ministries that we are all committed to leads us to stronger relationships, working together more cohesively rather than expending energy on trying to convince or convert people to our way of thinking. This willingness to create a diverse diocese has compelled me to offer myself for episcopal office. My personal experiences at the parish, diocesan, national and international levels have prepared me to hear diverse voices and seek common ground. The concern will be our allegiance to the glorious past and comfortable pews. The challenge will be facilitating conversations among all parties to cultivate and nurture a culture of Inclusion, which is the precursor of the Kingdom of God.



NABOTH MANZONGO

I am letting my name stand in this election because I feel the sense of call to lead. What the diocese is seeking in the new leader resonate with me. The

Diocese is seeking a compassionate, visionary, and collaborative leader to guide it through challenges like aging membership, financial sustainability, and reconciliation efforts. These have been my ministry goals wherever I have served. I always seek to be an incarnational leader who is immersed and connected with his leadership context. I always seek to foster unity, embracing diversity, and inspiring renewed faith in the ministry contexts I have served. I am confident that this will be my mission across the Diocese. My sense of what of call to be a bishop are to;

- Ensuring a consistent teaching ministry which emphasizes the joys and responsibilities of living out our baptismal vows and the five marks of mission
- Encourage clergy and congregations in assessing their situation, open their eyes and ears to what the spirit is telling them, and respond by opening their doors as well as go out to serve those needs or by joining forces with other local church communities
- Nurturing current and future ordained and lay licensed ministers, and adapt and help develop new models of ministry to respond to the current needs for leadership, both for sacramental presence and engagement with the world.
- Visiting and being present to the parishes, chaplaincies and other ecclesial groups and community projects to provide support and pastoral care as needed, as well as identify ways to lighten the administrative as well as building management load.
- Together with Synod, Diocesan Council, Executive Committee and other committees, to support and respond to our communal decision-making processes and to be good stewards as we budget and allocate resources to support realistic mission projects in the widely differing areas of the Diocese today.

As I write this, the world is in mourning for Pope Francis, a Pope who served with a passion and a heart for the people. He offered the right leadership for a world hungry and thirst for love. He did not only speak truth to power but also spoke truth to empower. His heart for ecumenism where he would

encourage other religious leaders to “walk together, work together and pray together” was so profound. Such leadership is to be emulated. From the profile, I am encouraged by the commitment of the diocese to support its bishop. I read where it says, “We will support, strengthen, collaborate, and share in the competencies, learning, and action that we ask of our new Bishop.”

This jumped at me and it's encouraging. I feel called to serve this diocese because it is one of the few dioceses in The Anglican Church of Canada that requires its clergy to take Indigenous Awareness course and Anti- Black Racism course as prerequisites. This shows its commitment to issues of diversity, anti-racism and unity. Many of our parishes are safe spaces where everyone is welcomed.



RACHEL TWIGG

I believe in community discernment and respect the people who, by nominating me, have encouraged me to walk down this path. I am a part of this diocese, I care deeply about it and

want to play an active role in helping us to be the people God is calling us to be. If people discern that the best way I can do that is as bishop, then I will do my best to honour the trust you would be placing in me.

In my lifetime the geographical diocese has gotten larger, the number of clergy and lay people has gotten smaller and the world has changed dramatically. I am concerned that our expectations of a bishop and the diocesan staff have not been adjusted accordingly. Will you maintain high expectations of your next bishop while also equipping and supporting them so they can thrive as bishop and as a human being?

My faith is rooted in the contemplative and Benedictine traditions and sustained by the liturgical life of the Anglican church. Listening to God, myself, and others are skills I have been and will continue to hone for the rest of my life. In my current role I love it when I rephrase what I have just heard a patient say and they light up and respond, “Yes, that's it!”

We are all gifted and called to serve. Helping people discover God's call and finding a place to put those gifts to work is something that excites and energizes me.

Armour of God?

Isn't Jesus supposed to be the Prince of Peace?

DONALD PHILLIPS

In the final section of the New Testament Letter to the Ephesians, the author begins with this statement: “Finally, be strong in the Lord and in the strength of his power. Put on the whole armour of God, so that you may be able to stand against the wiles of the devil.”¹ Even Christian toy manufacturers have come up with their own representation of this – a little “armour of God” set consisting of a (plastic) helmet, shield, belt and sword – all fashioned after the style of a medieval knight. A few weeks ago we read the account of Jesus’ betrayal and death in a garden just outside Jerusalem. In John’s Gospel it states that “Simon Peter, who had a sword, drew it, struck the high priest’s slave, and cut off his right ear.” But Jesus said to Peter, “Put your sword back into its sheath.”² and in the same account in Luke’s Gospel Jesus emphatically says, “No more of this!”

So where does this “armour of God” notion come from? In actual fact, the author of Ephesians had lots of references from the Hebrew Scriptures (Old Testament) to draw from. In those Scriptures, it’s clear that Israel often referred to God as a “warrior” who would protect or rescue Israel from its enemies. But those texts don’t describe God’s armour as the usual military gear. In the later period of Isaiah, the prophet writes, “He [God] put on righteousness like a breastplate, and a helmet of salvation on his head.”³ And in the Book of Wisdom, likely composed just before Jesus’ lifetime, the author writes, “The Lord will take his zeal as his whole armour... he will put on righteousness as a breastplate, and wear impartial justice as a helmet; He will take holiness as an invincible shield, and sharpen stern wrath for a sword...”⁴

The author of Ephesians tries to clarify what kind of battle we might be engaged in such that we need this armour of God. “For our struggle is not against enemies of blood and flesh [human beings] but against the rulers, against the authorities, against the cosmic powers of this present darkness, against the spiritual forces of evil in the heavenly places.”⁵ In the contemporary cosmology of 1st century Judaism, there was a hierarchical ordering of power and authority beginning with human rulers and then ascending to angelic beings and other cosmic powers. These unseen



Photo: [GVZ 42](#)

powers exercised their power and authority through the human rulers lower on this hierarchy. So the exhortation to Christian disciples is to equip themselves with these godly moral attitudes (armour) that would empower them to withstand the pressure and temptation to turn away from following Christ and to be able to instruct others to continue to follow Christ. (i.e. belt of truth, breastplate of righteousness, shoes that enable the proclamation of the gospel of peace, along with the shield of faith and the helmet of salvation – protecting one from evil attack.)

But this imagery of putting on “articles of clothing” also has another significance. In the ancient church, when one was baptized into Christ, part of the liturgy involved taking off old clothes and putting on new ones – particularly a white robe – symbolizing putting on Christ himself. “Let us then lay aside the words of darkness and put on the armour of light... put on the Lord Jesus Christ...”⁶ Earlier in the Letter to the Ephesians the author writes, “You were taught to put away your former way of life, your old self... and to clothe yourselves with the new self, created according to the likeness of God in true righteousness and holiness.”⁷

¹ 1 Corinthians 15:14

² John 18: 10 - 11

³ Isaiah 59:17

⁴ Wisdom 5:17-20

⁵ Ephesians 6:12

⁶ Romans 13:12, 14

⁷ Ephesians 4:22, 24



Photo: [Antonia Felipe](#)

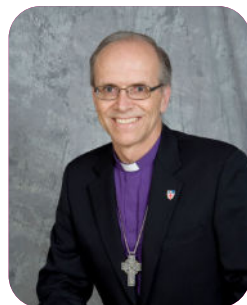
So the New Testament epistles admonish the baptized Christian to consciously put on this “armour” as part of their daily living as followers of Christ. And they make the point that we should always be discerning what the real threat is behind the destructive words and actions of others – who are, perhaps unknowingly, working against God’s good intentions for the Church and the world.

Much of these exhortations in the New Testament are coming from leaders in the Christian community who are trying to teach Christ’s way to their “flock.” But how does this play out amongst the leaders of the Church? In the early Church this would have been the apostles and the elders. In our contemporary Church it might refer to bishops, clergy, and lay staff at all levels of the Church.

With over 18 years of experience in episcopal ministry, I can say that “living out what you teach” can be quite a

challenge! First of all, as seems typical in our contemporary cultures, when people are unhappy with what they’re experiencing, they want to try and make their leaders accountable for what’s taking place. It is no different in the Church. Bishops frequently have to bear the pain, disillusionment, anger, and frustration of those in the Church. And while one can say “That’s what you signed up for!”, it is made more challenging by the need to exemplify “wearing the armour of God” in all circumstances. That means being willing to speak the truth – about the situation, about others, and yes, about yourself. It means being transparent in your leadership (righteousness) and speaking and acting in such a way that people are able to receive a “gospel of peace” from you and the situation. And since bishops come from the same frail humanity that the rest of do, it means being able to “quench” the hurt and pain (flaming arrows) that others project on to you, without you being destroyed by it. And finally, even in your most fearful state, it means being sure enough of the salvation God has given you in Jesus Christ, and the authority with which the Church has called and anointed you, to be confident in the helmet of salvation – that you will ultimately be preserved in whatever challenge you are immersed.

The author of Ephesians began this final section with these words, “Be strong in the Lord and in the strength of his power.” A bishop needs to know how to draw, not on his or her own strength, but on the grace and strength of God – in all circumstances. Finally, a bishop must “Pray in the Spirit at all times in every prayer and supplication.” A bishop needs to know how to pray – deeply, passionately, and compassionately, for all persons and in all circumstances. This is how they can wear the “armour of God” and teach others to do the same.



DONALD PHILLIPS

The Right Reverend Donald Phillips, PhD served the Diocese of Rupert’s Land as bishop from 2000 to 2018. He has also served the Church in Alberta and Saskatchewan, and is a strong proponent of supporting the life and ministry of all. He and his spouse Nancy are delighted to have two sons and six grandchildren.



The Angel and The Demon

DURELL DESMOND

Act I

Down below sits the devil in his infernal revel
With drool strewn across and his face in knots
Licking his lips with a devilish smile
As he spies his next victim to beguile
Upon his throne with horns ablaze, he studies his victim with
eyes aglaze
A woman fair and pure of heart, truly a wondrous work of
art;
Infinite mystery, the grace of an angel
Steadfast serenity, undoubtedly faithful
Here craves the devourer of souls, who foams at mouth, O
fearsome dhole

Mad dog of hell who giveth chase to rob his conquest of her
grace

“Oh, what a delicious, scrumptious delight
To strip and rob her of her light”

Act 2

Wickedness boils, his scheme now toils
Without any shame, he dances in flame
The Infernian burns with bold expectation
Of bringing heart's desire a closing damnation
“I'll whisper sweet lies with artful disguise
Fill her heart with pride by my own misguide

Allow her head to swell
 And chest to puff as well”
 “Conjure despair by dreadful fear
 Leaving her stressed and torn, her life depressed and worn
 Then leave her to her own devices
 So that she may accept her vices”

Act 3

Despite the hellion’s many wiles, all his cleverly crafted trials,
 His fiendish ploys were all destroyed
 To no avail,
 The devil failed
 Puzzled by his amiss in his fiery abyss
 A maniacal temper arose, as she foiled each plot, he knows
 Volcanic anger did erupt
 As he could not by truth corrupt
 The fiendish imp mistook her measure and, in the end,
 Denied his pleasure
 Be all for his naught, she struggled and fought
 And left the infernal charmer
 Unable to break her armour

Act 4

“I watched my interest for long years and saw her many,
 many shed tears
 Never did she curse, for better or worse,
 Despite her hard life, and her tough decisions,
 She always gave thanks for her small provisions”
 “I see her truly for the first time, now that she’s old and long
 past her prime
 Now as my incessant hunger is repressed, I sit silently in
 thought, dark and depressed
 True to me, may she be set free,
 Now and forever lost to me.”
 The woman departs through the golden clouds, and thus
 enters through heavens pearly shroud
 A splendor of light so blinding to eyes, still he dares not
 advert his gaze through cries

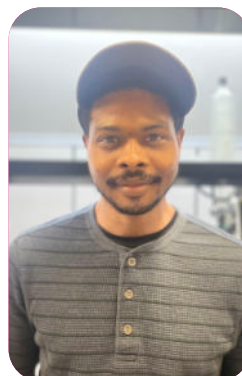
The devil may cry as he says goodbye
 His tears turned to smoke and vanish till dry

Act 5

With eyes burned upon her heavenly visage, the devil loses
 his gift to envisage
 The devil could not stand to be apart, for he had finally
 gained a fond heart
 “Oh, how I’ve grown to love thee, a love surely not to be
 A love fated for failure and one to end tragically.”
 The devil wallows in loneliness, void of all bliss in his dark
 abyss
 Though blind, the devil now clearly sees, and pays the price
 for penitent fees
 “Can salvation be granted to one such as me?
 May I gaze upon her beauty once more I plea?”
 “A hand reaches out to me from above, so I may ascend to
 the one I Love
 Scales now stripped from my very eyes, although I cannot
 fathom why
 For one such as me who slipped and fell
 Now raised and freed from my personal hell”

Epilogue

The angel and devil, together forever, a bond once broken,
 will not ever be severed
 The angel forgives, the devil redeemed; transformed,
 transfigured, no longer a fiend
 United by love
 They’re at peace above



DURELL DESMOND

Raven Rite (Dr. Durell S. Desmond) is an amateur poet without a background in the arts. During his time working as an environmental scientist, he whimsically wrote poetry focusing on the themes of nature, humanity, spirituality, and family.