



smyrna, Tennessee

St. Patrick's Anglican Church

An Ancient Faith for Modern Times

Letters from the Wilderness

#2

Dear Saints,

If you have been following church news then you know that it is starting to get crowded out here in the wilderness. Two historic churches in Virginia with combined memberships of over 4,000 voted last weekend to leave The Episcopal Church. Additionally four to six other churches in Virginia have done the same or are close behind

(see story <http://www.foxnews.com/story/0,2933,237121,00.html>).

So we may have to share the manna with a bunch of Virginians (and Floridians and Texans and an entire Diocese in California) but God will provide for these faithful souls as well. I bring this up because you need to know that while we were the first to choose another path in our diocese, we are far from being the first or the last in the Nation.

And speaking of manna, as well as continued emails and letters of support we also received a check for over \$1,000 from the Anglican Church of the Redeemer in Chattanooga as a symbol of their love and appreciation! Typical of the outpouring is this from a priest from in Wisconsin. *“Please be assured that you and the faithful of St Patrick's are in our prayers up here in the northland. It goes without saying that your courage and witness to the Gospel are speaking for themselves as you are continuing the journey. Please be assured that you have the prayers and support of our people at Sts Thomas & John.”* I have also been told that two Baptist Churches in our state are praying for us by name in their Sunday worship services. So not only are we not alone, we are being under girded by the prayers and love and financial contributions of the Body of Christ.

A word about being in the wilderness. It really is not that bad. We had our first Mass at Smyrna Assembly of God and there were 217 present on a Sunday afternoon during a Titans home game. The baptism was glorious, the congregation was joyful and the Sacrament was valid. What else could we ask for? While it was not the sacred space we were used to and we can expect a season of adjustment for us all, I want to encourage us to keep two things in mind. First the gracious Pentecostals are sharing their home with us and while it is unfamiliar it is still holy space. We should be respectful of their facility and make every effort to leave it in pristine condition. Second we need to remember, particularly this week, that given that our Lord was born in a cave (the stable of His day) we need to be grateful for whatever we have and wherever we are. One parishioner commented to me that she didn't miss all of “our stuff” as much as she thought she would. Neither did I and that is because the joy

of obeying the Lord and the joy of all of us being together far outweighs the things we left behind.

Last week I heard the testimony of a reporter covering the horrors of the genocide in the Sudan. One night she heard the singing of children and so she followed the voices and came across an open field where children were singing praises to God under a star filled night. That is the stuff of real Christianity. That comes from a Savior born in a cave. We will launch a building fund, and God willing, we will purchase land and build again. But in the meantime we have the Lord and we have each other and so like George Bailey in *It's a Wonderful Life*, we need to know that we are the richest people in the world. This is a sacred and humble season and like those children in the Sudan, we can be a part of it wherever we are. O come let us adore Him.

Fr. Ray +

