



AMERICAN NATIONAL CATHOLIC CHURCH

Dear sisters and brothers of the American National Catholic Church,

Peace and apostolic blessings! I wanted to capture some of my thoughts of our first clergy convocation and share them with you as we continue together to discern where the Holy Spirit is leading us.

First, let me thank each and every one of you for making the time to attend our first convocation. Your attendance required personal sacrifice and speaks to me of your commitment to dedicating the time and energy needed to establish the ANCC as a credible and valid expression of Catholicism in the United States. Thank you all.

My first impression is formed by this tremendous dedication to the mission of the ANCC. What follows from this dedication, I think is, a feeling of confidence in who we minister with. I heard what several of the members of the gathering captured - the sense of safety we feel in ministering in the ANCC. We are able to say this because we have established a set of criteria which all members of the clergy must meet before anyone can minister in the church. This assurance of a professional and fair process is a logical outgrowth of the founding principle of the ANCC to capture the promise of the Independent Sacramental Movement (ISM) movement, while learning from and avoiding the mistakes made by others so many times before. The ANCC's adherence to this founding principle has created a presbyterate in which we can have a sense of trust in those we ministering alongside.

Many of our discussions about the Church led us back to the Eucharist. Indeed our entire gathering was very much centered on our time at the Eucharist. I witnessed how all of us see ourselves as Catholics gathered around the gift of God's self in the Eucharist. Many of us - in fact most of us - echoed the Second Vatican Council's belief about the life of the Church flowing from the Eucharist. We seemed to embody the Council's view of the Eucharist as essentially in the people of God, the Body of Christ, and the importance of including everyone in our beliefs about communion. This reminded me about the importance of the life of prayer to us all and how that message organically flows to the people who we are sent to minister to. From this we recall that we have been called to preach the Gospel of Jesus Christ - not our own. In the midst of the grace flowing from our life of prayer, centered around the Eucharist, we saw how we had to unite ourselves to the *missio dei*.

From this sense of dedication, trust, creative energy, and understanding ourselves as a Eucharistic Church, grew the sense of safety to explore ourselves in a missional dimension. We continue to experience the joy of rediscovering the importance of God's call to be God's people and exploring what it means to be Jesus' presence in the world. We realized that we are not bound by the institutional constraints of others. As a result we can form communities striving to live out Christ's command to love each other as he loved us.

My prayer is that we will be able to harness the tremendous creative energy I felt in the members of the convocation. As I listened to many of you share what attracted you to the ANCC, I heard the joy of being able to minister in the manner we have heard God calling. Each of us has found here some expression of the truest desires of our hearts being fulfilled. I saw the joy of discovering a priesthood more concerned with the Church communicating the love of God to everyone than with finding a way to fence off God's grace. This energy is diverse, and I am not naïve enough to think that we all agree with each other on every aspect of the Church's future; however, I think the convocation provided a forum where everyone felt that their voice could be heard and respected. Now, the task for us is to organize this energy into a common vision, engaging everyone's unique talents.

Sincerely yours in Christ,

A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads "George R. Lucey, FCM". The signature is written in dark ink and is positioned above the typed name.

Most Rev. George R. Lucey, FCM
Presiding Bishop