

11/14/2024

Gathering...

This past Friday and Saturday, we gathered in Riverside for our diocesan convention. This year's convention was notable for several reasons. One is that we tried to cram all the real "business" of the convention into just one day, which partially worked. But it was a lot for one day. The other reason, and more substantial, was that a good bit of the convention's focus was on recognizing the 50th anniversary of women's ordination in the Episcopal Church. And that was rightly and very well observed, with opportunities to hear from one of the first women ordained in our Church, the Rev. Dr. Carter Heyward.

On Friday night, we enjoyed a viewing of the film, *The Philadelphia Eleven*, about the "irregular" ordination of Heyward and her ten colleagues. They were ordained by three courageous retired bishops, in the Church of the Advocate in Philadelphia, in opposition of the Church's official position at the time. For these women, justice had been delayed for too long, and justice delayed is justice denied. As one of them said at the time, their "vocation was not to continue to ask for permission to be a priest, but to be a priest."* They knew, as we know now, that God calls whoever God calls to be priests, irrespective of gender, race, orientation, or any of the other things people have used to discriminate and exclude. God knows what God is doing!

The documentary film is, in a word, fantastic and I look forward to experiencing it again. We will arrange for a viewing at St. Clement's, so you too can see it (if you haven't already). The tremendous resistance that these women faced, the misogyny, the false claims that they were unqualified due to their gender, that their ordinations were invalid and the death threats they received, were all of course difficult to take in, but made their resilience all the more compelling.

Today, I believe that about 40% of the ordained in our beloved Church are women. So, we've come a long way! But, as Mo. Norma Guerra (former assistant rector at St. Clement's) explained in her homily, we still have work to do, especially regarding equity. I'm grateful that at St. Clement's we have, as long as I've known, supported women's ordination and have been blessed with several, and extremely gifted, female clergy throughout the decades, including the rector who preceded me and went on to become a bishop, the Rt. Rev. Diane Bruce.

You can learn more about the Philadelphia Eleven here. And more about the film here.

Other convention items included the passing of our diocesan budget. We joyously welcomed St. Andrew's in Irvine to full church status, from their former mission church status. We renewed our companion diocese relationship with the Diocese of Jerusalem. And we noted that at next year's convention we will elect a bishop coadjutor, who will then serve with our Diocesan Bishop, the Rt. Rev. John Taylor, until his retirement in 2026. In all, a very meaningful convention. If you have interest in participating next year, perhaps even standing for election as one of our delegates, with both voice and vote, I hope you will let me know.

As always, I welcome your feedback: frpatrick@scbythesea.org

Yours in Christ,
Fr. Patrick

*https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Philadelphia_Eleven