

CHAPTER III

“En famille” : Ecumenical hospitality

The Anglican Bishop of the Diocese of Quebec, Bruce Myers, shares with us this moving narrative of what can be well described as “ecumenical hospitality”:

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*In the year I spent as Coadjutor Bishop of the Anglican Diocese of Quebec, awaiting a more permanent move into the official episcopal residence, I crashed with the neighbours. More specifically, I was invited to live at the official residence of the Roman Catholic Archbishop of Quebec, Cardinal Gérald Cyprien Lacroix. The Cardinal’s home, archevêché, is situated in Old Quebec, beside the city’s Roman Catholic cathedral, Notre-Dame Basilica, just a short walk away from our own Anglican Cathedral of the Holy Trinity.*

*The place is home not only to the Cardinal, but also to the Roman Catholic Diocese of Quebec’s two auxiliary bishops, a retired bishop, about a half-dozen priests, and occasionally a couple of nuns. Each of us had our own individual rooms, but, significantly we shared our meals together, en famille (“family style”), as Cardinal Lacroix likes to say! Family is indeed just the right word to use because my erstwhile housemates are indeed sisters*

*and brothers in Christ, and I was welcomed as a sibling. Despite the different Christian traditions from which we come, we are bound together by the waters of our common baptism, a sacramental bond even more fundamental than genetics. In this case water turns out to be thicker than blood. “It’s a family,” Cardinal Lacroix once explained, “and we welcomed Bishop Bruce as a brother.”*

*As that description suggests, living at the archevêché was much more than living at a residence. There were also regular occasions to socialize and to pray together. When not travelling I would attend mass every morning with the other bishops, participating as fully as our respective traditions allow. It was both a daily celebration of the rich liturgical heritage which Anglicans and Roman Catholics share, and a daily reminder of the pain of our existing divisions as churches in real but imperfect communion. Cardinal Lacroix said that this feeling was mutual: “It was painful for [Bruce], but for us as well. And it’s good that it’s painful, because we don’t want it to remain this way. We desire a full unity. And how do we do that? There are steps: we pray, we work.”*

*In the same way that I was given such a hospitable welcome, another kind of hospitality has been extended in the other direction. During a liturgy in 2016, a chair of equal prominence to the Anglican Bishop of Quebec’s Cathedral was dedicated in the Cathedral of the Holy Trinity “as a permanent seat in this cathedral for the Roman Catholic Archbishop of Quebec.” At this service, Cardinal Lacroix was formally seated in what is known as “The Archbishop’s Chair,” which the liturgy described as “an outward and visible symbol of our churches’ desire to grow together in unity and mission, and a foretaste of the full communion which is our desire and our Lord’s will.”*



In *The Church as Communion*, ARCIC II invited Anglicans and Roman Catholics locally “to search for further steps by which concrete expression can be given to this communion which we share” (CC, 58). *The Gift of Authority* placed a particular call in this regard on bishops when it said: “For the sake of koinonia and a united Christian witness to the world, Anglican and Roman Catholic bishops should find ways of cooperating and developing relationships of mutual accountability in their exercise of oversight. At this new stage we have not only to *do* together whatever we can, but also to *be* together all that our existing koinonia allows” (GA, 58). In both of the gestures described above – the unique episcopal living arrangement, and the unprecedented Anglican Cathedral furnishings – we see two modest yet powerfully tangible examples of these ecumenical commitments being lived out.

At the same time, CC also notes the paradoxical phenomenon that “the closer we draw together the more acutely we feel those differences which remain” (CC, 58). Each story testified to this reality as well, demonstrating a reality that is all too familiar to those who engage in ecumenical relationships with their presently separated members of the Christian family. Though this can be a difficult thing to bear, it serves to hold before us the fact that while we have advanced very far in the healing of our relationships as Anglicans and Roman Catholics in the last 50-60 years, we have not yet reached the ultimate destination on our journey. To quote ARCIC II once again, “together with all Christians, Anglicans and Roman Catholics are called by God to continue to pursue the goal of complete communion of faith and sacramental life” (CC, 58). It is always good to be spurred on ever further, even when that motivation comes along with a measure of sadness and pain.



*Cardinal Gérald Cyprien Lacroix (left) and Bishop Dennis Drainville (right) in prayer together before the cross / Daniel Abel, Basilique-cathédrale-Notre-Dame-de-Québec*

While these stories refer specifically to the experiences of these particular bishops as individuals and their strong ecumenical friendship, the seeds they have planted have also borne fruit in a wider sense. In these gestures of welcome uniquely offered and received by their respective leaders, the two Dioceses have come to

receive one another in greater hospitality as well. This has now begun to give rise to further opportunities for collaboration and cooperation in many different spheres.

Speaking on the fiftieth anniversary of the Anglican Centre in Rome in 2016, Pope Francis and Archbishop of Canterbury Justin Welby jointly declared the following: “Our ability to come together in praise and prayer to God and witness to the world rests on the confidence that we share a common faith and a substantial measure of agreement in faith.” In the case of these two bishops in Quebec City, one could also add the ability to sit together and even live together. And yet, their statement does not leave things there. It goes further to say that because of this newfound ability to come together, therefore “the world must [also] see us witnessing to this common faith in Jesus by *acting together*.”

*Have you experienced a close “ecumenical friendship” with a member of another Christian community, and how has it affected your faith?*

*Can you share any examples from your own context of similar gestures of ecumenical hospitality as those described in the story? Why are these sorts of symbols important?*