

BISHOP TUTU PRAYS THE DAILY OFFICE

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From: "Means of Grace, Hope of Glory"

<https://www.orderoftheascension.org/means-of-grace-hope-of-glory/2022/1/2/bishop-tutu-prays-the-daily-office.html>



I had to redo my sermon because of late breaking news. Bishop Tutu had died on 1 Christmas, and I was to be the celebrant and preacher for the mass on Zoom that morning. Easy enough. He was a light in the darkness.

After mass I sent a message to members of the Order of the Ascension that touched on two matters related to Blessed Desmond. A few others then shared their experience with him.

I only met him once. In 1984 he won the Nobel Peace Prize. He had been staying at General Seminary (GTS) in New York that year and had agreed to speak at the convention of the Diocese of Connecticut. I was on the Connecticut bishop's staff through much of the 80s. My bishop asked me to pick Bishop Tutu up and drive him to the convention. Linda Miska was the communications person on staff and an Associate of the Order of the Ascension. She and I drove to the City to get the bishop. That was against the backdrop of our bishop having had a visit by agents of the South African security services. No direct threats had been made. Maybe they thought Bishop Arthur would be so impressed by them that he would cancel Bishop Tutu's address.

Linda and I got ourselves to GTS in plenty of time. Things did get off to a rocky start as the parking limit in front of the seminary was just an hour. Bishop Tutu really liked people. He liked to talk with them. He listened to them. He would allow them to impact his schedule. In this case, my schedule. Linda and I hung around outside what was then the school's bookstore. I tried to look patient. I think Linda was thrilled just to be watching the bishop as he slowly made his way toward us through a crowd of students and others congratulating him on the Prize. While all this was happening a police officer was writing a ticket to place on my car. A student front desk staffer saw that and rushed out. The conversation was something like this. Student: "The car is for Bishop Tutu. He just won the Nobel Peace Prize. He'll be out in a minute." Officer: That's great.

This is New York City. Here's the ticket." The bishop gets in the back seat. I start to drive. I was using city streets because by this time the major highways were jammed. I think we were someplace in Harlem when Blessed Desmond said, "Father, could we stop and say the Office?" My mind raced through a mix of logistics and anxieties. Was there enough time? I wanted to say the Office with this man. We were still far from the convention site. My bishop wouldn't be happy if I didn't get this South African saint to the convention on time. So, I said, "maybe we could do that once we're out of the city." He accepted that.

As we moved into Connecticut, I noticed that he had gone to sleep. His head resting on a green and white pillow my grandmother had made for me. I wish I still had that pillow. When I saw that he was awake I asked if he wanted to say the Office. "That's alright. I've said it for us." He had quietly said Evening Prayer in the backseat as we left New York.



We arrived at the convention center. As I pulled in, my car was surrounded by police officers. They wanted to search for bombs. That had not been among my anxieties.

The Church is the fellowship whence adoration, worship and praise ascend to the heavenly throne and in company with the angels and archangels and with the whole host of heaven we sing as did the cherubic choir in Isaiah's vision and as we shall soon be bidden to do in his glorious service: Holy, Holy, Holy, Lord God of Hosts, Heaven and earth are full of thy glory. [i] Desmond Tutu

More in the days ahead.

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