

Come Holy Spirit, touch our minds and think with them, touch our lips and speak with them, and touch our hearts and set them on fire with love for you. Amen.

This afternoon, we come together for a celebration of something new and something good. Mark has been called to be your rector, if you haven't heard before now. He and Laura, Miriam, and Jacob have come a long way to get here, literally traversing an ocean and a continent, 5,500 miles to begin an adventure with you.

In the Episcopal Church, we used to call this service an installation, I always thought that's an interesting image. It's like you buy a new dishwasher, you plug it in and you hope it works. From everything I've heard so far, it seems to be working pretty well. It's really good that we call this a celebration of new ministry, because of the elegant mutuality that God has called us to create here.

Mark has been called into this new ministry and so have you, good people of Saint James. I was feeling pretty good about all this until last Sunday. See, we had this thing at the cathedral called St. George's Day Evensong. You know Saint George, the patron Saint of England. Your rector was the preacher and I'm afraid that, well I'm just afraid. I mean it's all things English, and I drove up here and there are all these British flags and I saw a picture of the Queen of England.

You know, Mark came from the diocese of London. If you're a student of the Episcopal Church history and the history of the United States, you may know that during the whole colonial period, the church and the colonies were over the oversight of the Bishop of London. I'm thinking, "British Air starts flying back into San Diego bigger and bigger planes, and now we have a priest as rector in La Jolla." I'm just really glad that after we sang God Save The Queen, we also then immediately sang The Star Spangled Banner. You know those rocket's red glares? They're your [pointing to Fr. Mark] rockets. You burned our White House and we're not over

that yet. Just wanted to lay this all out and make sure we're all clear here.

No, I am very happy you're here. I know Laura you'll keep him straight on all of this US/British stuff – probably have been doing that for quite some time.

Calling processes never go in a straight line. You, the people of St. James know that very well. They are curiously curvy and non-linear, and take us to what can only be described as teachable moments. I wonder if your calling committee or your vestry had any clue that you would be calling a London vicar. If you had a vision to see that possibility, I also wonder, might you have asked different questions? Those of you who were involved in the calling process, always set questions you ask. Then there are interview questions that are thought through very carefully.

I must say, just returning to Evensong before last Sunday, Mark's sermon which was really interesting, I probably would not have taken the risk that I'm about to take, but he took a great risk. He used the English food spread marmite as his continuous motif through the sermon. I thought that was a brave and spectacular thing. I have to follow his lead a little bit here, and look for a connective tissue for what I want to say. I think this is what I wonder about your calling committee: what if they had used as their primary question of the calling process what I saw few weeks ago on Facebook, which is a questionnaire that determines which member of the cast of Downton Abbey are you?

I think that would have been inspired. Downton Abbey, as you all may know ... I trust that you all do know Downton Abbey, and if you don't, you can now get it for free on Netflix. Downton Abbey is a fictional Yorkshire country estate under the care of the Earl of Grantham and his American-born wife and their three daughters. The six seasons that have just ended spanned from 1912 and the sinking of the Titanic through 1925. The saga, it captures

the interplay of the Crawley family and their servants. It's just a lot of fun.

Who would Mark be? Would he be the Earl of Grantham? Maybe so. Trying to hold the expensive estate together. Caring for all the villagers and the farmers dependent on it for their living. Maybe. Or maybe everybody's favorite, the Dowager Countess. Has the best lines in the series. Trying to cling to that past world. God forbid that he be Thomas, always scheming, not to be trusted. He might be Bates, ever suffering, true and good. Some of you would want him to be Carson the butler, the archetypal servant. The possibilities are endless. Cousin Matthew, but he dies too early. Mosely, Mrs. Patmore, Dr. Carson, Branson, one of the daughters. He could be Lady Mary or Lady Edith, but I have to tell you they are always at each other's throat, jockeying for position and harboring resentments and fears. That just wouldn't be right. Doesn't feel right.

No, this is where I finally lighted. I think your new rector would score as being Lady Sybil. Lady Sybil, for those of you who are not familiar with this series, was the one who bridges two worlds, the aristocrats and the servants. That bridge is most notably seen in her love for and ultimate marriage to the chauffeur, Tom Branson. She's also one who seeks to change herself in tumultuous and trying times. World War I comes upon England and Downton Abbey, and in a world suddenly cast into violence and incredible carnage, this Sybil that seeks and receives training as a nurse and then is pivotal and an inspiration, and dare I say leader in the transformation of the estate into a hospital for wounded soldiers.

In the end, and seemingly too early in the story of Downton, Sybil gives her life in birth for her child, an apt symbol for her work. A child of course is a new thing. This child represents, incarnates that bridging, that bonding of two worlds. The child represents a whole new world which brings to us again, ancient words that we heard from the pen of the apostle Paul to the church in Rome. Do not be conformed to this world, but be transformed by

the renewing of your minds so that you may discern what is the will of God, what is good and acceptable and perfect.

The vocation of the church is to move us from conforming to the standards of the world to the standards of Jesus. Every lesson we read, every song we sing, every decision we make should be about building up Christ within each of us, not conforming to the world, but conforming to Christ renewing our minds. That is the really important thing about this fellowship. That is why this community exists. Beloved of St. James, God has entrusted you with each other and the ministry of reconciliation. God has trusted you with the care and tending of the harvest which is La Jolla.

That's something your new rector understands, and I pray that he teaches all of us that the parish is not confined to property or parishioners. Rather, the parish is the community in which St. James, this church, is located. To be more specific, what we should be celebrating today is that Mark is not rector simply of St. James by the sea. No, this is the rector of La Jolla, and you're sharing with him your ministry to the community of La Jolla.

I know that one of the concerns about all churches, and I know you're no exception to this, is about numbers. About numbers going down, people in the pews and all. I have good news for you today. Your parish is made up of 42,000 souls. That's a lot of parishioners. That is an abundant harvest. The Lord of the harvest is sending you into that field to do that work. When you think about 42,000, the laborers are few but we will pray to the Lord of the harvest, and the laborers will come if we focus on what the ancients called the cure of souls. Which takes me back to Downton Abbey and to Sybil.

If Mark as missionary from England has the characteristic of Lady Sybil, over time he'll bring us along. In daylight, Downton, this grand edifice might actually be transformed into a hospital of sorts for those who need God's healing mercies. I dare say you're well on your way before you even had your new rector arrive. Each of you in so many

ways already act as nurse and caregiver, and with his leadership and pastoring, those gifts can grow and the Spirit can do the Spirit's work.

Mark, as is customary on this side of the pond at least, I invite you to stand and receive a charge.

[Facing Fr. Mark] Dear one, our Lord has placed in your hands His beloved of La Jolla. Those present and those out in the mission field. Hold fast to your understanding of your parochial cure. You are rector of La Jolla. That's your cure of souls. I find myself thinking of words of Augustine of Hippo reflecting on his own cure, and I think they're apropos for this moment. He wrote the turbulent need to be corrected, the faint-hearted cheered up, the weak supported, opponents of the Gospel must be refuted, insidious enemies guarded against, the impertinent should be instructed, the indolent stirred up, the argumentative checked, the proud should be put in their place, the desperate put on their feet, those engaged in quarrels reconciled, the needy have to be helped, the oppressed liberated, the good given their backing, the bad tolerated, and here is the money quote, and all must be loved. A comprehensive list to be sure, and one that no one priest can accomplish by themselves.

[To the congregation] Which is where you come in. And so, I ask you the people of St. James, the ministers of this community to stand as you're able with your rector.

Beloved, you are the body of Christ in this place and in this time. God has called you together to do Christ's ministry in this new season. What an adventure you are about to share in this ministry of mutual support and care. For the harvest is plentiful, but the laborers are few. God is calling you to join in the cure of souls. May this St. James by the sea be a hospital in which souls are cared for, mended, and healed.

Grace and peace to you.