



LeaderResources in the News

President Bush, First Lady visit American Cathedral in Paris

By Matthew Davies, June 18, 2008

[Episcopal News Service] President George W. Bush and his wife, Laura, were among the visitors attending the 11 a.m. Holy Eucharist service on June 15 at the [American Cathedral in Paris](#).

The Bushes were accompanied by U.S. Ambassador to France Craig Roberts Stapleton and his wife, Debbie, both parishioners at the cathedral. The president's visit was part of a weeklong tour of Europe, which included June 16 meetings in London with British Prime Minister Gordon Brown.

In celebration of Father's Day, the June 15 liturgy at the American Cathedral honored the children and youth of the parish, and their mothers and fathers "who love, nurture and support them through the journey into adulthood," said the Very Rev. Zachary Fleetwood, cathedral dean, in a pastoral letter to parishioners.

The children's choir sang with the adults as young people served as lectors and acolytes. Eighteen-year-old Louise Trueheart, who grew up in the cathedral's Sunday school and youth ministry, preached from the pulpit, "giving powerfully authentic witness to the abiding love of God that surrounds each of us in the journey of life," said Fleetwood.

The American Cathedral uses The [Journey to Adulthood](#) (J2A) as its youth ministry program. J2A is widely used throughout the Episcopal Church. Fleetwood said one of the most dramatic moments of that journey is the annual Rite 13 ceremony, which was used during the June 15 service.

"In this liturgy, young people in the J2A youth program, and their parents, participate in a lovely and moving ritual, marking the passage from childhood to manhood and womanhood," he said. "Such ritual acknowledgement lies deep in the traditions of many religions and cultures, including our own. We human beings need ritual expression in the face of life's great moments and mysteries."

Describing Bush's visit as "a great honor and historic occasion," Fleetwood said the president was "most gracious in taking the time to greet and congratulate our Rite 13 'celebrities' and their families. In speaking with me privately, the president was visibly moved in expressing his heartfelt gratitude for the generous hospitality of the cathedral."

During the service, Bishop Pierre Whalon of the [Convocation of American Churches in Europe](#) introduced Archbishop Fidèle Dirokpa of Congo and his wife, Ruth, who were visiting Paris and the convocation while en route to England. Dirokpa, who was greeted by the president, was enthusiastically welcomed by the cathedral community with spontaneous applause, said Fleetwood.

"It was a great moment, a poignant reminder of our deep family ties within the Anglican Communion, despite our divisions," he said.

In February, Whalon embarked on a mission trip to the Anglican Province of the Congo to seek possibilities for forging companion relationships.

The Convocation of American Churches in Europe is a jurisdiction of Episcopal parishes, missions, and specialized ministries serving in eight countries of Europe and central Asia. The American Cathedral serves as the "mother church" for the convocation.

Speaking about the president's visit, Whalon, who has served as bishop of the convocation since 2001, commended Fleetwood and the cathedral staff, as well as the French police and Secret Service, for "handling everything perfectly."

-- Matthew Davies is editor of Episcopal Life Online and Episcopal Life Media correspondent for the Anglican Communion.