



Highlights of diocesan news in printable format — May 25, 2022

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From Bishop Hughes

May is Asian American and Pacific Islander Awareness Month. Why do we celebrate awareness months?

This is a transcript from a video message.

This is Bishop Hughes in the Diocese of Newark, and it is Asian American Pacific Islander Awareness Month. This is one of the five months that I've asked every parish, all 93 of them, to observe in a way that makes the most sense for them, and that works within the context of their gathering for worship and for other events. It's late in the month for us to be talking about this, but the month is not over yet, and certainly you don't have to stop your celebration after the month is over. And many parishes have already been thinking about Asian American Pacific Islander, or AAPI, Awareness Month, all of the month of May. There have been festivals, there have been special prayers, there have been book studies, there have been suggestions for things to watch in terms of television and film – a number of ways that parishes have been thinking about how to be more aware and more observant of Asian Americans and Pacific Islanders and the cultures that they may observe.

Part of why we do this, to observe these various months, Black History Month in February, AAPI Awareness month in May, Pride Month which begins next month in June. In mid-September,

September 15, we begin Hispanic awareness or Latino Awareness Month. And then November, Indigenous People or Native American Awareness Month. Part of the reason we do this is for our own education. But part of it is to show the amount of honor and respect we have for those cultures that are part of who we are as a diocese, and more importantly, who we are as people of God.

Somebody said to me at one point this year, "When you focus on all those awareness months, you're making us separate, Bishop!" And I said, "Think of it a different way. When your grandchild asked you how did you meet your spouse? Or tell the story of how they came into being? Does it feel like you're being separated from them? No, it feels like your history is being honored and that your love of that child is being honored and the love of your family is being honored." The same thing with these awareness months. It gives us a chance to show how much we love, honor and appreciate those folks who are walking in and around us and part of our lives, or people who we want to get to know better.

There's another reason that this is especially important right now. It has become a way of being for some to "other," to look at other groups of people and call them "other" and to ostracize them, to discriminate against them, to call them "those people" that live "that way" – to make them other than ourselves. And othering has gotten to the place where not only is it disrespectful, it is dangerous. We, the things that we saw happen in Buffalo with the death of those 10 people who

simply went to the grocery store to shop, is the extreme version of othering.

So when we do what we do to honor people through these awareness months, it is to provide a preventative. It is to help us see that we're all actually part of one another. There is no one of us, that is "other." We are all more of who we are because of all of us being part of the same family, that is the people of God. So I invite you, if you haven't started a celebration, or taken any kind of steps to focus your parish on Asian American Pacific Islander Awareness Month, it's not too late! Go ahead and start now.

Features

The Rev. Deacon Sun-Hwan Spriggs on her immigrant experience

On May 8, 2022, her final Sunday serving at St. George's, Maplewood, Deacon Sun gave a sermon in which she described at length her experience coming to the U.S. as a 16-year-old immigrant from South Korea.

This is a transcript from a live stream video.

May the words of my mouth, and the meditations of our all our hearts, be pleasing to you, oh God, our strength and our Redeemer. Amen.

Good morning. Well, this morning, since we're celebrating Asian American and Pacific Islander Heritage Month, I thought I would share a bit of my immigration story. So over 50 years ago – and I don't want you to do the math, because you will know my age – so over 50 years ago, on December 28, I entered America with my family. I was 16 years old. We flew from Seoul, South Korea, to Seattle, and we landed late at night. The terminal we landed in was a huge – so big that I felt dwarfed by the size. There were not too many people around and I had never seen such a large place with such a few people. The terminal was a very bright like the daytime. Everything was a big,

spacious and bright compared to where I came from. I thought the Koreans were correct in saying that in America everything is bigger, even the moon. I liked what I saw.

From Seattle, we took a connecting flight to Washington, DC. I don't remember much about DC terminal. But I remember one incident after we arrived. My younger brother and I decided to explore the streets around the hotel we were staying at. We found a store nearby. But better yet, we found bananas. Lots of bananas. Banana was a specialty item in Korea so we never had enough of. So my brother and I we went for it. And probably it's more accurate to say we dove into it. In our excitement, we did not see the bottles displayed around the bananas, so you can you imagine what happened. Of course, we broke some bottles. We were terribly embarrassed, but people were kind. They asked us whether we're okay and cleaned up the mess without any commotion. I'm sure they knew we just arrived in this country. Their kindness, their kindness was a great gift to the new arrivals.

So these were the first 48 hours of memory in this country. If I felt any fear of being in a foreign country it was quickly overcome by my excitement. I wanted to live in *miguk*. *Miguk* is the name Koreans gave to America or the U.S. It means, "beautiful country."

Korea has been changing a lot in the past decades, particularly under the influence of American culture. But when I was growing up Korean culture didn't allow individualism. We were taught from a very young age that our life was for the country, for the society, for the community, for the clan and for the family, and in that order of importance and priority. The idea of "I" was disparaged, and "we" was promoted. Korean culture was a culture of conformity and shared values. There is a beauty in such a cultural norm. But when the norm is constantly reinforced, one can feel trapped and oppressed.

And the Korean culture was highly patriarchal. I struggled in my native culture and often felt oppressed. I was frequently told that I was too strong-willed to be a girl, that I should have been born as a boy. I used to be reprimanded about being curious and having my own ideas or opinions as a girl. I was even told that my name is a masculine name, that I should ask my father to change it to more proper girl's name. Now, let me digress here. My name is Sun-Hwan comes from the Chinese characters. Sun means goodness and kindness, and Hwan means brightness like fire. So I think it is a great Christian name, right? Serve others and be a light. And I try to live up to my name.

Now back to my main point. In contrast to Korean culture, the U.S. culture was more towards individualism, and the creative space for me to work and finding my selfhood and my voice as an individual. There was a lot of letting go of my past life and which created a space for new life. The process of being myself has been long and hard work. And I can really relate to Paul in today's epistle. When the pain and suffering were overwhelming, God always provided me a safety net to catch me and bounce me back to life with hope. The spaciousness and kindness I experienced in my first 48 hours were in some ways a metaphor for my journey and transformation in this country.

I've always been grateful to my parents for bringing me here, and this country for receiving me. But I came to realize that while I had lived with gratitude, I had been living in this country as a guest. Now don't get me wrong, I have been a naturalized citizen for over 45 years. But I still felt I was a guest, and that this country was doing me a favor for letting me live here. And this forced me to be a model minority. And I didn't fully claim to be an American. It was only several years ago that I realized I was living with internalized oppression. Which means that although I was a fully participating member of this society, I always felt that because I'm an immigrant, I don't have the

same rights as people who were born here. I became aware of this fact as I was struggling with the toxicity from the rise of the white supremacy movement. I thought a lot about racial relationships and it became a catalyst to recognize my own biases. When I'm in tumult and struggling God shines light in the darkness and the darkness does not overcome it, as it says in John's gospel. So I look for the divine light when I experience the darkness in my life, since the divine light reveals God's invitation in through the darkness. I do not think God necessarily creates darkness, but when it happens, God worked through it to make whole to make me whole. This is how I saw my own internalized oppression. And in recent years I have been working on being aware of and letting go of my unhealthy attitudes and allowing myself to fully embrace my American identity.

Now, as I fully embrace my identity, things, things bother me about this country more deeply than before. We have a lot of problems we need to deal with, and sadly, they keep coming. And we cannot not talk about what just happened in a way I'm still in shock. I cannot say I was surprised but I'm still in shock. It has been a week since we heard of the leaked draft of a Supreme Court opinion signaling the overturn of Roe vs. Wade. I cannot help but asking, "What century am I living in?" If women do not have the most basic and fundamental rights to our own bodies, how can people speak of a social economic and political equality for women?

I know many of us are hurting today. The question is how do we serve our siblings who are marginalized while we're struggling with injustice ourselves? How can you live with a disappointment and anger and sometimes despair in the face of a continual erosion of human rights? I find the answer in today's Psalm: "Be a stronghold in times of trouble, be a stronghold for the oppressed." And we can do stronghold only through God. As Paul said, we're like earthen vessels. As you know earthen vessels are fragile, right? Can be easily scratched, chipped, and shattered when dropped.

With such characteristics it will be hard to find any earthen vessel which is not flawed. We all are flawed. We all are fragile and vulnerable. And yet, and yet, God chose each one of us to be the instruments of God's love and agents of change for a just world. God meets us where we are, not where we think we ought to be, and works through our failings to bring the good news. And this is the resurrected life in Christ for us. Our flaws and failings are not the end, but God works through them to bring wholeness to life. Hey, why can I say, God is the best recycler.

Historically, St. George's has been a stronghold for the LGBTQ rights and women's rights. In the past two years, we have been earnestly discerning where God is calling us to put our energy and resources to be a stronghold. As we move from discernment to action, I hope you remember God does not wait for us to be perfect. God does not wait for us to be perfect. Again, God works through our failings. God is a redeeming God. As the Zen master Thich Nhat Hanh said, "No mud, no lotus." We should not worry about whether we succeed or how much impact we make, as long as our intentions are deeply rooted in love and faith in God. Sometimes we worry more about the outcome than our intentions. In that case, we need to be honest, and ask who is in control? God, or us?

Here's an excerpt from Thomas Merton's prayer that speaks to this point. He writes, "The fact that I think I'm following your will does not mean that I'm actually doing so. But I believe that the desire to please you does, in fact, please you. I hope that I will never do anything apart from that desire. And I know that if I do this, you will lead me by the right road, though I may know nothing about it."

I pray that as St. George's intention to be an instrument of unconditional love, may you fully trust God in that process. Now, last 21 months – and I counted, it was 21 – it's been it's been fun. It's been joyous. Hard, it's been their hard work. We all did it together. And I am so incredibly grateful that I got ordained in this church, and that

I served last 21 months as your Deacon. I could not have asked for a better parish. I really couldn't. You accepted me with an open heart. You guided me and you supported me. Being in a relationship with such a loving, genuine and authentic people, I feel like I came here to be healed. Although we may be thousands of miles apart, you are always my family. May God bless you, protect you, and keep you safe. Amen.

Diocesan Announcements

Federal holidays this summer

Episcopal House will be closed in observance of these holidays:

- Monday, May 30 – Memorial Day
- Monday, June 20 – Juneteenth
- Monday, July 4 – Independence Day