Good morning Bishop Mary, Clergy and Lay Leaders of the Diocese of El Camino Real. It is a very real pleasure to be with you for this, your 39th Convention. I have just arrived in this diocese three weeks ago, and it has been an amazing time of discovery.

I especially want to thank the diocesan staff for their warm welcome and the many ways in which they have extended themselves to help me to get to know them and what their lives and passions are. They are truly a gifted and committed group of people, dedicated both personally and professionally to God’s ministry and mission—and to providing resource and expertise so that you may serve in the many ways that are yours in your places.

It is such a privilege to be with Bishop Mary during this time of transition. I think we are all participating in and bearing witness to something seldom seen, if ever, in this way. Bishop Mary and I are, I like to say, doing this graceful dance of transition: meeting each other, talking and listening, taking some reflective time, and then re-engaging as we share ideas and experiences. And I would have to admit that there have been quizzical moments, followed by a lot of amusement and downright loud laughter. We could write a book—and maybe we will someday, two little old lady bishops, sitting together on a porch, just as we did our first day together.

When Bishop Mary asked me—in invited, informed, you know how that goes—to speak this morning, I excitedly agreed. That excitement was soon followed by anxiety, as I wondered what to say. I had a moment of channeling the prophet Jeremiah, when he said, “But I don’t know how to speak, for I am only a boy (or a girl!).” The Tech team for this convention had to wait as I sorted this out, so I owe them a debt of gratitude for their patience.
But then, I encountered you. In these past three weeks, I have met you officially on the beach in Monterey, at St. Dunstan’s Carmel Valley, San Pablo Seaside, St. Andrew’s Saratoga, St. Jude’s Cupertino, St. James’ Paso Robles, and St. Luke’s Atascadero, and parish pop-ins at St. John’s Aptos, Calvary Santa Cruz, St. George’s Salinas, and St. James’ Monterey. In these encounters, I am beginning to hear your stories and know who each of you are.

In our conversations, I can begin to see the unfolding of this new part of our journey together as I increase my understanding of the path you have walked with Bishop Mary.

The time of your shared episcopate with Bishop Mary is legendary. With her, you have grown in trust, increased in love, and embraced grace as a way of being. This has enabled you to learn and function ever better as disciples of Jesus. As I reviewed some of your past initiatives and past convention titles, I could see that as this episcopate has developed in a deeper understanding of solid discipleship, you have also paved the way for the next part of our journey, and our shared episcopate.

Thus our theme: “A Call to Pilgrimage.” For this is the next part of the journey for the 21st Century Church. And we here in the Diocese of El Camino Real are ready.

Now, here’s the thing: I think everybody has written a book about pilgrimage. Just for fun, I Googled it, and there are volumes written, going way, way back. And as with a term that has been widely used, the meaning of the word “pilot” or “pilgrimage” has been diverted and sometimes used for practices that aren’t about walking the way of love. Similarly, the word “Christian” has come to mean something that doesn’t always seem Christ-like.

When that happens, it becomes important to go back to the root of the word and reclaim it for what it means and can mean.

So, to get us all on-board with language and with a shared understanding of the term “pilgrimage,” let’s take a look at the word: Pilgrimage comes from the
Old French term “pellegrinage,”—in Spanish, peregrinaje—which was coined in the 13\textsuperscript{th} century. And synonyms for “pilgrim” are “foreigner, or stranger.” Another way of understanding a pilgrimage is that it is an intentional journey of becoming a stranger in a strange land.

You’ll find that I am going to speak a bit from my own experiences this morning, as my pilgrimage on the Camino de Santiago in Northern Spain was transformational and shaped not only my own spiritual life, but also my understanding of the call of the 21\textsuperscript{st} Century church.

As I went on this intentional journey of becoming a stranger in a strange land, I walked a 500-mile path that had been walked by hundreds of thousands of pilgrims before me. There were places where that was so apparent, that I would stop and stare at my own feet, knowing that I was on a path where pilgrims like me had experienced the fullness of the journey for centuries. And all of this was in the dust of the path that I was walking on.

Although I was walking in Spain, I couldn’t help but think of the early apostles who, two thousand years ago, embarked on their own pilgrimages. Remember that the Book of Acts tells us that they gathered in Jerusalem, and then, with others who were there as well, they were sent forth to walk the paths of the known earth. And as apostles, witnesses to the resurrected Christ, they were to bring this good news to the ends of the earth. This was their shared episcopate—to become strangers in strange lands … walking among those they did not know, but would soon know … learning, listening, and spreading the good news.

The hagiographies, or stories of saints, tell us that Thomas went to what is now known as India; Mary Magdalene, we hear, went to England; James showed up in Spain, and so on.

So, our shared episcopate, the one we will begin on January 11\textsuperscript{th}, is this next part of the journey—this call to apostleship through a journey of pilgrimage.
Just as an aside, the episcopate in our church comes down to the bishop through what we call apostolic succession. The laying on of hands by the consecrating Bishops ensures that the line traces back all the way to the original apostles, and each Bishop has their own number in that line of succession.

When Bishop Mary and others lay their hands on me, on all of our behalfs, that number that I am given is the number of our shared episcopate, or our shared apostleship, if you will.

But, back to the matter at hand. “A Call to Pilgrimage” is a call to embark on a journey, one that has been studied by many, as we said. In order to answer this call and to begin our journey, we need to prepare a bit. There are many pilgrimages in the world, and my own experiences with this are based on the Camino de Santiago in Northern Spain. Before I began the Camino, I did what you have already done in many ways; I prepared. I read 13 books on the Camino, carefully tested and bought the right boots and socks, the right backpack, the right walking sticks, and clothing. I was set.

Yet there were lessons that I learned that can inform the way that we, as a diocese, engage our pilgrimage experience.

To put us into good conversation, let’s go to a pilgrimage experience that is found in scripture. On your tables, you will find papers that have a brief lectio. So, pass those around. As we read, the question for us to consider is: How do you think the disciples were feeling when they were sent out in this way?

“And he called to him the twelve, and began to send them out two by two, and gave them authority over the unclean spirits. He charged them to take nothing for their journey except a staff, no bread, no bag, no money in their belts; but to wear sandals and not put on two tunics.” Mark 6:7-9 (RSV)

[7 minutes]

As you read the Lectio a second time, consider the question: What experience have you had where you were the equipment that Jesus is talking about? In what way did the simplicity of that realization surprise you?
“Jesus called the Twelve to him, and sent them out in pairs. He gave them authority and power to deal with the evil opposition. He sent them off with these instructions: ‘Don’t think you need a lot of extra equipment for this. YOU are the equipment. No special appeals for funds. Keep it simple.’ (MSG)

[10 minutes]

When I read this account, it strikes me that this moment serves as a training ground for the disciples. For we know that what comes after the resurrection of Jesus is the Pentecost experience that we discussed earlier. As apostles in this early expression of the Jesus Movement, these men and women stepped out into pilgrimage. It seems to me that they probably remembered the particular moment in their discipleship when Jesus had sent them out. Now, though, it’s more than training ground: it’s the real thing; it’s the Christian version of pilgrimage.

The first lesson, then, is that of travelling light. And how this plays out in their apostleship is a guide for us. When we think of the 21st Century church as one embarked on pilgrimage, we need to consider what it looks like to travel light.

A way for us here to think about it is to remember that the structures that we have in place in the institution we call “church” exist for the purpose of supporting God’s ministry and mission. These would include our buildings, land, committees, budgets, by-laws, canons, etc. What I appreciate is that later today, there is a resolution coming before this convention to re-evaluate our committee structures to ensure that they continue to meet the needs for which they are intended.

This is an important process to do consistently on the parish level: think of all the structures you have in place where you are serving, and take an honest look at how they support God’s ministry and mission in your context. You may want to think about letting go, or revising the charge of some, or of repurposing them to meet the changing needs where you serve.

So, a lesson of pilgrimage is to travel light.

The second lesson I learned about pilgrimage is to stay balanced. Like the point about travelling light, this is simple and it seems pretty obvious when you have a load on your back.
I was about ten days into the pilgrimage when I awakened one morning to find out that my back had gone out. I crawled around on the floor, wondering how I could possibly continue. With the help of my patient husband, and a solid pair of walking sticks, I was eventually able to get on my feet and walk 10 kilometers—which was an incredibly short day on that pilgrimage.

Late in the afternoon, we arrived at an albergue, which is a pilgrim inn. After I cautiously made my way to the bunk bed, the innkeeper came and sat alongside my bed. “Peregrina,” he said, “Pilgrim, you are carrying too much and you are out of balance.”

Of course, I thought. I need to get rid of some things. “No, he said, “it’s more than just your backpack. **You** are out of balance.” When I looked at my backpack, it was true: it was out of balance. You can’t carry your water, your apple, your cheese, and your bread all on one side of your pack and just your few articles of clothing on the other. You end up walking on a tilt.

But he was also talking about me—and he didn’t even know me. It was a lesson I took to heart.

Our tradition is one that helps us spiritually with the daily discipline of finding and staying in balance. The Daily Office section of our Book of Common Prayer helps to capture that with its grounding in the Benedictine tradition—one that since the 6th century has called for a balance between work, prayer, study and leisure. So, the quest to stay in balance is familiar and we strive for that.

Our life in mission and ministry is a call to that balance.

A church of pilgrimage needs to embrace that same balance, and also pursue balance in a broader way. As the Episcopal Church, it seems that we are striving to find balance between tradition and innovation, working to hold them both. Nowhere does this play out more than in liturgy. We have a fantastic and beautiful tradition for worship. At the same time, our rubrics and our history allow us room for exploration and new ways of worship—something that is so very important in this changing world and our increasingly diverse setting.

Our understanding of mission is another, often sensitive way, in which we strive for balance. The historical view of mission in the church was guided by
people like our grandmothers and grandfathers. Their world was different, and their worldview shaped their understanding. Yet now we are gaining a view from the perspective of pilgrimage. To engage in God’s ministry and mission is to be willing to become strangers in a strange land, walking into places we don’t understand, with people we’ve never met. All of us on pilgrimage together; each of us listening and learning as we walk with community partners and local agencies.

(Slide—Table talks: In the past year, in what ways have you in your congregations worked to keep balance between tradition and innovation? What possibilities have opened up for you? What challenges have arisen?)

I want to pause for a moment on this second point of pilgrimage: staying in balance. At your tables, I need you to choose a facilitator to lead a short discussion. Then, I would like someone from each table to volunteer to be the scribe for the table. Please be sure that you write legibly, because at lunch time it will be important that you hand your paper to either Canon Brian or Canon Jesus so we can gain insight from what you’ve said.

Here’s the question to consider: In the past year, in what way have you in your congregations worked to keep balance between tradition and innovation? Think of liturgy, mission and other areas of your ministries. What possibilities have opened up for you? What challenges have arisen?

[10 minutes]

Let’s continue exploring this call to pilgrimage. We’ve talked about travelling light and staying in balance.

The third part of today’s conversation is about having the courage to be lost. When I said the word “lost,” what was your reaction? For some, I know your heart rate increased. Some may have felt anxious. Some may have felt a sense of eagerness or anticipation.

The 21st Century Episcopal Church probably doesn’t want to talk much about being lost. Yet church has changed, and in this room we all know that. People do other things on Sunday mornings. Some are very busy. Others may be disillusioned with church. Many have little or no exposure to it. The ways in which we did things and engaged our traditional way of being church—which
worked for us about 60 years ago—no longer meet the needs of the world we inhabit today. As I’ve said before, our numbers and tangible resources are decreasing, yet the need for church is only increasing.

So, if we’re honest about it, we’re a bit lost. The good news is, that’s an important part of pilgrimage.

This next story that I want to share was a real turning point of pilgrimage. I call it the “That’s what happens when you don’t have coffee” story and there are a few of you who have heard this story before.

One morning, before dawn, a rather grumpy innkeeper turned on the lights and turned us all out of our beds. There was no coffee. I walked for a couple of miles by flashlight, but eventually dawn began to break. About ¼ mile in front of me, I made out the shadows of three people who were turning to the left. When I arrived at that place on the path, I also turned to the left. Soon, I caught up with them, and learned that their names were Gisele, Javier, and Pierre, and they were from Paris.

But, they were too talkative and loud for me without coffee, so I stayed a bit behind them. A little while later, I came upon the threesome again. This time, they were arguing loudly. As it turned out, we were lost.

Gisele threw her pack on the ground, sat on it and said, “I’m not moving until you figure this out.” Javier said not a word and proceeded to go off on his own to climb a nearby hill. Pierre muttered to himself and rummaged through his backpack. Pretty soon, he pulled out a very large map, which he turned this way and that before pointing to the landscape around us insisting “That is wrong!” His map was right. The landscape was wrong.

A quick “popcorn” check-in. Tell me, who in the story did you relate to? How many of you are like Gisele? How many like Javier who climbed the hill? What about Pierre who looked at the map? What about some sort of a combination of the three?

In the story of Gisele, Javier, and Pierre, I have found the basic challenge of being a church of pilgrimage. Being lost is not somethings we necessarily always embrace with grace. Sometimes we are the person who sits and won’t budge; at times, we may go off on our own, even leave for a time, because it’s
not the church that we knew. I have a special place in my heart for the Pierres of the group, who pore over strategic plans and wonder what to do when the plan doesn’t fit the world we encounter.

Yes, for many, being lost is the hardest part about the call to pilgrimage. Yet that is an amazingly fruitful time—a time of trusting in God, learning more about our faith, and discovering new ways of being leaders. Gisele stopped, Javier explored, Pierre consulted what was known.

And then, they reconnected and kept moving on their pilgrimage. They didn’t turn around and go back. They had the courage to move forward, even though they were lost.

A call to pilgrimage is a call to being faithful to our journey. Like the apostles before us, we travel light, we stay in balance, and we have the courage to be lost.

A call to pilgrimage is a call to the next part of our journey as the Episcopal Diocese of El Camino Real. Well prepared, we are ready to set forth in this shared episcopate, marveling at the rich mission field that is entrusted to us and wondering at new possibilities. This journey promises to challenge each of us individually, challenge our communities, and our entire diocese. And this to pilgrimage is our call to travel light, stay in balance, and have the courage to be lost. May God bless our every step and our every encounter as strangers in this strange and wonderful land.