

Jeannie's Corner on Convention

June 19, 2006

Wow! What a day! The House of Bishops were cloistered at the Cathedral, away from the Convention Center. The Bishop's Spouses were in the Spouse's Room after lunch, when one of us received a call that there was to be some sort of announcement, and we should head down to the House of Deputies room. The House of Deputies room is enormous – over 900 people seated and then the “gallery” of observers on the side and in back of the room.

After almost an hour, there was a lot of movement at the front of the room, press cameras coming in, people running around, and finally the announcement came. There had been an election...the Bishops have chosen The Right Reverend Katharine Jefferts Schori.

I wish you could have been there to hear all of us in that huge room gasp! There was such shock. This was followed immediately by tears of joy and excitement on the part of many in the gallery. People who didn't know each other were hugging and whispering excitedly. Of course, the House of Deputies then had to officially vote to accept the Bishops' choice.

Many people stood up to affirm Bishop Jefferts Schori, and only one person spoke against. The most powerful tribute came from Deputy Blanca Lucia Echeverry of Columbia, in South America. She is the wife of Bishop Francisco Duque-Gomez, one of the nominees for Presiding Bishop. Blanca Lucia is a civil rights attorney in Columbia. She said, through her translator, that, even though her husband had been one of the nominees, she wanted to urge the House of Deputies to support Katharine Jefferts-Schori for Presiding Bishop. It was quite a moment – and the first time that the room broke into applause.

After what seemed like a very long time (and the bishops were all still cloistered at the Cathedral until the Deputies voted) the vote by orders (separate votes for clergy and laity) was called for. Bishop Jefferts-Schori was affirmed by a very large majority (around 90 to 10) in both the clergy and laity.

And so it was official! After about 20 minutes, she and her husband and daughter arrived to a prolonged enthusiastic standing ovation. She spoke in Spanish and English to thank everyone.

Just being present when that announcement came was such an honor for me. I will tell my grandchildren about being there and what that felt like for me. There was a point at which I looked around the room at all the people standing there, and suddenly I stopped seeing people, and I began to see women, perhaps in a whole new way.

As we walked out of the room, I thought to call our daughter Laura, who is an attorney in Washington, D.C. I left her this message: “Hi, Laura. This is Mom. It's a girl!”

Faithfully,

Jeannie