

# Bishop's Message | Fall 2025

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Dear Beloved Sisters and Brothers in Christ,

This August, I rented a motorcycle and rode “the Dragon.” On maps, the Dragon is an unassuming squiggle of rural US 129 where the highway crosses the Tennessee and North Carolina border at the edge of the Great Smoky Mountains National Park. In person, it is an Appalachian road named for its serpentine bends, steep ascents and descents, and wicked blind curves. It winds through landscape that is gorgeous beyond description. Among motorcyclists it is widely considered one of the best rides in the country. But for others, even with its stunning scenery, it is a stomach-churning road to be avoided whenever possible.

The Dragon is known to be dangerous. All those curves and climbs come on asphalt with little to no guardrail between the rider and a steep drop into valleys far below. The mountains are delightfully cool and rainy in summer — for bikers, the former is a plus but the latter makes roads slick and unpredictable. History offers its own lesson. At each end of the route, a large sign makes it abundantly clear what is in store: “Motorcycles: High Crash Area Next 11 Miles”. The sign does not further mention that the nearest ambulance service is a solid 45 minutes away, meaning that, in the event of a crash, medical help will take a long time to work its way to you and back out to a hospital.

I do not mean to be melodramatic. It is after all just a very curvy road. The Dragon was not easy, but it was absolutely thrilling, and I hope to ride it again someday with my own bike. I am a better and wiser rider now for having taken this road — yes, for the road itself, but even more for the preparation that got me to and through the challenge safely and joyfully. I do not for a minute imagine that everyone should grab a motorcycle and seek out curvy roads. But I do know that setting and achieving this small challenge for myself, especially amid a trying time in the nation and world, has been rejuvenating and reaffirming.

I rode for many days on that rented motorcycle through gorgeous winding roads of western North Carolina. I passed a church sign near Franklin that read, “The road to life is narrow, but the road to destruction is wide.” I don’t know what the pastor had in mind with this quote from the Sermon on the Mount, but I doubt he meant to make folks laugh. But I did laugh. Clearly Jesus enjoys narrow roads, too, and maybe ones with lots of curves.

+Kevin

The Rt. Rev. Kevin S. Brown