

The Centurion

The Parish Magazine of St. Alban's Church

1011 Old Joppa Road, Joppa, Maryland, 21085



My dear People:

Lately I have been struck at how wonderful the people of St. Alban's have been in supporting various sick and shut-in members of the church. One parishioner visits a couple and does haircuts and tidies up their home. Other parishioners have been supporting a new member who was diagnosed with cancer. Still others look after longtime members who are sometimes or regularly shut-in. And the list goes on! This level of support and ministry is fantastic, and exactly what the Body of Christ should be doing. Each Christian is a member of the mystical Body of Christ, the Church. We are therefore *spiritually* part of one another. (see 1 Corinthians 12) When *one member* of the body is ill and absent the *entire body* is affected. And so to get them well the *entire body* should come to their aid. This is one of the reasons why God has given each member of the Church spiritual gifts - for the building up of the Body of Christ. It is marvelous to see how people here at St. Alban's use their spiritual gifts to minister to people both inside and outside of our parish family. What are your gifts? Are you using them to build Christ's Church and spread the Kingdom of God and the Gospel of Jesus Christ? Sometimes we wonder where the clergy fall in all of this. Many folk think that it is the clergy's job to do *all* of the pastoral care. But this is theologically inaccurate. In Ephesians 4:11 ff. we see that the main role of pastors and teachers is to *equip the saints* for works of ministry. Clergy certainly must do pastoral visits and ministry as part of their overall work, but to expect them to do it *all* - as though they are "professional" Christians - is not biblical. It is also *impossible*, especially in a small church like St. Alban's. Here's why: I spend at least a full day and a half doing administrative work because we do not have a secretary. Add to that sermon prep, Christian education prep, Bible study and services, the occasional clergy meeting, the occasional building crisis, off-campus liturgical celebrations, and all of the rest, and it means that my schedule is overloaded. While I still get many pastoral visits in each month, the need for more is great. I hope that we can make serious headway this year in expanding our facility so as to attract new members, not only to raise revenue to hire the staff necessary to do the work of the ministry in our community, but also so those members can join us in bringing the Kingdom of God into greater realization. So please continue to work, pray, and give for the expansion of our facility for the greater glory of God.

Affectionately, your Friend and Pastor,

J. Gordon Anderson

April 2014

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UPCOMING HOLY DAYS:

April 13th - 19th - Holy Week

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April 21st - 22nd - Monday and Tuesday in Easter Week

Holy Communion at 10:00 a.m.

April 25th - St. Mark

Holy Communion at 10:00 a.m.

May 1st - Ss. Philip & James

Holy Communion at 10:00 a.m.

May 26th, 27th, and 28th - Rogation Days

Holy Communion at 10:00 a.m.

May 29th - Ascension Day

Holy Communion at 10:00 a.m. & 6:30 p.m.

June 9th - 10th - Monday and Tuesday in Whitsun Week

Holy Communion at 10:00 a.m.

June 11th, 13th, and 14th - Ember Days

Holy Communion at 10:00 a.m.

THEOLOGY: *“Eucharist and Resurrection” A Sermon by the Rev’d Dr. E.L. Mascall*

The Catechism of the Church of England, in reply to the question ‘Why was the Sacrament of the Lord’s Supper ordained?’ answers that it was for the continual remembrance of the sacrifice of the death of Christ and of the benefits which we receive thereby. And we have just heard Paul declare in the words of my text that ‘*Christ, being raised from the dead, dieth no more. Death hath no more dominion over him.*’ (Rom. 6:9) We might, therefore, be tempted to suppose that the Lord’s Supper, the Mass, was simply a kind of memorial service to commemorate something that happened a long time ago, but is all finished with now - the death of Christ. And indeed there have been Christians who have thought about it in that way. I think that this is one of the reasons why in many Christian bodies the celebration of the Lord’s Supper, in spite of the intentions of the Reformers, did, in fact, become a very occasional thing.

I remember hearing that the father of a theological student, when his son told him that, in the particular seminary where he was, the Holy Eucharist was celebrated every morning, replied: ‘Surely it is a very dismal way in which to begin each day, to commemorate the last sad meal of our Lord with his Apostles.’ As I said, people have often thought of the Eucharist in that way: as being a mere commemoration, either of the death of our Lord on the Cross or of the meal which he had with his Apostles the night before he died. And if that was the whole truth about it, then the Eucharist would be something primarily concerned with a past event: a very important past event

no doubt, but a past event, and one consisting chiefly of death.

Now, of course, we must never allow ourselves to belittle the absolutely central significance of the death of our blessed Lord. When God took human flesh, and came into this world, as man, in order to make that perfect offering of a human life which we men had failed to make, it was, so far as we can see, inevitable that that offering would take him to death. And the fact that it took him to death is the measure of the completeness of that offering in a fallen, sinful world. But we shall have a very inadequate view, both of our Lord’s sacrifice and of the nature of our religion as a whole, and also of this Blessed Sacrament in which we are now engaged, if we allow ourselves to think of our Lord’s sacrifice as simply something which took place in his death on Calvary. Calvary was, indeed, the central point of it, the crucial point; and I may remind you that the English word ‘crucial’ does, in fact, come from the Latin word which means ‘cross.’ But if we are to think of our Lord’s sacrifice in its fullness, we must think of it as something which extends onwards from the moment when he took human nature in the womb of his blessed Mother, and which now is made perpetual in heaven in his ascended glory. For what happened when the Son of God, the Second Person of the Holy Trinity, took flesh, was that he communicated to human nature that offering of filial response, of response of a son to his Father’s love, which he was making from all eternity, and in all eternity, in the Life of the Blessed Trinity, the Godhead itself.

When he became man, he took a human nature into that perfect filial offering under the conditions of a human life in a way which, as we have seen, in a sinful world took him to the death of the Cross. But the death of the Cross was not the end, and if it had been the end, we should clearly see that this filial offering had culminated in a defeat.

The death on the Cross was followed by the Resurrection, and the Resurrection by the Ascension. And Jesus now is the ascended, risen, glorified Lord. The Ascension, as no doubt we are all aware, does not mean that our Lord went away from us; it means that his human nature, in which he rose from the dead, has been liberated from the last restrictions of spatial and of normal material existence, so that now it is something universally accessible to all men and women everywhere and at all times.

‘Christ, being raised from the dead, dieth no more.’ He is, now and forever, the risen, glorified man who makes for ever to the Father the offering of Sonship, the filial offering, which man as God’s creature and son is bound to make.

Where, then, does the Eucharist come into this? Simply because it is the placing of that heavenly offering in the Church. The Church, the Body of Christ, of which you and I are members, is constituted not by our allegiance to Christ, important as indeed that is, but by the fact that we have been made his members.

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SPIRITUALITY: *Four Misconceptions About the Spiritual Life*

There are many misconceptions about the spiritual life and how we grow spiritually as believers in Jesus Christ. Here are four common ones.

“The purpose of God, the Church, and religion is to entertain me, make me feel good about myself, and help me improve my life.”

Notice the “me, me, me” in all of that. This is the consumer culture run amok. While we do indeed gain many benefits and blessings from being in a living, and active relationship with God in Christ Jesus, the purpose of being a Christian, and indeed the purpose of all of life and creation, is to give God worship, praise, honor, and glory. The Christian life is a life of sacrifice, and thanksgiving to God for all that he has done for us. *If we want to be transformed into new creations in Christ let us “put self on the shelf” and give our hearts and lives entirely to God. To paraphrase John F. Kennedy, “Ask not what God can do for you, but what you can do for God!”*

“Doing the same spiritual exercises I always do will help me grow spiritually.”

Would a musician get better if he always played the same songs? No. Would a sports team get better if they always ran the exact same plays? No. When asked for practice tips Dave Weckl, one of the world’s foremost jazz drummers, once said that many people remain poor musicians because their “practice” consists of playing riffs and rhythms that they already know. *True practice, on the other hand, involves playing what you cannot already play. While it is not always pleasant or fun to listen to, it is how one grows as a musician. So it is in the spiritual life. If we always leave everything the same (e.g. give up the same item for Lent; confine ourselves to the same spiritual activities; read the same things we always read; etc.) we will never grow. But if we challenge ourselves more and more spiritually then God will do something in our lives and we will grow in grace and holiness. Let us each make an effort to challenge ourselves every now and then with new spiritual challenges so we will continue to grow as Christians!*

“I’ll grow spiritually even if I show up for Sunday services just once in a while.”

Perhaps the first thing to remember regarding this position is what it says in the book of Hebrews: namely, that we should not forsake the gathering of God’s people! (Hebrews 10:25) Why does the writer of the epistle state this? Partly, no doubt, because he knows that if people only show up at church every now and then, or if we go for a several weeks, and then disappear for weeks or months at a time, they will never grow in grace and holiness. It is a simple truth: *for something to grow it must be fed and nurtured!* When we intentionally absent ourselves from corporate worship we do not receive the grace of God in the Blessed Sacrament, or hear the mysteries of the Christian faith proclaimed in the reading and exposition of God’s holy word, therefore we are not being fed spiritually. On the contrary, we are starving and killing ourselves spiritually. *Let us make attending church each Sunday a priority for us and our families!*

“It’s just me and Jesus.”

This is the view that we do not have to be part of a fellowship of believers to experience God’s grace and grow in holiness. It is clearly contrary to God’s word (see 1 Corinthians 12), and a contradiction of 2,000 years of Church tradition and teaching. The Church is the mystical Body of Christ, a hierarchical communion. Our actions and spiritual life have far-reaching effects in our families, own parish community, and the rippling outward into the larger community and the world. This attitude ties into and feeds many other misconceptions of the spiritual life. If it is just me and Jesus then I do not have to go to church each Sunday. If it is just me and Jesus then I am the arbiter of all spiritual and moral truth. If it is just me and Jesus then I am ultimately accountable only to myself. *Let us remember that if we name the name of Christ that this automatically makes us part of a larger body of people! ✠*

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To quote the catechism again: 'My Baptism wherein I was made a member of Christ, and a child of God'; for if we are members of Christ, members of the Son, sharers in his sonship, then we are God's children. We are *sons in the Son*. Our human nature has been incorporated into his, so that by the operation of grace we may be made more and more into his likeness. And because we have *all* been incorporated into Christ, because we have been brought *together* into Christ's human nature, we, the Church, are his Body. And when the Church assembles to celebrate that great sacrament which Christ himself has left us and has commanded us to perform as his memorial, the Eucharistic body, the Body in this sacrament, is the link

between the mystical body of Christ, his Church on earth, and the glorified human nature, the glorified body of Jesus our Head in heaven.

There are not three bodies, there is one body, existing in three very different forms: first, the glorified body in heaven, the personal human nature which Jesus took from his Mother in which he died and rose again; secondly, the corporate mystical body of the Church militant; and thirdly, the sacramental body which, by drawing his members more closely into him, as they receive it in communion, makes this imperfect earthly body with its sinful members, bit by bit, into the likeness of the glorified Christ.

And so, the, the Eucharist and the Resurrection are connected in the closest possible way. It is *because*

Christ, being raised from the dead, dieth no more, it is *because* death hath no more dominion over him, that this Sacrament is not just a commemoration of something in the past, whether that be the Last Supper or the death upon the Cross, but is, as its most proper and universal name describes it, Eucharist, Thanksgiving, the Church's great act of thankful response, by which it offers itself to the Father in heaven, through and in the glorified Head of the Body, who offers himself to the Father in heaven, now and forever. ☩

From "The Gospel of the Resurrection: A Course of Sermons Preached in the Chapel of Pusey House, Oxford" (Mowbrays, 1962)

PARISH NEWS: *News and Updates from St. Alban's Church*

Parish Lenten Appeal - Rose Vestment Set:

Don't forget that we are still raising money for our rose vestment set. We still need about \$1,500.

Diocesan Lenten Appeal - K-12 School for Dalits in India: Don't forget that we are raising money to help continue the school for Dalit children in India. Details are available on the parish website.

2014 Schedule of Lenten Services and Activities:

Tuesdays at 6:30 p.m.

Evening Prayer followed by dinner and the amazing DVD series called "Faith Lessons." We meet in various parishioners homes and dinner is always provided.

Wednesdays at 10:00 a.m.

Morning Prayer and Holy Communion

Thursdays at 11:30 a.m.

Morning Prayer followed by Bible Study

Fridays at 12:00 p.m.

Stations of the Cross & Benediction of the Blessed Sacrament.

2014 Holy Week Services: April 14th - 19th

Monday, Tuesday, and Wednesday before Easter

Holy Communion at 10:00 a.m.

Tenebrae

Service at 7:00 p.m.

Maundy Thursday

Holy Communion at 7:00 p.m.

Good Friday

Services at 10:00 a.m. and 7:00 p.m.

Easter Even

Services at 10:00 a.m.