

The Centurion

The Parish Magazine of St. Alban's Church

1011 Old Joppa Road, Joppa, Maryland, 21085



My dear People:

There has been quite a bit happening here in the late months of summer. No doubt you have noticed the progress being made with our parish hall renovation. Special thanks goes out to Dale Livingston and Ellen Pons for their hard work in that area. The goal is make our parish hall look as classy and welcoming as possible. Please pardon the dust as the work progresses. Soon we hope to have new valances made courtesy of Beth Dixon, as well as some new art on the walls. You have probably also noticed by now the lovely pew cushions that have recently been installed in the church. Special thanks goes out to the anonymous donor who made all of the arrangements and gave the money for the project! Our newly reestablished choir under the leadership of Tom and Lynne Care sung at one of our services this summer and did a great job! They sounded fantastic and everyone loved it. In the fall they will be singing one Sunday per month. If you can sing would be interested in joining them please see Tom or Lynne. Of course our Pony Show and Yard Sale were fun and successful as well. Frannie Flatau, Karen Novakoski, and Roy and Beth, and so many others worked really hard to make those events succeed. Andrew Dixon has been very helpful here around the Church, doing a number of repair jobs on our building. He is working on repainting the entryways into the church and parish hall. And so many more people - too many to mention in this small space - have been doing all sorts of work around the church to improve it and make it a nicer place. I am incredibly thankful to God for St. Alban's and the warm and wonderful people who make this their church home. Thank you for offering your time, treasures, and talents to the Lord and His Church.

Perhaps you have noticed that during Holy Communion I lay hands on certain people and say a prayer for healing. This is because they have asked for this ministry. If you have a sickness or chronic problem and would like a prayer for healing at Holy Communion just let me know and I will lay hands on you as well. The prayer for healing is found in the Prayer Book on p. 320 and reads: *I lay my hand upon thee in the Name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost; beseeching the mercy of our Lord Jesus Christ, that all thy pain and sickness of body being put to flight, the blessing health may be restored unto thee. Amen.*

Affectionately, your Friend and Pastor,

J. Gordon Anderson.

AUGUST 2012

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UPCOMING HOLY DAYS:

August 6th - The Transfiguration of our Lord Jesus Christ

Holy Communion @ 10:00 a.m.

August 24th - St. Bartholomew the Apostle

Holy Communion @ 10:00 a.m.

September 19th - Ember Wednesday

Holy Communion @ 10:00 a.m.

September 21st - St. Matthew, Apostle & Evangelist

Holy Communion @ 10:00 a.m.

September 29th - St. Michael & All Angels

Holy Communion @ 10:00 a.m.

Prayer Book Holy Day Masses last a little over half an hour and always include Morning Prayer! Please make time to come out for these important days as you are able!

LITURGY & THEOLOGY: *The Sacrament of Confirmation.*

This fall on September 16th we will be visited by our suffragan bishop, the Rt. Rev. Chandler Holder Jones, SSC. He will be here to visit the parish, receive new members, and administer the sacrament of confirmation.

The rite of confirmation is found on pages 296-299 in the Book of Common Prayer. In this sacrament the bishop lays hands on the confirmands (those being confirmed) and prays for them to receive the seven gifts of the Holy Ghost. They are also anointed with holy oil called *Chrism*.

Traditionally, confirmation is understood as being the completion of holy baptism. In the ancient Church the sacraments of baptism and confirmation were administered together. Over time in the west for various reasons they came to be separated. In the Eastern Orthodox churches, however, baptism and confirmation are still done together. Ultimately however, *when* one is confirmed is not as important so long as he or she *is* eventually confirmed!

Confirmation is important because it is a sacrament of spiritual strengthening, as the word *confirm* implies. (*Confirm* means *to strengthen* in the Latin.) We are strengthened by receiving the seven gifts of the Holy Ghost. These are found on p. 297 in the Book of Common Prayer: wisdom, understanding, counsel, spiritual strength, knowledge, godliness, and holy fear. As one author put it, "*These gifts are not the virtues which*

we call by such names, so much as they are the capacities to act virtuously, by God's power and help, so that the Christian may increasingly manifest the fruit of the Spirit whose gifts have already been given him."

Simply put, God gives us the strengthening gift of the Holy Spirit so we can live the Christian life and do all that He requires of us. On p. 291 it says that the duty of members of the Church is to follow Christ, worship God every Sunday in his Church; and to work, pray, and give for the spread of his kingdom. This is sometimes



very hard for us to do! So it goes on to say that the Church provides special means for us to fulfill our spiritual obligations: that is the gift of the Holy Spirit in confirmation. Because of this confirmation is sometimes referred to as the "ordination of the laity."

There is another important aspect of confirmation relative to it being the completion of baptism. Namely, it is the individual's ratification and acceptance of the promises made in his name at baptism. When one is baptized he is made a member of Christ's mystical Body, the Church. But since faith and repentance is required to be

baptized, and since most people are baptized as infants, the sponsors act in the child's name, and accepts the Christian faith on his behalf, promising to rear them in it. At Confirmation, now that the child has reached the "years of discretion" (BCP, p. 296) he renews, ratifies, and confirms the vows made in his name at baptism. Or put more simply: *the child* promises to follow Jesus Christ as our Lord and Savior. (p. 297)

Administering the sacrament of confirmation is one of the duties of bishops. On page 294 in the Book of Common Prayer it reads: "The office of a Bishop is, to be a chief pastor in the Church; to confer Holy Orders; and to administer Confirmation." A few pages over on p. 296 *The Order of Confirmation* begins. There we see very clearly in the rubrics (the small, italicized print) that the bishop celebrates this ceremony. The bishop administers this sacrament because he is a successor to the apostles. This is what is alluded to in the passage from Acts 8 that is read during the service... *the apostles* prayed for the Christians in Samaria to receive the Holy Ghost.

While much more could be said about this important sacrament we must stop here for now. In the meantime, let us pray for the young people being confirmed this year, that God would do a great work in their lives, and let us thank God for our own confirmation, and for the indwelling gift and power of the Holy Ghost. ✠

BOOK REVIEW: *“At Home : A Short History of Private Life”* by Bill Bryson

A year ago a favorite uncle of mine died at the age of ninety three; not long before that I experienced the death of my mother. In my family the “old guard” is dying off and those who used to sit at the kids’ table have now replaced them. We (my siblings and cousins) are not particularly old and are unsure of what we are supposed to guard. I don’t think we could ever really fill the shoes of our predecessors. Uncle Dean and my mother, for instance, were passionate life-long learners with a fondness for history, old houses and ancient churches, museums of any kind, battlefields, monuments, genealogy, and travel. And since they loved sharing their knowledge, a visit with either of these two relatives of mine was always an enjoyable, informative experience.

Reading Bill Bryson’s *At Home* took me back to those days. Mr. Bryson, who lives in a former Anglican rectory built in England in 1851, devotes each chapter to a different room in this fascinating house, but begins in the garden/graveyard. As we move inside from one room to another, Bryson, our guide, tells us the history of everyday objects associated with each room in such an amiable way that it feels as if we are on a pleasant tour with an intimate but extremely erudite friend. And you find yourself saying, “I didn’t know that. How did I not know this? I especially liked the origins of phrases and words that we use daily, for instance “sleep tight’. I said “sleep tight” to my kids every night and never once thought of the origins of that phrase. (You had to tighten the rope inside the frame of the bed so the hay and you wouldn’t fall through!) And why do we say “room and board” when we mean meals are included? And why do we say “chairman of the board” or why do we say we need someone to “chair” a committee? I now know that these expressions have their origins in the Middle Ages, when tables were boards that hung on the wall and brought down to rest on a persons lap to have a meal. Chairs were scarce and saved for the most eminent of guests, while the lowlier sat on benches.

Another thing I liked about this book was the way in which Mr. Bryson brought life to nineteenth-century architects and landscapers, brick layers and cement makers, showing how the work of these craftsmen and artisans has contributed to the

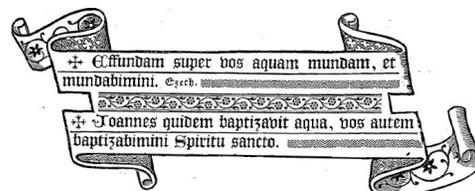
comfort and style of our homes today. Also, there are detailed and obscure facts about such famous people as Alexander Graham Bell, Queen Victoria, and Thomas Jefferson that I am certain will not be known by most readers. And so many great inventors and people who truly contributed to our domestic life died in penury. If any reader has recessionary blues, this is a good book to read because it seems to be a pretty normal situation historically.

I hear many people comment that life is messy and complicated and things are not as simple as they were back in the past. Reading this book, you learn that life was always messy, and seldom were people even comfortable; even the upper classes could barely stay warm.

Parts of this book will make you laugh out loud because so much of humanity has historically been so full of foolishness and superstition that one wonders how people ever accomplished anything of any significance. The great thinkers, rulers, explorers and inventors that we are in awe of were people who made mistakes but somehow managed to pass down a nugget of wisdom to the next generation to build upon.

Read this book; it is good for you. It is good for your soul; it is good for your kids. It makes you grateful to be part of the human experience no matter where that might lead. I know that my mother and Uncle Dean would have loved to read this walking tour of this old rectory, so I walked with them in mind. ☩

Reviewed by parishioner Susan Kelly. This review originally appeared in “The Dagger Online Newspaper.” The book is available at Amazon.com for \$10.85 plus shipping and handling.



THE CHRISTIAN LIFE: *Becoming more spiritually informed Christians*

One of the best ways to grow and progress in the spiritual life is to do spiritual reading, which is reading books and others works that expound on important biblical and theological themes relevant to the Christian life.

The difficulty with this however is twofold: 1) Where do I find good material to study, and 2) Once I find such material will I be able to understand and absorb it? There is a lot of material on the market that is available for study, but unfortunately a lot of it is untrustworthy, and it can be difficult to discern the good from the bad. And then, should one be able to find a decent, classic book to study, the material is often so long-winded and abstruse that the reader gives up studying after one or two chapters! So what is a person to do?

One of the best places to find good, solid materials to read and study, and where the topic is presented briefly and succinctly is on the St. Alban's

literature table. We are in the process of stocking the table with a number of useful tracts - short pamphlets - on important theological topics. Over the next few weeks and months we will be rolling out a collection of tracts written by the Episcopalian *Order of the Holy Cross* in the early 20th century on such topics as: the Real Presence; the Church; the Ministerial Priesthood; Confession; the Blessed Sacrament, and more. We also have other tracts as well as devotional materials available. Needless to say, these are all available free of charge.

These short, pithy tracts are packed with good, solid theological instruction and reflection. They are an excellent and convenient resource for those folk who wish to explore deep and important theological topics in a simple, accessible way. So please check out the literature table from time to time and take some of these tracts home to read and study and further grow in your walk with God! ✠