

The Centurion

The Parish Magazine of St. Alban's Church

1011 Old Joppa Road, Joppa, Maryland, 21085



My dear People:

Last month we had our diocesan synod in Charlottesville, Virginia. Me, Fr. Edelmann, and Frannie Flatau were our official parish delegates, and Deb Kavanaugh and our postulant Tyler Phass came along as observers. A number of important things happened this year. First, Bishop Grundorf, our diocesan bishop, had to offer his resignation as he has reached the canonical age of retirement (72). But right after he offered his resignation a motion was made to extend his office for five more years, and that motion passed unanimously. This is allowed by our constitution and canons, and thank goodness! We would like nothing more than to have him on as long as he is willing to serve. Bishop Grundorf has been a fantastic leader over the last few decades because he has been a tireless minister of the gospel, a unifier among Anglicans, and a stalwart defender of Christian orthodoxy. Many bishops have come and gone over the years, and crashed and burned, or been carried away in scandal, but Bishop Grundorf keeps on going! The Elton John song "I'm Still Standing" always comes to mind when I think of our dear bishop! Bishop Grundorf and his amazing and highly accomplished wife, Dr. Mary Grundorf, will be visiting us in November, so be sure to mark your calendars for their visit. The other exciting news from synod was the election of a new suffragan (assistant) bishop for the diocese. The Very Rev'd. Bill Perkins of Delray Beach, Florida, was elected and will be consecrated in the fall at our pro-cathedral in Oviedo, Florida. Bishop-Elect Perkins will mainly serve the parishes in the Florida, but will be available to visit other churches in the diocese as well. I hope to get Bishop Perkins to visit us at St. Alban's at some point in the not-too-distant future. Overall, I have to say that I feel very blessed to be a part of this diocese. Some people love what they do but hate their colleagues. Others hate what they do but love their colleagues. I am thankful to both love what I do *and* love my colleagues. My fellow clergy in the diocese are some of the finest people I have ever met in my life. Their dedication to God and his Holy Church is awesome to behold and a big encouragement and inspiration to me. Many have given up lucrative secular careers in order to minister as parish priests in our modest parishes. Others have undergone tremendous suffering in life... *and yet they never complain about anything!* The laity of the diocese are marvelous as well, and have much the same story as the clergy: they sacrifice a lot to serve God and the church, and always with a smile. The best thing about our diocese is that it is like a family, and we really experience this at each synod. Come to synod sometime and experience it for yourself. It would be great to have you join us and you will be blessed - I guarantee it!

Affectionately, your Friend and Pastor,

J. Gordon Anderson

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UPCOMING HOLY DAYS:

August 6th - Transfiguration

Holy Communion at 10:00 a.m.

August 24th - St. Bartholomew

Holy Communion at 10:00 a.m.

**September 16th, 18th, 19th -
Autumnal Ember Days**

Holy Communion at 10:00 a.m.

September 21st - St. Matthew

Holy Communion at 10:00 a.m.

September 29th - St. Michael

Holy Communion at 10:00 a.m.

October 28th - Ss. Simon & Jude

Holy Communion at 10:00 a.m.

**November 26th - Thanksgiving
Day**

Holy Communion at 10:00 a.m.

November 30th - St. Andrew

Holy Communion at 10:00 a.m.

**December 16th, 18th, 19th -
Advent Ember Days**

Holy Communion at 10:00 a.m.

PARISH LIFE: *St. Alban's is About More Than Just St. Alban's*

St. Alban's is a church that is connected with history. When we worship together the connection with a long, venerable tradition is incredibly vivid. Yes, we are indeed a church that is concerned about the present: in the sermon and bible studies we learn and discuss how the scriptures apply to our lives; and in our activities and ministry we bring God's love and grace to people here and now. *But all of this takes place in the context of an unbroken stream that goes all the way back to Jesus and his apostles, and that will go beyond us and into the future until our Lord comes again.* Let us look at some of the elements of our faith and life and whence they come:

The Bible: Our sacred scriptures were written on three different continents by people of all walks of life: royalty, peasantry, anglers, shepherds, scholars, and more. They were written in several different languages: Hebrew, Greek, and Aramaic. They date from thousands of years before Christ, and were copied all over the world by devout people so that a reliable testimony about God and his revelation in Jesus Christ could be passed on to future generations.

The Liturgy: The word "liturgy" refers to the worship of the Church. Ours is found in the Book of Common Prayer. This service has been in continual use since the 16th century, and many elements of it go back to medieval times (the English "Sarum" liturgy) and even to ancient times (e.g. the "Sursum Corda" ["Lift up your hearts..."]). Our American Prayer Book of 1928 has prayers and devotions in it that come from the 19th and 20th centuries as well. In the Prayer Book we pray many of the same prayers that Queen Elizabeth (I & II), George Washington, T.S. Eliot, and others prayed. Others were composed by important medieval theologians like Alcuin. The Book of Common Prayer went wherever the British Empire went, and was more or less adapted by every country that used it. Thus, there is a South African Prayer Book, a Ceylonese Prayer Book, a Scottish Prayer Book, and many more. Moreover, the Prayer Books all cross pollinate, so we have things in our prayer book (and in our other authorized liturgical resources, such as manuals and missals) that come from other nations and other times.

Ceremonial: Accompanying the words of the liturgy (ritual) are certain actions known as "ceremonial." We cross ourselves, genuflect, use bells and incense, wear gorgeous vestments, stand in certain places and in certain ways in certain circumstances, and more. Whence does this all of this come? It is *tradition*. It has been handed down in some cases from ancient times, and even from the worship of almighty God in the tabernacle and temple of the Old Testament!

Devotion: At St. Alban's we practice all sorts of devotions that are rooted in earlier times: Morning and Evening Prayer, which date back to the ancient and medieval canonical offices; Stations of the Cross, which served as a substitute for medieval people who could not make a pilgrimage to Jerusalem; rosary, Benediction of the Blessed Sacrament, bible study, and more. All of these go back to various periods and places in the history of the church.

What is the point in writing all of this? Well, it is very easy for us to fall into a myopia where we think that our day to day life here at St. Alban's, or the way church was when grew up, is the "be all and end all" of the Christian experience. Another name for this myopia is "sentimentalism." The myopic and sentimental approach to Christianity leads to spiritual stagnation. We develop a sort of spiritual "tunnel vision" where we are resistant to *any* sort of change or progress, or any challenge to our usual way of experiencing church... to "the way we have always done things." Remembering that the Church is a body that not only crosses the bounds of history and cultures, but also, theologically speaking, transcends space and time, can help us get beyond the myopic sentimentalism that drags us down. When we consider how the scriptures, liturgy, ceremonial, devotions, and other traditions of the Church come from such a wide and varied background... going back centuries, and crossing all sorts of cultures... it can help see ourselves in a new and healthier light.

We are not a little "boutique" church that is consumed with its own peculiar life, and the "way we've always done things." We are not a "country club" parish for a few select people. We are not a "breakaway" episcopalian congregation, or a life raft for disgruntled Anglicans. *We are parish of Christ's One, Holy, Catholic, and Apostolic Church, the mystical Body of Jesus Christ, that spans all cultures and goes back thousands of years to Jesus himself!* That is what our traditions convey. We at St. Alban's are part of something much bigger than our own modest history, and that is very exciting to consider. In the Holy Eucharist we experience this most powerfully. Because this holy mystery is our sacramental participation in what Jesus Christ himself is doing for us in heaven! In other words, the Mass is not just a wonderful and amazing parish celebration remembering Jesus' love for us, or a quaint service that we grew up with... it is much more than that! It is his very atoning act of love itself made present to us at the altar. Heaven and earth unite in this holy sacrament! Wow! We are much larger than ourselves indeed. May God help to see the wonder in this and let it transform us in our service to him and the world. ☩

CHRISTIANITY AND CULTURE: *Some Thoughts on Art, Religion, Culture, and Art Shows*

This month my art show at the Liriodendron ends. I want to thank everyone who came out for it, and for all of the nice and interesting comments on my work. Many of the works were familiar to us as they have been gracing the walls of the parish hall and my office for some time. The history behind that is that we needed some decorations for the walls but did not have any money budgeted for that. So, in consultation with the vestry, it was agreed that I could hang my works in the parish hall on a temporary basis. This was always meant to be temporary. One of my professors in college, a sculptor, once told us that it is not good for an artist to be around his own work all the time. I would tend to agree with that. So after the show is over only one or two large pieces will return to the parish hall and maybe a couple of small icons.

The work currently hanging in the parish hall is that of my late first cousin once removed, Noel Kavanaugh Edwards. Noel was an artist and naturalist based in Redding, CT. Over the years he created many wonderful pieces in all sorts of mediums (charcoal, graphite, oil, watercolor, etc.). I hope everyone enjoys looking at his art and feels closer to nature and God as a result. Some of the work will come down or be moved when a few pieces of mine return to the walls, so there should be a nice balance of art in the parish hall in a few weeks.

We are also moving the bulletin boards back into the main portion of the parish hall. This is because I have noticed that many people do not make it over to the back end of the hall where they have been hanging, and so no one reads the vestry notes, financials, articles, diocesan news, and other announcements that are posted. Having the boards in the part of the hall where most of us gather to fellowship after services will hopefully get more people looking at this important stuff. The boards will have lettering put on them so we all know what is posted on them.

One of the things that I will miss when most of my work leaves the walls of the parish hall is the fascinating questions and comments that I would get about them. In fact I think I got more comments about my art than my sermons! Some people would look at certain pieces, such as "The Triumphal Entry" and "Holy Trinity Enthroned With Saints," and remark that a hand was in the wrong place, or that something was not correct spatially. It was very enjoyable for me to explain that the painting was *supposed* to look that way! Other people commented on how peaceful my painting "Virgin and Child Enthroned With Saints" made them feel. It was really great to hear so many great and wide and varying remarks about my work.

What was also interesting was how some people only commented on the paintings when they were hung in the *show* - not when they were hung at *church*! This is a good indicator of how we *look* (or fail to look) at things. There is so much that we see in life that we think little to nothing of... and don't even notice... because though we *look* at everything we often fail to truly *see*. This reminds us of what Jesus said about people having eyes but not seeing, or ears but not seeing. When I worked in stained glass restoration I'd occasionally point out a grossly bowed section of glass in need of repair to a client and more often than not they would say, "I never even noticed that! *And I sit next to that window every Sunday!*" Maybe the same thing was going on with my art. It was there in church every Sunday, but a lot of people - including myself at times! - didn't really "see" it. But when it was in a gallery setting we all had a better chance to look at it a bit more closely.

A lot of people laughed at me when I went off to study art years ago. "What are you going to do with that?" they asked. But studying art was one of the best decisions I ever made in my life. Art is not only a great mode of self-expression, it is a way of exploration into the human person, the world, and the nature of reality. It helps us better understand ourselves and the world... and as Christians, God. The prominent NYC-based figurative artist, Eric Fischl, speaks of painting in particular as being a primitive *language*. Language, as we know, is *expressive*. But it is also *creative*. The philosopher Martin Heidegger reminds us that language is "the house of being." That is to say, language plays an important role in shaping our world and us - how we think, what we believe, etc.

This is what the language of art does. It is not only a means of personal or even societal expression, it also *shapes* the world into which it emerges... one need only think of Picasso's *Guernica* - his incredible mid-20th century commentary on the Spanish Civil War, which brought worldwide attention to that conflict. Pop culture entertainment, for better or worse, does the same thing. It pushes boundaries and reshapes our imaginations, assumptions, and narratives on any number of subjects. If that is what art in general does, and how powerful it is, then what does art that portrays images of our Lord, and other scenes from the Bible do? It keeps these narratives on the scene, as it were, and reinterprets them for a new age and generation in order to subtly but powerfully shape the *weltanschauung* (worldview) of alienated and despairing people in a postmodern world! Perhaps more Christians should take up painting. It is a most profound and rewarding practice, and one that has the potential to bring about much good in the world. ✠

PARISH NEWS & UPDATES: *Please note these important items!*

Scotch and Wine Tasting - September 13th

Join us on Sunday the 13th at 2:30 p.m. at Steve and Linda Tillinghast's home in Bel Air for our first ever wine and scotch tasting!

Parish Yard Sale - September 19th

Please continue to bring in salable items and place them on the appropriate table in the basement. Try not to place them on the floor, as the basement sometimes floods. We will need all sorts of help with the yard sale. Keep your eyes peeled for a sign-up sheet with ways to help.

Does God Exist? - Tuesdays in October

Join us on Tuesday evenings in October as we listen to fantastic and scholarly debate between an atheistic biologist and a Christian philosopher and theologian on the question of God's existence. Is Christianity incompatible with reason and science? You won't want to miss the answer! Fr. Anderson will provide commentary on the debate as it progresses, explaining some of the more confusing and abstruse points when they arise. As is our custom, we will begin with Evening Prayer and then have dinner, which will be provided. I hope to see you there!

Episcopal Visit and Confirmation - November 1st

Mark your calendars! Bishop Grundorf will be here on Sunday, November 1st (All Saints' Day) to administer the Sacrament of Confirmation and visit the parish.

Annual Parish Meeting - November 22nd

Mark your calendars! Our annual parish meeting will take place on Sunday, November 22nd at 10:00 a.m. *We will have just one worship service that day at 9:00 a.m!* We need as many people as possible at this parish meeting to discuss the mission and future of our parish.

Diocesan Appointment

Father Anderson was elected to serve on the diocesan "Standing Committee" at this past synod. The Standing Committee is essentially the "vestry" of the diocese. The responsibilities of the Standing Committee are laid out in our diocesan canons (Canon 4): *Between Synods, the administrative authority of the Diocese shall reside in the Bishop and the Standing Committee. The membership of the Standing Committee shall consist of the Bishop, the Bishops Suffragan, two clergymen elected by the clergy of the Diocese at Synod, a*

treasurer, who shall be a communicant member of the Diocese elected by the lay delegates of Synod, a chancellor, being a priest or lay person appointed by the Bishop and three lay communicants of the Diocese elected by the lay delegates of Synod. The lay members of the Standing Committee shall constitute the Finance Committee of the Diocese. The Standing Committee shall meet at the call of the Bishop, or during a vacancy of the see, by the senior Suffragan Bishop or by its own resolution. The President of the Standing Committee shall be elected by that body from among its members who are Priests. The Secretary of the Standing Committee shall be elected by that body from among its members. The members of the Standing Committee shall have seat, voice and vote in Diocesan Synod.

A Call to Fast and Pray

Did you know that the Book of Common enjoins us to fast and abstain from meat on most Fridays throughout the year? (And in Lent on Wednesdays *and* Fridays, with each weekday of Lent being a day of fasting. See BCP, p. li, at the very top.) Please consider observing this spiritual discipline in some small way throughout this summer and the year. Find something from which to fast - it doesn't have to be food... it could be Facebook, TV, or some other activity - and use that time to pray! Fasting is a way to grow spiritually as individuals and corporately. Jesus regularly fasted and prayed. So should we. When you pray, please do so with the following intentions developed by a bishop of the Church: **1) That God would cause people to experience conversion of the heart and spiritual growth through our ministry; 2) that God would open new doors of mission for us; 3) that God would provide for all our needs.** Friday, the day of Jesus' death, is the ideal day to fast, but we may choose whichever day we want - save Sunday, which is never a day of fasting. God will do great things in our parish and in our lives if as many of us as possible corporately fast and pray!

Want to study theology?

Check out the Ecumenical Institute of Theology in Baltimore. "Take your faith journey somewhere new! Study theology, Bible, and ministry at St. Mary's Ecumenical Institute in Baltimore, offering master's programs (degrees, classes, certificates) to men and women of all faiths. Apply now to enroll in fall classes, conveniently offered on weekday evenings and Saturdays." More information: www.stmarys.edu/ei; or contact Patty Rath at 410-864-4203 or prath@stmarys.edu.