

# The Centurion

The Parish Magazine of St. Alban's Church

1011 Old Joppa Road, Joppa, Maryland, 21085



My dear People:

“Help Paint Alban’s Church!” This month we will begin a capital campaign to raise \$8,000 to have the exterior of the church professionally painted. The vestry received three quotes and has chosen the one that gives us the biggest bang for the buck. The entire church will be power washed and painted with a long lasting paint job. The doors, porches, and windows will also be completely painted. Every Sunday in August after the 8 a.m. and 10 a.m. service I will lead those of you who are interested in a tour around the outside of the church so you can see with your own eyes how badly this needs to be done. *Will you consider making a tax deductible donation to the church to make this possible?* Please see me for more details and if you have any questions. As I write this the gutters on the front of the church are being replaced and the roof is being repaired by McCreech Slate Roofing (Red Lion, PA) after they sustained damage from when the bell fell out of the belfry a few months ago. Our insurance company covered the cost of the damage. Thankfully, the bell was not damaged in the fall. Special thanks goes out to David Demme, son of Frannie Flatau, and the original donor of the bell, for reinstalling it in the belfry! Once we get the exterior of the building shored up it is time to turn our attention indoors. One of the things that really bothers me about the church is that all of our entrances look really bad. The porch leading up to the office looks like something out of *Sanford and Son*. It appears as though it is about to fall apart, though it is structurally sound. The porch off the church looks nice enough on the outside (it will look great after the paint job) but when you come in the room looks frumpy, cluttered, and tired. The drop ceiling is particularly ghastly. This, by the way, is the entrance that most first time visitors use. The rear entrance is not my main concern, but eventually something will have to be done about the handicap ramp, as ours is not up to code and is falling apart. Finally, the main entrance off the driveway... what can we say about this? Why it was designed the way it was is a mystery to me. It is cold, smelly, and ugly, and it is very difficult for older people to get up and down. Maybe one of the reasons the church has always been so small is because it just too darn hard to get into! This entrance is going to require a LOT of work to correct. But in the meantime we can focus on the other entrances. This stuff matters, folks, and it matters a lot. We only get one opportunity to make a good first impression on visitors. It all starts with the parking lot and entrances, after that it is smiles, handshakes, and hellos! Let’s strive to do all we can to make people feel welcome when they come to Saint Alban’s, and make sure the place is always in tip-top shape so that visitors become members.

Faithfully, your priest,

*J. Gordon Anderson*

August 2016

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UPCOMING HOLY DAYS:

**Aug 6th - Transfiguration**

Holy Communion at 10:00 a.m.

**Aug 15th - Assumption of BVM**

Holy Communion at 10:00 a.m.

**Aug 24th - St. Bartholomew**

Holy Communion at 10:00 a.m.

**Sep 8th - Nativity of BVM**

Holy Communion at 10:00 a.m.

**Sep 14th - Holy Cross**

Holy Communion at 10:00 a.m.

**Sep 21st - St. Matthew**

Holy Communion at 10:00 a.m.

**Sep 23rd - Ember Friday**

Holy Communion at 10:00 a.m.

**Sep 29th - St. Michael**

Holy Communion at 10:00 a.m.

**Oct 18th - St. Luke**

Holy Communion at 10:00 a.m.

**Oct 28th - Ss. Simon & Jude**

Holy Communion at 10:00 a.m.

DIOCESAN NEWS: *A Report from Father Anderson on our 2016 Synod*

Last month the Diocese of the Eastern United States met in Tampa, Florida for its forty-eighth annual synod. Our host parish was Saint Matthew's Church in Riverview, Florida. The events were held in downtown Tampa at the Sheraton Riverwalk Hotel. I was the clerical delegate and Tyler Phass, our postulant for Holy Orders, was our lay delegate. We left from BWI Airport late Sunday afternoon and arrived in Tampa that evening. The reason we had to leave so early was because Tyler had to meet with the Board of Examining Chaplains to report on his progress at seminary, and his meeting was held at the beginning of the week. You will all be happy to know that Tyler did very well. Everyone in the diocese is very impressed with him. That really makes us as parish look good! I want to thank Tyler for doing such a great job in seminary, assisting here from time to time at Saint Alban's, and assisting Fr. Eddy Rix at All Saints' Episcopal Church in Wynnewood, Pennsylvania. At the synod Tyler assisted in two official liturgies: reading the lessons at the Synod Evensong and serving as torch bearer at the synod's Solemn High Pontifical Mass. As for me, I was once again honored to serve as deacon at the synod Mass and was elected as president of the diocesan standing committee. It is a privilege and joy to serve the diocese in these and other capacities, such as being the area dean of the Mid-Atlantic Deanery. One of the things that makes going to synod so refreshing is seeing familiar faces from all over the diocese. Because we are such a small jurisdiction it is possible to get to know not only almost all of the other clergy but also a huge number of laity. Over the years I have become friends with lay people from a lot of other parishes. It is always good to catch up with them and hear who they are doing, learn how I can pray for them, and more. I have said it before and will say it again: it is such a blessing to be part of the wonderful family that is the Anglican Province of America.

At the synod meetings we received updates on the diocesan summer camp, our overseas missions, parish updates, ecumenical updates, updates from various committees, financial updates, and more. (Note the financial report from the synod is posted on the "Diocesan News" bulletin board in the parish hall.) In addition, the clergy wives always have a fabulous outing hosted by Mary Grundorf, and the order of deaconesses gather together for a meeting and fellowship. A couple of new parishes and clergy were welcomed into the diocese at this year's synod. One was the Rev'd Dr. John Klein and his parish of Saint James the Great (Smith Station, Alabama). I have known Father Klein for many years, as he once served as rector of Mount Calvary Church (Episcopal) in Baltimore City! What a joy it was to welcome this dear brother in Christ

and his people into our diocese! I was hoping that All Saints' Lancaster, PA, a new parish that recently joined our diocese, would be there but they were not able to send a representative this year. As the church is in our deanery, and I am looking forward to going up to meet them and their priest-in-charge, Fr. James Johnson, sometime this fall.

No doubt the most exciting part of the synod was the lecture by Bishop Kenneth Meyers. Bishop Meyers is a prolific author and speaker, who also serves as a bishop in the Anglican Church in North America. His presentation was "Salvation, and How We Got It Wrong" which also happens to be the title of one of his books. His talk focused on the theory of penal substitution, which is the idea that God the Father punishes God the Son on the cross for our sins. Many people take this theory of the atonement to be the one, true biblical model that explains how Christ's death atones for our sins. It has its roots in the medieval bishop Saint Anselm and was eventually adopted by both most of the Protestant Reformers and the Roman Catholic Counter-Reformers as being the best theory of how Christ's death atones for our sins. It reached its high point with the famous American theologian, Jonathan Edwards whose sermon "Sinners in the Hands of an Angry God" is almost a complete explanation of the theory. Now, it is worthwhile noting that the Church has never defined how Christ's death takes away the sin of the world. There are at least ten different theories (which Bishop Jones masterfully explained during a homily at one of the synod Masses) of how Christ's death atones for sin. Bishop Meyers believes that all of the theories have points of truth to them, and that taken together they form a complete picture... all but one, that is, and that is this theory of penal substitution! He argued that the doctrine was not only unbiblical, but irrational. While it is impossible to rehearse his argument here in this limited space those of you who are interested in hearing what he has to say can search his name and "Salvation and How We Got it Wrong" on YouTube to see a sermon he gives on the topic. He also has a book and video on it. While not everyone agreed with him, there was no speaker at synod that I can remember who ever engendered more passionate discussion and debate among the clergy and laity of the diocese! Indeed his very accessible book on the subject might make for a great study here at Saint Alban's someday.

I hope this brief report gives you some idea of what goes on at our synods. If you want more information or have questions please feel free to ask me. And lastly, why not consider coming to synod one year? We would love to have you! ✠

PARISH LIFE: *Funeral and Eulogies*

On the parish website is the following information about having a funeral at Saint Alban's Church: *"One of the corporal works of mercy of the Church has always been to bury the dead. To that end, the clergy of St. Alban's are willing and available to bury anyone. It should be understood that the form of burial will be appropriate to the baptismal status of the deceased. The clergy should be notified immediately upon the death of a parishioner, so that appropriate arrangements can be made which are consistent with Christian doctrine, and the rites, ceremonies, and traditions of the Church. Technically, the officiating Cleric, not the mortician, is the "funeral director". The norm for the burial of a faithful Christian at St. Alban's is, as outlined in the Book of Common Prayer, in the context of the Holy Eucharist. For more information on funeral preparation and burials at St. Alban's please call the Church office."* I am indebted to my former confessor and spiritual director, and longtime rector of St. Paul's "K" Street in Washington, Fr. James Daughtry, for providing this excellent policy for the church to use. But in addition to this there is one other longstanding parish policy that we try to follow when we have a funeral at the church. That policy is that there are to be no eulogies at the funeral! The reason for this is four-fold. (Note: All of the stories mentioned below are based on the rector's personal experience.)

- 1) **Eulogies take too much time.** A service that should be no more than an hour is often dragged out to two or even three hours with these endless, emotional speeches. I once saw at a funeral a man in the back row pass out after some eulogies went on and on for over an hour! An ambulance had to be called, which made the whole funeral take even longer than usual. On top of this, the poor old man urinated in his chair making a ton of problems for the janitorial staff, which at this church was the poor rector.
- 2) **Eulogies are too easily occasions to sin,** and the rector has no idea what anyone will get up there and say. Once at a funeral where there were eulogies various people got up and started making very nasty comments about other people present at the funeral! Another time person with very strange religious views made weird theological comments that were highly inappropriate and even damaging to the parish. The Church has strict rules as to who is allowed to speak from the pulpit in her public services. This is for a reason!
- 3) **Eulogies too easily degenerate into a form of narcissism and idolatry.** Some of the things I have heard said about the deceased at funerals has been utterly idolatrous. "So-and-so never got mad at

anyone. He never had a fight. She was the perfect aunt." Etc., and etc. More than once at a funeral I have felt that I had to dive under a pew to avoid being hit by lightning! And I have often wondered at what the dead would think at hearing all of these platitudes. More than once I have thought, "He must be laughing his rear end off at all of this!"

- 4) Fourth, and finally, and related to the previous point, **eulogies distract from the glory of God!** That is the essence of idolatry. The point of a funeral Mass is to pray for the dead, and offer for him or her the Holy Sacrifice of the Mass. We thank God that the Lord Jesus Christ died to save the deceased from from sin and death, and to bring him to eternal life. So the funeral Mass is ultimately a service of honor and worship to almighty God. And that's what *every* Mass is. What a eulogy too often does is draw attention *away* from Christ's redeeming death and make the dead person into some sort of demigod who is being worshipped!

So, for all of these reasons (and more) we do not allow eulogies at funerals. The only person who speaks is the celebrant of the service, and he does so to offer a biblically based message of hope that glorifies God. This does not make a funeral an impersonal event. Far from it! Any priest who knows his stuff and his people will be able to draw out a few relevant details from the dead person's life for the greater purpose of glorifying God and edifying his people. One of the purposes of the funeral Mass is *conversion...* to get those who are still living to turn their hearts and lives over to God, and to seek God now while they are still living, before it is too late! That is one of the things that the priest tries to do when he is developing his homily for the funeral. He offers hope, but he exhorts the "Church Militant" (the church here on earth) and all present to seek God who will judge *them* when they one day die!

Now, in closing, and all of that being said, I would encourage eulogies to be given in memory of the dead... *at the viewing!* The *viewing* is the place for eulogies. If the family is willing to deal with the risks that come with letting people get up and speak off the cuff, then that is up to them. I love hearing stories about the dead and all they did as much as the next person does. But it is the viewing that is the place for that. The Requiem Mass is the time for the Church to come together and offer the Holy Sacrifice on behalf of the departed and to plead Jesus for him or her. ✠

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 THE LITURGICAL YEAR: *A Brief Look at Some of the Principle Marian Feasts of the Christian Calendar*

One of the things that distinguishes the Anglican tradition from other non-catholic Christian traditions is our devotion to the saints. On pages 226-259 in the Book of Common Prayer (1928) we find a section of “provers” for various saints days to be observed throughout the year. Other holy days in addition to these are also observed in the Anglican Province of America at the discretion of the clergy, these being found in such authorized liturgical texts as *Lesser Feasts and Fasts* (1963) and the *American and Anglican Missals*.

The greatest of all of the saints is without a doubt Mary, the Mother of our Lord Jesus Christ. Hymn 599 (“Vigiles, et Sancti,” otherwise known as “Ye watchers and ye holy ones”) puts the glory of Mary into beautiful, poetic terms: “*O higher than the cherubim, More glorious than the seraphim, Lead their praises, Alleluia! Thou bearer of the eternal Word, Most gracious, magnify the Lord, Alleluia!*” What makes Mary unique among the saints is the fact that she was chosen by God to be the Christ-bearer. Her humility on consenting to this vocation is a model to all believers to submit to God’s will.

Let’s look at some of the most important Marian feast days on the calendar. The first one that we celebrate is the **Purification of Saint Mary the Virgin** (BCP p. 231). This feast falls on February 2nd. Also known as “The Presentation of Christ in the Temple” it commemorates Mary’s ritual purification forty days after giving birth to Jesus, and the giving of her firstborn to God by offering sacrifices.

The next one in the Prayer Book is the **Annunciation of the Blessed Virgin Mary** (BCP p. 235). This feast falls on March 25th, nine months before Christmas day! On it we recall how the Archangel Gabriel came to Mary and told her that she would conceive and bring forth a son to be named Jesus who would save God’s people from their sin. It is from this event described in Luke 1:26 ff. that we get most of the “Hail Mary” prayer. (“Hail, thou that are highly favored, the Lord is with thee: blessed art thou among women.”)

Those are the only two Marian feast days in the Book of Common Prayer because of the Reformers’ desire to retain only the feasts that had a biblical precedent. But since that time many of the older, extra biblical Marian feasts have made their way back into the Anglican calendar.

One of these is the **Assumption of the Blessed Virgin Mary** (August 15th). On this date the church commemorates the assumption of Mary – body and

soul – into heaven at her death. The Orthodox Churches call this feast “The Dormition” or “The Falling Asleep of the Blessed Virgin Mary.” The feast probably had its roots as a simple commemoration of the death of Mary and later had added to it the notion of her body also being assumed. In the Roman Church belief in Mary’s Assumption along these lines is considered a dogma of the faith. For the rest of us it is simply a pious, old tradition.

The **Visitation of Our Lady** (July 2) commemorates the Blessed Virgin Mary’s visit to her cousin Elizabeth. (Luke 1:39-45) That this clearly biblical event was not included in the Prayer Book calendar is strange. Perhaps it was not included because of the rather late date of its foundation (1263 in Italy by the Franciscans). Or maybe because it was not popular enough in England... though it was eventually made a “black letter day” (a minor feast) in the 1662 English Prayer Book.

The **Nativity of the Blessed Virgin Mary** falls on September 8th dates back to at least the 8th century in the east, and possibly the 7th or 6th in the west. As one can guess, this day commemorates the birth the Virgin Mary. This feast is not biblical, as the scriptures tell us nothing about the birth of Mary. In spite of this, it was made a “black letter day” in the 1662 English Prayer Book.

On November 21st we commemorate the **Presentation of the Blessed Virgin Mary**. This event is found in the apocryphal “Book of James” and dates back to the 8th century. Like the preceding feast this one is not found in the scriptures. In the Christian east, however, this feast is one of the twelve most important feasts of the Church, ranking right up with Christmas and Epiphany!

Finally, on December 8th is commemorated the **Conception of the Blessed Virgin Mary**. The Roman Church dubs this feast “The Immaculate Conception.” On this day they believe that Mary was “conceived without sin” (or more accurately, that the benefits of Christ were applied to her at the moment of her conception). Since 1854 this doctrine has been a dogma of the faith for Roman Catholics. For the rest of us, however, going back to ancient times, this has been just a pious belief, because the scriptures do not speak on it.

We celebrate these days here at Saint Alban’s because we honor the Mother of our Lord Jesus Christ. Join us for these days as they appear on the calendar! ☩