

The Centurion

The Parish Magazine of St. Alban's Church

1011 Old Joppa Road, Joppa, Maryland, 21085



My dear People:

Advent is now upon us. For many people this is the time of year to shop till you drop, go to holiday parties, and listen to schmaltzy Elvis songs like "Santa Bring My Baby Back To Me." But for the follower of Christ it is a time of year to think about the coming of Jesus. Typically during the Advent season we think of how Jesus *came* to us on the first Christmas day when he was born in a manger. This is indeed an important aspect of the season. But we might be surprised to learn that many of the Advent liturgical propers (the specially appointed readings - scripture passages, antiphons, and prayers - for the services of the Church) refer to Christ's *second* coming more than they do his *first* coming. The Collects for Advent 1, 3, and 4 clearly look forward to the second coming of Jesus, as does the Epistle for Advent 1, and the Gospel for Advent 2. Many of the hymns appointed for this season such as #5 ("Lo! he comes with clouds descending"), and of course the lections for Evening Prayer (the book of Revelation) also focus especially on the second coming of Jesus. As Christians, we believe that Jesus "...shall come again, with glory, to judge both the quick (living) and the dead." (Nicene Creed) During his earthly ministry Jesus repeatedly said that he would - when we least expect it - return at the end of time to judge the world. (Mt. 24:30-50) So often we live our lives as though Jesus is gone and never coming back. Some look at all of the injustice and violence in the world, and how the wicked seem to have full reign over the affairs of people, and become discouraged and cynical. Others think that since Jesus is long gone it doesn't matter how we live our lives in terms of morality and holiness of life. But the liturgy of the Church - the Kalendar, the propers, the hymns - and the sacred scriptures, whence the liturgy arises - constantly remind us that though Jesus is now in heaven, "...from thence he shall come to judge the quick and the dead." Jesus is coming again. "Surely I come quickly." (Rev. 22:20) He will come and all the people that have ever lived will have to give an account of their lives and all that they have done and face judgement. Thus, the Church enjoins us to "cast away the works of darkness, and put on the armor of light" (Epistle for Advent 1, Romans 13:8 ff.) that we may "rise to the life immortal." (Collect for Advent, BCP, p. 90) So this Advent let us be especially mindful of the fact that Jesus will come again, and when he comes all of the evil and injustice in the world will finally be done away with, and replaced with true joy, happiness, and peace. And let us frame our lives according to God's laws and precepts, living each moment as though our Lord may return, and leading others to him so that they might find peace of mind, happiness, and most important eternal salvation. May God bless and keep each one of you this Advent season and Christmastide.

Affectionately, your Friend and Pastor,

J. Gordon Anderson

December 2014

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UPCOMING HOLY DAYS:

December 1st - St. Andrew

Holy Communion at 10:00 a.m.

**December 17th, 19th, 20th -
Ember Days**

Holy Communion at 10:00 a.m.

December 22nd - St. Thomas

Holy Communion at 10:00 a.m.

**December 24th - 25th
Christmas**

Holy Communion at 6:30 p.m. and
8:30 p.m. on Christmas Eve, and
at 10:00 a.m. Christmas Day.

December 26th - St. Stephen

Holy Communion at 10:00 a.m.

December 27th - St. John

Holy Communion at 10:00 a.m.

January 1st - Circumcision

Holy Communion at 10:00 a.m.

THEOLOGY: *The Great "O" Antiphons of Advent*

One of the best beloved Advent hymns is "O come, O come, Emmanuel" (Hymnal 2). This hymn is based on the seven so-called *Great "O" Antiphons* which, beginning around the 8th century, were said before and after the *Magnificat* at Vespers (equivalent to our "Evening Prayer" service) from December 17th - 23rd. "Each of the Antiphons salutes the coming Messiah under one of the many title ascribed to him in Holy Scripture." (Hymnal Companion, p. 1) Their authorship is unknown, but whoever composed them followed what later became an Anglican liturgical principle. They took the words of scripture - which is what these antiphons are - and arranged them in devotional and liturgical format.

Though they hailed from before the Reformation their use never completely died out in the Church of England as suggested by the Kalendar of the 1662 Book of Common Prayer, where it lists December 16th as *O Sapientia*. (Note that the Medieval "Sarum" Use - the major form used in in England before the Reformation, and on which the Book of Common Prayer was largely based, had an additional "O" Antiphon, *O Virgo virginum*, which explains why the Prayer Book Kalendar has the antiphons beginning on the 16th instead of the 17th.)

In our 1928 American Book of Common Prayer the closest thing we have to specially appointed antiphons in the Daily Offices is found in the office of Morning Prayer, where on page 8 certain special antiphons are appointed to be said before the *Venite, exultemus Domino* on page 9. But it is fair to say that because the "O" Antiphons are found in our official hymnal in the form of that gorgeous, traditional Advent hymn "O come, O come, Emmanuel" that the "O" Antiphons are indeed a part of our

official liturgy and tradition. Let us quickly compare each of the "O" Antiphons with the verses of Hymn #2.

Hymn, Verse 2: "O come, thou Wisdom from on high, Who orderest all things mightily; To us the path of knowledge show, And teach us in her ways to go."

Antiphon - O Sapientia - "O Wisdom, which camest out of the mouth of the most High, and reachest from one end to another, mightily and sweetly ordering all things: Come and teach us the way of Prudence."

Hymn, Verse 3: "O come, O come, thou Lord of might, Who to thy tribes on Sinai's height, In ancient times didst give the law, In cloud and majesty, and awe."

Antiphon - O Adonai - "O Adonai, the Leader of the house of Israel, who appearedst in the bush to Moses in a flame of fire, and gavest him the law in Sinai: Come and redeem us with an outstretched arm."

Hymn, Verse 4: "O come, thou Rod of Jesse's stem, From every foe deliver them, That trust thy mighty power to save, And give them victory o'er the grave."

Antiphon - O Radix Jesse - "O Root of Jesse, which standest for an ensign of the people, at whom kings shall shut their mouths, unto whom the Gentiles shall seek: Come and deliver us, and tarry not."

Hymn, Verse 5: "O come, thou Key of David, come, And open wide our heavenly home; Make safe the way that leads on high, And close the path to misery."

Antiphon - O Clavis David - "O Key of David, and Sceptre of the house of Israel; that openest and no man shutteth, and shuttest and no man openeth: Come, and bring the prisoners out of the prison house,

them that sit in darkness and the shadow of death."

Hymn, Verse 6: "O come, thou Day-spring from on high, And cheer us by thy drawing nigh; Disperse the gloomy clouds of night, And death's dark shadow put to flight."

Antiphon - O Oriens - "O Day-spring, Brightness of the Light everlasting, and Sun of righteousness: Come and enlighten them that sit in darkness and the shadow of death."

Hymn, Verse 7: "O come, Desire of nations, bind, In one the hearts of all mankind; Bid thou our sad divisions cease, And be thyself our King of Peace."

Antiphon - O Rex Gentium - "O King of Nations, and their desire; the Cornerstone, who makest both one: Come and save mankind, whom thou formedst of clay."

Hymn, Verse 1: "O COME, O come Emmanuel, And ransom captive Israel, That mourns in lonely exile here, Until the Son of God appear."

Antiphon - O Emmanuel - "O Emmanuel, our king and Lawgiver, the Desire of all nations and their Salvation: Come and save us, O Lord our God."

Those of us who read the Daily Offices of Morning and Evening Prayer (which should be *all* of us) might consider incorporating the Medieval "O" Antiphons when we read Evening Prayer from Dec. 17th - 23rd. It would be a tremendous liturgical compliment to using the Advent antiphon at the *Venite* at Morning Prayer. All we need is our trusty 1940 Hymnal. From Dec. 17th-23rd, when we get ready to recite the *Magnificat* (p. 26) after the first lesson, *precede it and follow it with one verse from Hymn #2!* In that way we will be following the old Medieval custom of singing the "O" Antiphons and heralding the coming Messiah! ✠

LITURGY & WORSHIP: *"On the Use of Incense" by the late Rev'd Homer Rogers*

Once upon a time, in a far-away land, before the days of Air-wick and indoor plumbing, people's houses would get musty, and the odors of cooked cabbage and garlic would cling to the walls and curtains, and on damp days a crowded house might smell like the locker room of a gymnasium. Folks discovered, probably at first by accident, that if they would burn certain fragrant resins and gums the smoke would sweeten the air and make life indoors much more pleasant.

However, since these aromatic resins and gums were rare and costly, they were saved for those occasions when company was coming. Thus it came to be that burning incense became a sign of somebody important coming to the house. You walk in and smell incense and say, "Who's coming?"

Royalty and the aristocracy had incense burned before them on all public occasions. If you wished to honor a friend, you burned incense when he visited you.

So burning incense in the presence of someone very important came to be regarded as a mark of honor and respect.

Incense was burned in temples and all places of public and private worship in honor of the God who was to visit the temple. It purified the place in anticipation of his visit. The Jews did this, and the Christians took over the custom. "From the rising of the sun even unto the going down of the same my Name shall be great among the Gentiles; and in every place incense shall be offered in my name, and a pure offering; for my name shall be great among the Gentiles, saith the Lord of Hosts." (Malachi 1:11).

It is instructive to notice the places in the church service at which incense is offered. On the entrance into the sanctuary at the beginning of the Mass the priest "censes" the altar to prepare it for the coming of God on the altar. Then he himself is "censed" by the deacon or thurifer, because the priest himself is to become an instrument through which God acts in the service.

The bread and wine are "censed" at the offertory, because God is going to visit them and make them His habitation. Then the congregation is "censed", for they are going to receive their communion - God is going to visit them. They further are due honor in their own right as the

Mystical Body of Christ through which (with the priest) God acts to consecrate the Holy Sacrifice.

At the moment of Consecration the bread and wine (becoming the Body and Blood of Christ) are again "censed" by the thurifer, because God becomes present there.

God is really acting through His priests; God is really present on our altars under the forms of bread and wine; God is really speaking to us through the reading of the Gospel, and finally God is really and actually present in the Christian who receives the Sacraments or hears His Word.

Incense is not used merely because it is pretty, or because it smells sweet, or because we like "high church", but rather because, as a living link with Christians and Jewish antiquity, it assures us that the early Christians

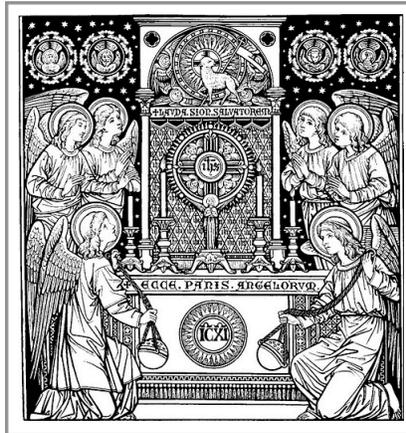
believed as we believe, that when we gather together in His Name, God is in our midst, that we do not merely remember a dead Jew but have Communion with a Living Christ, that we do not merely long for a heaven that is "up yonder" or "in the sweet by and by", but adore an Eternal Lord who is "right here and now."

It adds to our service an atmosphere of mystery - and well it might. For it signifies an invasion of the Eternal into time, of the Infinite All Holy into the midst of His people.

Additionally, we are called to glorify God with our bodies, and the use of incense with its sweet odor allows our sense of smell to participate in our worship; just as our sight, sound and motion do as we look, sing, and position our bodies.

So when incense is offered, it should properly awe and impress us with the terrifying fact of the imminent entrance of Him who flung the stars into space and who numbers the hairs of our heads, yet whose tender love is concerned with the sparrow's fall, who willed to be laid in a manger and nailed to a cross that you and I might know His love for all eternity.

Understanding its ancient meaning, as purification before the entrance of an important visitor, incense as the Church uses it is eloquent testimony and a vivid dramatization of the Church's most cherished beliefs and vital experiences: God's coming to man, really and actually, in man's worship of God. ✠



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

Christmas Family:

St. Alban's is once again sponsoring a needy family for Christmas. In the parish hall on the literature table is a Christmas tree that contains "wish list" items for the family of five in need. There is a mom and four kids - one girl, and three boys - ranging in age from 2 - 18 years. Please be sure to attach the tag the gift that you get for the children so we know what is in each box and can give the gift to the appropriate child. Special thanks to Susan Kelly for getting this all set up for us! If you have any questions please see Susan.

A Special Notice for "Bible Sunday":

The Second Sunday in Advent, December 7th (Bible Sunday), has for years been designated "Seminarian Support Sunday" by Bishop Grundorf. On this day we will be collecting money after each service to send to the diocese. The money is placed in a fund to support seminarians and their families and is dispersed on an as-needed basis. Please give as you are able for this most important cause!

Service Notes:

In the pews is a long-awaited worship booklet to help those who attend the 10:00 a.m. service make all of the right responses at the Mass. The booklet also has additional devotional material as well as other prayers that are sometimes used at Sunday and daily Masses. Please leave the booklets in the pews. If you'd like your own personal copy please see the rector and he'll make one for you!

Vestry Meeting:

The vestry will meet on December 17th at 7:00 p.m. at the church.

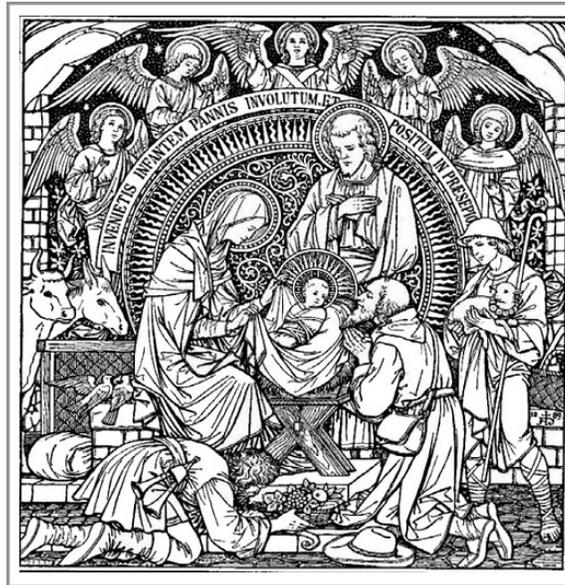
Pledge Cards for 2015:

Please be sure to bring your bring cards back to church by December 21st. The church needs your financial support to keep going and to expand its mission and ministry in

the community and the world. St. Alban's is entirely self-supported. We receive no support from the diocese, and we do not have an endowment fund. We are here entirely by your generosity. God calls us to give our whole lives to him, and support the work of the ministry with our time, talent, *and* treasure. (not *or* treasure) Thank you for your support and please consider increasing it as you are able.

Standing Notices:

"The minister is ordered, from time to time, to advise the People, whilst they are still in health, to make Wills arranging for the disposal of their temporal goods, and, when of ability, to leave Bequests for religious and other charitable uses." (BCP, p. 320)



"My bounden duty [as a member of the Church] is to follow Christ, to worship God every Sunday in his Church; and to work and pray and give for the spread of his kingdom." (BCP, p. 291)

Quilt Raffle:

Our quilt raffle is drawing to a close! The gorgeous work of art made by Tammy Jones on display in the parish hall will be raffled off on January 6th (Epiphany) at our annual Epiphany Dinner and Gift Exchange. The proceeds will go to a set of rose vestments. We are very close to making

our goal so we can have the vestments by Lent 2015! So please continue to buy tickets... not only to help us purchase the vestment set but also to win this magnificent quilt.

Upcoming Events:

On the Second Sunday in Advent we will officially institute our new vestrymen, Karen Novakoski and Steve Tillinghast. Then, on the Fourth Sunday in Advent we will have the Blessing of the Christmas Creche which will be decorated by the children of the parish. Afterwards the kids and grown-ups will decorate the parish hall with our Christmas tree and other holiday decorations! ✠