

The Centurion

The Parish Magazine of St. Alban's Church

1011 Old Joppa Road, Joppa, Maryland, 21085



My dear People:

The world was horrified a couple of months ago when it was revealed that famed director Harvey Weinstein had been sexually harassing women for years, and in some cases had allegedly raped them. This set off a chain reaction with many other men—and in some rare cases women—in positions of power being accused of this type of bad behavior. Supposedly family-friendly entertainers and household names, such as Matt Lauer, and even Garrison Keillor, all were exposed as being sleazy abusers to one degree or another. Many people wonder, “How could this happen? Why did this happen?” But as Max von Sydow’s character said with regard to the Holocaust in the movie *Hannah and Her Sisters*: “The real question is not ‘How could this happen?’ but rather, given the nature of man why doesn’t it happen more often?” I think that many people were shocked by these men’s behavior, and all of the coverups that made it possible, because they have an unflinching belief in the goodness of humanity. This is one of the hallmarks of our liberal (not in the political sense, but in the classical sense) democracy rooted as it is in enlightenment thinking. The prevalent idea today is that man is on an ever-upward trajectory of progress and mastery of himself and his environment, and that he develops greater moral sophistication with each passing year. The way “traditional values” are sneered at and vilified illustrate this perfectly. But the scriptures have a different view of man. While he is made in God’s image and likeness, and occupies a unique place in the creation, he is, sadly, a fallen being. His nature is weakened by sin and his heart corrupted. Saint Paul’s stunning indictment of humanity in Romans 1:18 ff., and elsewhere in his epistles, says it all. The bad acts committed by these corrupt men, as well as the injustices and human rights violations that we witness in many countries, the senseless violence destroying our own city of Baltimore, and many other cities and countries throughout the world, should make us wonder: are we really as good and fabulous as we sometimes imagine ourselves to be? Or is there perhaps something to what the scriptures and the tradition has said? Thankfully, God does not leave us to die in our trespasses and sin and be eternally alienated from him. Rather, in his great love for humanity he himself took on human nature in order to conquer sin and death, so that those who repent of their sin and turn in faith to Jesus Christ receive forgiveness and new lives in him! By our sacramental union with Jesus in Holy Baptism and the Holy Eucharist we receive grace—God’s divine help—to be truly changed and grow in holiness. As we grow spiritually, however, we are beset at every turn by our old sinful nature, and assaulted by the temptations of the world, the flesh, and the devil. So we must be on guard and make careful use of the means of grace given to us so that we might win the race... the race to everlasting life.

Faithfully, your priest,

J. Gordon Anderson

February 2018

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Important News and Other Items

UPCOMING SERVICES:

Feb. 2nd - The Purification of St. Mary the Virgin

Holy Communion at 10:00 a.m.

Feb. 9th - St. Cyril of Alexandria

Healing Service at 10:00 a.m.

Feb. 14th - Ash Wednesday

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

Feb. 20th - Feria

Evening Prayer at 6:30 p.m.

Feb. 21st - Ember Day

Holy Communion at 10:00 a.m.

Feb. 23rd - Ember Day

Holy Communion at 10:00 a.m.

Feb. 27th - Feria

Evening Prayer at 6:30 p.m.

Mar. 2nd - St. Chad

Healing Service at 10:00 a.m.

Mar. 6th - SS Perpetua & Felicity

Evening Prayer at 6:30 p.m.

Mar. 9th - Feria

Stations of the Cross and Benediction at 10:00 a.m.

 DIOCESAN NEWS: *An Update from the 2018 Winter Conference from Father Anderson*

Last month Mason Waldhauser and I flew to Florida for the annual diocesan winter conference, which was hosted by All Saints' Church in Palatka, Florida. Palatka is located in what is apparently the "cabbage capital" of the United States. Indeed a wonderful cabbage casserole was served at one of the dinners.

These conferences used to be known as "clergy conferences" but inasmuch as a number of laity attend the powers that be have begun referring to it as "winter conference." Like at our annual diocesan synod various diocesan committees meet at winter conference. These include Standing Committee (which is sort of the "vestry" of the diocese), the Bishop's Advisory Committee (which assist in approving candidates for Holy Orders), and the Board of Examining Chaplains (which examines men who are seeking ordination, and women who are seeking to be set apart as deaconesses).

Our own Mason Waldhauser met with the bishop, the BAC, and BEC at the conference and was approved to be a postulant for the diocese. And our former curate, the Rev'd Tyler Phass, met with the BEC and Standing Committee to be approved for ordination to the sacred order of priests this spring. I will let the church know the time and place of his ordination.

As people gather for the conference there is time for short excursions, sight-seeing, and other activities. Mason and I went with Dcn. Phass and Fr. Wade Miller (St. Philip's, Blacksburg, VA) to the beautiful historic town of St. Augustine, Florida, which was only about thirty miles away.

The opening night of the conference consists of a fellowship dinner. Then the next morning we read Morning Prayer and then, after breakfast, the clergy and whichever laity want to gather for some sort of educational session.

In past years we've had lectures on Dante's Divine Comedy by a priest of the diocese who is an expert in Dante and in Medieval theology and philosophy. This year we had a fantastic presentation given by two priests of the diocese on the topic higher criticism. (See the next page to learn more about higher criticism.) Lunch is always served midday.

While this is happening the deaconesses meet to discuss the business of their ministry, and the clergy wives have lunch and an outing hosted by Mrs. Grundorf. After the presentations have ended we gather for Holy Communion and then a fabulous dinner. Our dinner this year was a "Low Country Boil", typical of that region,

which is corn on the cob, shrimp, sausage, and cabbage. It was messy as one would expect but also very yummy!

The next morning is Holy Communion and then the trip home. Each night at the conference a priest typically hosts those who are interested in his room for cocktails, fellowship, and theological discussion.

As I've said before I feel extremely fortunate to be a priest in the Anglican Province of America. I can say without hesitation that I both admire and cherish my colleagues in the ministry. We are truly blessed to have a great bunch of people in this diocese all working together to further the kingdom of our Lord and Savior, Jesus Christ.

I am blessed to serve as president of the Standing Committee. My three year term ends this summer. Our meeting is always after the Friday morning Mass. It takes about three hours. As mentioned above, we interview candidates for Holy Orders. But we also do a lot of other things. The treasurer presents the current balance sheet of the diocese and answers questions about it. The head of our publishing arm gives a report on sales and upcoming products. Reports on our global partnerships (foreign missions) are given by the vicar general, the Very Rev'd David Haines. The bishops report on their ecumenical and other activities. Old and new business are discussed as well.

Under new business we discussed the bishop's 2018 Lenten Appeal. This year we'll be raising money to build another Christian school for our churches in India. I'll be sending out information on it once the diocese mails it. Our schools that we currently have in India are ministries to the Dalit ("untouchable") population, and to the marginalized and poor who are exploited by temple prostitution, which is supposed to be outlawed in India but in fact is alive and well.

We also discussed our 2018 Diocesan Synod. This year it will be held July 16th - 20th in Charlotte, NC. The host parish is St. Michael the Archangel. In the past I have always enjoyed synods hosted by this church because we're on church grounds for most of it rather than at a hotel. This makes for a very prayerful and relaxing synod. Though this year, because of our size, I believe all of the business activities and most of the worship activities will be held at the hotel.

In closing I want to thank the generous people of Saint Alban's for making it possible for Mason and me to attend this wonderful annual event. Please remember to pray for the diocese —its people and leadership— as we most assuredly need it! May God bless and keep you! ✠

SACRED SCRIPTURE: *What is Higher Criticism?*

At our winter conference two learned and godly priests who serve on the Board of Examining Chaplains gave an all day presentation on “Higher Criticism.” In the morning, Fr. Paul Rivard, rector of St. George’s Church in Simpsonville, SC, gave a fantastic history of the the development of higher criticism. And then in the afternoon Fr. Mark Menees, rector of St. John’s Church in Greensboro, NC, gave an excellent, multi-faceted presentation on the doctrine of revelation (how God reveals himself to man) and on the patristic and Anglican approaches to scriptural interpretation.

What exactly is higher criticism? First and foremost it is a branch of biblical criticism. The word “criticism” here refers to the “study” of something. A critic “studies” something (e.g. a film “critic”). “Higher criticism” is a body of methods and techniques used to study the origins and meaning of the biblical text.

Historically it was concerned with discovering the origins of the biblical texts, and it addressed questions of authorship, dates, and more. “Higher criticism” was contrasted with so-called “lower criticism” which was the study of textual differences between manuscripts and the meaning of the text in its original time. Nowadays, however, differences between the two form of criticism are considered anachronistic, as theologians approach study the scriptures using all sorts of techniques and methods.

The bible is a collection of books from thousands of years ago and from a completely different culture than ours. That means that we ought to approach its interpretation very carefully. We need to know something about the text, the culture, the time period, etc. in order to better understand the meaning of the text.

So, in the realm of biblical interpretation there are a number of types of criticism that nearly all scholars employ. Here are a few very brief descriptions of the most important of them: (courtesy of *Introduction to the New Testament* by Raymond Brown, Doubleday Books, 1997, pp. 21-29)

Textual Criticism: We no longer have the original written versions of the books of the bible. All we have are copies, sometimes of the entire bible, but usually just fragments. Sometimes there is disagreement among these copies and fragments. This type of criticism studies these differences in an effort to discover the most original form.

Historical Criticism: The biblical writers were often trying to convey a literal, historical message to the reader. This type of criticism studies the meaning of what

are to us obscure passages (e.g. Mark 7:11-12) so we may better understand what is being written.

Source Criticism: This is the study of the sources of the biblical books. What did the author(s) of the text use for inspiration for writing? Stories? Other texts? Where did the writer get his information to write what he did?

Form Criticism: What we are reading determines how it is to be read and understood. For example, we do not read the classified ads or the comics in the newspaper the same way we read the front page. The same is true of the bible. Poetical books are read and interpreted differently than epistles because they are two different forms of literature.

Redaction Criticism: This type of study focuses on the authors of the books as “redactors” or “editors” and studies their individual style and emphases.

Canonical Criticism: This examines the meaning of a passage not within the larger book itself but in light of the entire “canon” of the Old and New Testaments.

Structuralism: This concentrates on overall structure and final form of the book. Many “study” bibles have outlines of the books of the bible at the beginning of each book. This is a hallmark of structuralism, which studies the overarching narrative and final product.

Narrative Criticism: This approach focuses on the books as stories. To that end it distinguishes the implied author from the actual author, the implied audience from the real audience, and so on. It is especially useful when studying different “narratives” such as the infancy narratives.

Rhetorical Criticism: This analyzes the strategies used by the author to make what was recounted effective. (Brown, p. 26) Like narrative criticism it takes an especially “literary” approach to the text.

There are few other major types of criticism but for lack space we will stop here. More information on the various forms of criticism can be found in the text by Raymon Brown or online on Wikipedia. Sound scholarship recognizes the strengths and weaknesses of each type of criticism and employs several different approaches *together* in order to better understand the text. The excesses of John Shelby Spong and the Jesus Seminar on one hand and the fundamentalists/literalists on the other, where one approach is taken to extreme, are well known. Let us celebrate the inspired word of God by using techniques to better understand it and apply it to the way we live out lives. ☩

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

February 2017 Update from Seminarian Mason Waldhauser

Dear Church Family,

The semester has begun, and so far so good! It's been nice being back in the rhythms of chapel and class here on campus. I just got out of my Historical Theology class, and we're learning about the Jewish origins of Christianity, and just how much overlap there was, so much so that many Christians were still going to synagogue even in the 300s. Last week, I met up with Fr. Gordon in Florida for the APA's clergy conference, where I passed my interview for postulancy status; so next time you'll see me, I'll be in one of those collars with a stripe on it. It was nice to warm up down there; it's been so cold here in Wisconsin that some of us went ice fishing on the lake here at the school. Happy Candlemass! Looking forward to seeing you on my next trip home.

Best,

Mason

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Shrove Tuesday/Mardi Gras Party

Please join us on Tuesday, February 13th for our annual Shrove Tuesday/Mardi Gras party. We'll have Evening Prayer at 6:30 p.m. followed by a lovely dinner. Mark your calendars now! More details to come.

2018 Lenten Activities and Study

We have a very short Epiphany season this year — just three weeks. That is followed by the three week season of pre-Lent, and then finally comes the forty days of Lent. In addition to our usual Holy Day services, as well as our monthly Healing and Requiem Masses, we will have Stations of the Cross and Benediction of the Blessed Sacrament on Fridays at noon. We'll also have a Lenten study. This year for our study we will be looking at the Four Cardinal Virtues: Prudence, Temperance, Justice, and Fortitude. These virtues form the basis of the moral life. The day and time of meeting will be announced. As always we will begin the study with a service of Evening Prayer and dinner will be provided. May God help us to keep an holy Lent!

Saint Blaise and the Blessing of Throats

Saint Blaise is believed to have been bishop of Sebaste in Armenia. According to Church tradition he was the son of rich and noble Christians, and was very young when consecrated bishop. According to the legend, a woman once brought him her son, who was at the point of death because a fishbone was stuck in his throat. St. Blaise healed him, and at a later date when he was imprisoned, the same woman looked after him in gratitude by bringing him food and candles. Church tradition says he was put to death under Emperor Licinius in the 4th century. He was believed to be torn with wool-combs (which is his iconographical emblem), before being beheaded. By consequence he became patron saint of wool-combers. The feast of St. Blaise is Feb. 3rd.

The interesting thing about him from a cultic perspective is the tradition on his feast called the "Blessing of Throats," which is still practiced by traditional Christians all over the world. Sufferers from throat diseases or any other ailments that effect the throat (i.e. the common cold) are blessed at the altar rail with two candles and a special prayer called The Blessing of St. Blaise:

"THROUGH the intercession of blessed Blasius, may God free thee from all affections of the throat, and from all other ailments: In the Name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost."

St. Alban's will observe the Blessing of the Throats (which is also intended to help ward off winter colds and sickness) in honor of St. Blaise at the end of the feast of the Purification of Saint Mary the Virgin on February 2nd here at the church.

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) ☩