

The Centurion

The Parish Magazine of St. Alban's Church

1011 Old Joppa Road, Joppa, Maryland, 21085



My dear People:

I hope everyone has recovered from the holiday season. Though technically, of course, we are still in Christmastide until January 6th, the feast of the Epiphany. So I guess we're not out of the woods yet! This year we have a very short Epiphany season. Epiphany can last anywhere from two to six weeks. This year there are just three weeks in Epiphany until the pre-Lenten season begins on Septuagesima on January 27th. The theme of the Epiphany season is the manifestation of Christ, especially to the gentiles. (BCP, p. 107) It is based on the story of the wise men from east, who followed the star to Bethlehem to see the Christ child. (Mt. 2:1-12) According to tradition they represent the gentile world. While I can't get into any more historical detail than that in this small space, I do recommend that those who are interested in learning more about these fascinating individuals look them up on the internet on a site like *Wikipedia*. I will, however, say this. One of the great truths that we can take away from this season is that Jesus Christ is for *all* people. He is not just the king of the Jews. He is "...a light to lighten the Gentiles, and the glory of God's people Israel." (BCP, p. 28) Jesus came to save *all* people not just one ethnic group, or a certain select, elite portion of people. What does this mean for us? It means that we need to bring the saving message of Jesus' Gospel to *all* people. Tempting though it may be at times (especially when we see people covered with tattoos and strange body piercings), we can't look at certain people and decide that God, church, religion, and our Lord Jesus Christ are not for them, or that they would hate St. Alban's Church. *Everyone* needs Christ. *Everyone* has a God-shaped hole in his or her life that can only be filled by being in a living, personal relationship with our Lord Jesus Christ. Jesus Himself came to seek the lost. He sought out those who were marginalized and scorned by the religious elite of His day. So we ought to follow the same example. Let us reach out to *all* people with the Gospel of Jesus - not just those who look or act a certain way, or who in our mind would make an ideal member of the church. May we be open to God using us as instruments to help all people come to a saving knowledge of Him through His Son, our Savior, Jesus Christ. This year let us make it a point to invite someone to church, especially someone who does not have a church home, or whom we think might not be interested. We might be surprised at the results!

Affectionately, your Friend and Pastor,

J. Gordon Anderson

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UPCOMING HOLY DAYS:

January 24th - Conversion of St. Paul (eve)

Holy Communion @ 3:00 p.m.

January 31st - Purification of St. Mary the Virgin (transferred)

Holy Communion @ 3:00 p.m.

February 13th - Ash Wednesday

Holy Communion @ 6:30 p.m.

February 20th - Ember Day

Holy Communion @ 6:30 p.m.

February 25th - St. Matthias (transferred)

Holy Communion @ 10:00 a.m.

March 24th - Holy Week

March 24th - March 30th

Prayer Book Holy Day Masses last a little over half an hour and, when celebrated in the morning, always include the office of Morning Prayer. Please make time to come out for these important days as you are able!

CHURCH HISTORY: *The Martyrdom of King Charles I of England in Context*

Those who purchased a 2013 Ordo Kalendar will notice that on January 30th we remember the martyrdom of King Charles I of England in 1649. Charles (reigned 1625-1649) was the son of James I, who gave us the King James Bible. He was the second monarch of the House of Stuart, the Scottish royal family, which had taken over England after the death of the childless Queen Elizabeth I.

After the Reformation the English monarchs had their hands full trying to keep peace in the kingdom. The nation was full of factions, each vying for control of political and religious life. With most Roman Catholics having fled the country, gone into hiding, or converting to the state church, Elizabeth I had only to broker a settlement, between the various remaining Protestant factions to maintain peace. The main parties that had to be reconciled were the established church - the Church of England, and the Puritans. Generally speaking, Elizabeth was always able to keep a tenuous peace between these parties during her reign.

Yet throughout her reign the religious tension between these parties was always just beneath the surface, ready to erupt in controversy or even violence. When the House of Stuart ascended the throne the Puritans thought they would finally have a monarch sympathetic with their interests, since James I came from Puritan and Presbyterian Scotland.

Unfortunately for them, James loathed the Puritans and much of what they stood for. Among other things he was a passionate advocate for the divine right of kings, and believed in the near absolute power of the king. Related to this, he was a vigorous believer in the doctrine of the episcopacy (that the Church is to be governed by bishops). In his mind monarchy and episcopacy went together. If there were no bishops then there could be no



kings. James therefore did not entertain the desire of some of the Puritans to change the polity of the English Church from an episcopal to a presbyterian model.

These despotic tendencies and doctrinal positions were passed on to his son, Charles I, his successor to the English throne. Charles was less politically shrewd than his father, and so was much more willing to put his beliefs into practice. One of his plans was to force the Church of Scotland, which was Presbyterian, to accept the Episcopacy and the Book of Common Prayer. A new Prayer

Book for Scotland was compiled, but it was considered too Catholic, and its delivery was greatly botched. A revolt ensued, and in 1639 a war between Scotland and England. While this was going on Charles and his associates pushed through the church the passage of several new canons designed to strengthen the tie between monarch and church.

By 1641 parliament was getting very tired of King Charles.

Politically, they loathed his despotism, and religiously, the Puritans did not like the reforms he and his archbishop (William Laud) made in the church, finding them too Romish and high church for their tastes. By 1642 a civil war broke out. It was the divine right of kings and episcopacy versus parliamentary rule and presbyterianism. Both sides believed that God was with them, and fought from the conviction that their beliefs were biblical, and good for the life of the church. During the civil war Puritan thugs and parliamentarian troops ransacked churches and destroyed many valuable works of art and appointments used for the worship of the Church.

Charles was defeated in the civil war and eventually taken prisoner. Oliver Cromwell, who was the head of the anti-royalists, established a puritan dictatorship (for lack of a better term) with himself at the head. By the time the war ended in 1645 the Book of

(continued on page 4)

THE CHRISTIAN YEAR: *Meditations on the Epiphany Season, by the Rev'd. Lesley Wilder (1961)*

In this meditation we turn to the Proper Preface for Epiphany (BCP, p. 77), where we find these descriptive words on a reference to our Lord: "*Who, in the substance of our mortal flesh, manifested forth his glory.*" We shall consider some of the implications of that statement.

First of all, we might turn our attention to the time which God chose for his work of salvation, considering the period of history which he selected in which to send his Son into the world. The first thing we notice about it is the fact that the time was not ideal. If one thinks that our own period of history is frightening, the same could be said of Palestine at the time our Lord was born. The little Jewish nation was an occupied country - a tiny corner in the great empire of Rome. There was domination from without and revolt from within. Living there must have given one the feeling of walking on the brink of a volcano. It was not a time when there was peace on earth or good will among men. If God had waited for such an ideal time to do something about the world's salvation, we never would have known the life of Christ nor felt the power of his transforming love. If God had waited until mankind was rid of its selfishness, cruelty, and greed; if he had said: *I will not send my Son into such a situation as that to receive such a fate as that* - in other words, if he had waited for a happier time when his Son would have been received with open arms and acknowledged as King, then we still would be creatures without hope, having no light to point the way. There is never an ideal time!

There is a lesson for us in this Epiphany Preface, would we but heed it. There is so much that we could do to remove some of the debris in our lives, barriers we could tear down, shadows we could clear away, but we wait for a more favorable time. We say to ourselves, "Just as soon as I complete this big deal, or just as soon as I straighten out this domestic situation, then I'll do something about the heavy drinking that is getting heavier all the time, but right now I need to keep it going." There is so much we could do for the Church and for the kingdom of Christ, but we wait for a more favorable time. (The excuses that are offered when someone is asked to do

a job!) The first thing we notice about God's action in Christ is that the time was not ideal.

The second thing that we notice is that the material which God used was not perfect. "*Who in the substance of our mortal flesh manifested forth his glory*" - who in the weakness and frailty that flesh is heir to, the incompleteness of it, the temptations of it - who in the substance of this mortality, the fragility, this transiency, manifested forth his glory. God didn't say: *I must have a more perfect vessel than this, something that will transmit more adequately the vastness of my power and the glory of my love. Flesh and blood have such limitations; they are subject to things like diseases and pain and death. This is not a fitting instrument to manifest my glory.*

The material which he chose was not perfect! And here we find the second lesson of our Preface. Some of us are not very attractive physically, some are not very keen mentally, some of us are not very inspiring spiritually, so that it never even occurs to us that we might be instruments for the manifestation of God's glory. We forget how beautiful imperfect things can be.

If we were to choose a subtitle for Christmas and Epiphany, I would suggest this: "*God, making the best of the situation.*" Choosing a time that was not ideal (no time is ever ideal), using a material that was not perfect (flesh and blood are never perfect), we see God making the best of the situation. And that is all he asks of us - to make the best of the situation in which we find ourselves, of a time that is not ideal, and a material that is not perfect.

There is one thing we usually overlook, however. When a man makes the best of a situation, both the man and the situation are changed. If he doesn't wait for some ideal time but takes positive and creative action in the time that he has, then his action will leave its imprint on the time and help to change the time; just as the action of God, during the confused time of Herod, changed all time thereafter. If a man doesn't wait for some perfect instrument but is willing to use a broken shell, then his act of grace and love will transform the broken shell and will shine forth all the more beautifully because of its very brokenness. "*Who in the substance of our mortal flesh manifested forth his glory.*" ☩

PARISH NEWS AND NOTICES: *Please make a note of these important announcements and events!*

Tuesday, Jan. 1st - Tuesday Evening Prayer and Study Returns. During the month of January we will be studying the doctrine of the incarnation. It will be based on a text by the early church, St. Athanasius. During pre-Lent and Lent we will be studying the virtues: the three theological virtues (faith, hope, and charity), and the four cardinal virtues (prudence, temperance, justice, and fortitude.) Dinner is always provided. Please join us.

Sunday, Jan. 6th - Epiphany Luncheon and Gag Gift Exchange - This year Epiphany falls on a Sunday. As is our custom, we will have a covered dish luncheon and our gag gift exchange that day. So be sure to save that special gift that you received but are not quite interested in keeping so someone else may be able to be blessed by it!

Tuesday, Jan. 22nd - Annual Meeting of the Order of St. Vincent - On this date all altar servers and readers need to come to the church for this mandatory meeting. If you serve at the altar in any capacity please set aside this date now and plan on attending. We only have one meeting a year, and your presence at this meeting is essential so we can discuss liturgical business. Tentative time is 6:30 p.m. Dinner will be provided.

Tuesday, Feb. 12th - Shrove Tuesday Pancake Supper - Join us at 7:00 p.m. for a service of Evening Prayer immediately followed by our annual supper hosted by the Order of St. Vincent. Anyone wishing to be "shriven" in preparation for Lent should see the rector!

Wednesday, Feb. 13th - Ash Wednesday - Join us at 7:00 p.m. for our Ash Wednesday service. Ash Wednesday is the beginning of Lent.

Did you pick up your copy of the new parish directory of members and friends? Who are all those new people? What's that person's name? If those thoughts are running through your head each Sunday then you need to pick up a copy of the directory. Alternatively, Fr. Anderson can e-mail you one.

Please remember St. Alban's in your estate planning - *"The Minister is ordered, from time to time, to advise the People, whilst they are in health, to make Wills arranging for the disposal of their temporal goods, and, when of ability, to leave Bequests for religious and charitable uses."* (BCP, p. 320) ☩

(continued from p. 2) Common Prayer was banned, and the episcopal structure of the Church demolished. In 1649 Charles, who had been locked up in prison, was hauled before a special court where he tried, sentenced to death, and then publicly beheaded. His execution, however, had the opposite effect intended by the Puritans overlords. The people were horrified by it, and eventually the monarchy was restored.

In spite of his despotic tendencies, Charles is considered a

martyr of the English Church. This is because of the stand he took for the episcopacy, and his firm belief in catholic polity even to the point of death. From 1662-1859 there was a special Holy Day in the Prayer Book commemorating his death, making him someone as close to a saint as the English Church can proclaim.

In 1894 the *Society of King Charles the Martyr* (SKCM) was established in England. Today it is a worldwide society that meets once a year to remember the martyrdom of King Charles.

Locally there is an historic anglo-catholic parish in the Mt. Vernon neighborhood of Baltimore, Grace & St. Peters, which has a gorgeous shrine to King Charles the Martyr. If you look online at Wikipedia entry on the SKCM you can see a picture of this beautiful shrine. Or you can visit it, and light a candle and say a prayer in honor of this man who, though imperfect, stood firmly for retaining the catholic structure of the Church of England. And for that we all owe him a debt of gratitude. ☩