

The Centurion

The Parish Magazine of St. Alban's Church

1011 Old Joppa Road, Joppa, Maryland, 21085



My dear People:

It is a new year, and perhaps some of you have already begun hearing about "New Year's Resolutions." With a lot of people these "resolutions" are a joke. Just ask someone in February or March how they are doing with their resolution (if they made one) and see if they even remember if they made one in the first place... much less kept it! The problem most people have with making and sticking to resolutions (New Year's or otherwise) is that our actions have to change in order for our ingrained habits to change. And for most of us it is very hard to change our actions. Virtues and vices are good and bad habits respectively. If we make a resolution to overcome a vice (e.g. gluttony... "I'm going to eat less sweets and exercise more.") we have to do particular acts to change that habit (e.g. avoiding the sweets aisle in the grocery store; changing our daily schedule so as to accommodate exercise, etc.). This is where we usually get off track with resolutions. It is easy to make a resolution. Anyone can do that. But to follow through with it takes real effort and discipline, which is much harder to do. Spiritual resolutions are exactly the same way. We make them all the time too. "I am going to be a more thankful person. I'm going to be more generous in my giving. I'm going to study the Bible and pray regularly. etc." But we often fail to follow through with our well-intentioned resolutions because we fail to take the proper steps. Do we, for example, want to have a regular prayer time early in the morning when everything is still and we are alone? Then perhaps we need to go to bed earlier the night before and not stay up "binge watching" television shows! Do we want to be more generous in our giving? Then perhaps we need to cut back on trips to Starbucks and fancy restaurants so we have more to give. And so on and so forth. The point is not to disparage making positive resolutions at new year's or any other time. Far from it. Rather, the opposite. The practice of making good resolutions, spiritual or otherwise, is often ridiculed because we do not think through the process and adjust our schedules and changes our actions to create the new good habits that the resolution is all about! This year let us make a good spiritual resolution and try to stick with it. Resolve to pray each day. Resolve to attend church more faithfully. Resolve to read the Bible more. Resolve to support our diocesan mission works overseas. It could be anything. But then, no matter what we resolve, let us each make sure that we look at our daily lives and see what actions we need to change in order for that resolution to come to fruition. We are not going to "magically" be able to start keeping a resolution merely because we announced it. We need to reorder our daily lives and what we *do* in order to change our habits... change vices in to virtues. May God grant each of you a wonderful and grace filled 2017!

Faithfully, your priest,

J. Gordon Anderson

January 2017

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Important News and Other Items

UPCOMING PRAYER BOOK

HOLY DAYS:

Jan. 6th - The Epiphany

Holy Communion at 12:00 p.m.

Jan 25th - The Conversion of St. Paul

Holy Communion at 12:00 p.m.

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

Holy Communion at 12:00 p.m.

Feb. 24th - St. Matthias

Holy Communion at 12:00 p.m.

Mar. 1st - Ash Wednesday

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

Mar. 8th, 10th, and 11th - Lenten Ember Days

Holy Communion at 12:00 p.m.

Mar. 25th - Annunciation of the Blessed Virgin Mary

Holy Communion at 12:00 p.m.

Don't forget that we offer the Holy Communion Tuesday - Friday at 12:00 p.m. for other feasts and fasts of the Church! The schedule is found online.

LITURGY: *Evelyn Underhill on the Nature of Worship*

Evelyn Underhill (1875-1941) was an English theologian of the Anglo-Catholic tradition who is best known for her highly acclaimed works on spirituality and mysticism. A fellow of King's College, London, Underhill was the first woman to lecture to clergy in the Church of England, and to conduct spiritual retreats for the Church. Her book *Mysticism* (1911) was one of the greatest works on that subject of the 20th century.

But in addition to writing about spirituality, she published an extremely important volume on worship called *Worship* (1936), in which she articulates a magnificent biblical and philosophical understanding of worship... what it is, why we do it, what it involves. The book is a comprehensive analysis of the nature of worship that is as valid today as it was when it written almost 100 years ago. What follows is a brief outline of some of her main points in the book.

Underhill begins by explaining what worship is. It is fundamentally the response of the creature to the eternal. Human beings, when faced with the awe of God – he who is totally “other”, powerful, mysterious, and transcendent – respond through worship, which is offering that being praise and sacrifice. This is an almost universal phenomenon as evidenced by the many different religions with their various types of worship and sacrifice. We offer something to God (or in other religions, “the gods”) to acknowledge him, adore him, and to satisfy him. Hence, the author of human worship is ultimately God, because it is a response to God’s revelation of himself to us.

Worship gives rise to rituals, ceremonies, and institutions. Specific words (ritual) are used at specific times and for specific things. Particular actions (ceremonies) accompany these words. And all of this is done within a particular framework (institutions) of priests, preachers, lay people, and other such folk, all of whom, working together – each fulfilling his own unique role (liturgy) – accomplish the act of worship. Because God reveals himself to all people, these elements of worship tend to become codified over time within a religious community or tradition. This is seen to preserve the integrity of worship as something that represents the work of the people (which is what the word *liturgy* means) over and above the eccentricities of any single individual.

Related to those elements of worship are sacraments and symbols. A sacrament, of course, is a “sign.” It is an external, physical reality that both points beyond itself to a deeper reality, and which, at the same time, vivifies and conveys that same reality. Broadly speaking, most religions worship God via sacramental means. Physical objects are used to communicate the divine to us and for us to

communicate with the divine. One of the main reasons for this, according to Underhill, is because human beings are physical and spiritual beings. Man is a *unity* of both. God can only speak to man as man, and man can only speak to God as man, so we use physical means to do this, and God to us.

We see this throughout the scriptures with things like the “fiery pillar” and the “cloud” that guide the children of Israel as they flee Egypt; the bronze serpent that Moses uses to heal the Israelites bitten by poisonous snakes, the cult of the tabernacle and temple, and perhaps most importantly in the incarnation of our Lord Jesus Christ. In the latter, God himself becomes a man to save and restore his beautiful creation. In the 20th century such Anglican theologians as Oliver Quick and John Macquarrie wrote of the “sacrament” of Jesus. Roman Catholics also picked up on this, particularly the Dutch Dominican friar, Edward Schillebeeckx, who work, along with that of other theologians, greatly influenced the Second Vatican Council, which spoke of Christ as the “primordial” sacrament.

Evelyn Underhill spends a great deal of time discussing the meaning of sacrifice as it relates to worship. Sacrifice is the heart of worship because worship is about *offering* something to God. It is to look at ourselves, and all of the ways that we have been blessed, and then to look at God, and how great and awesome he is, that leads us to fall on our knees and worship him, and then to offer something to him in thanksgiving. The ultimate thing that we can offer to God is ourselves – our very life... our souls and bodies – and this we do through “sacramental” means... offering a sacrifice such as is found in the Old Testament in temple worship.

The New Testament sacrifice is, of course, the Holy Eucharist, the Body and Blood of Jesus, to which Underhill devotes several chapters. In this “sacramental” sacrifice we offer to God “ourselves, our souls and bodies” in union with Jesus Christ who, in heaven, “ever liveth to make intercession for us.” We participate in his eternal self offering to the Father under the under the forms of bread and wine in this sacrament that he himself established. Because we are offering Christ in union with him this sacrifice is perfectly acceptable before God and avails for our salvation in a way that the earlier sacrifices and signs could not, in and of themselves.

This rich and wonderful book *Worship* is still in print and is worth a careful read. If you want to hear from one of the great spiritual masters of the 20th century how to get more out of worship and better understand it check out this phenomenal book. ✠

THE CHRISTIAN YEAR: *The Season of Epiphany: Its History and Certain Aspects of Its Meaning*

Epiphanytide is the season of the Christian year that immediately follows Christmastide. It always begins on January 6th, which is the feast of the Epiphany. In England Epiphany is popularly called “Twelfth Night.” The feast, and the ensuing season, celebrates the “Manifestation (which is what “epiphany” means) of Christ to the Gentiles” (BCP p. 107) as it was on that night that the magi from the east found the Christ child. That is why it is on Epiphany that the “three wise men” appear in the nativity set at church! The season of Epiphany essentially closes out the Christmas cycle.

Epiphany is actually one of the oldest feasts of the Church, dating back to the second half of the second century. It is thought that the Church established this feast to counteract the threat of paganism and the heresy of gnosticism. On one hand, January 6th was chosen in order to counter a popular pagan celebration on that day in honor of the god Osiris, the greatest god in the Egyptian pantheon. On the other hand, a feast celebrating the manifestation of Jesus to the gentiles at his birth would counteract gnosticism, which, believing matter to be evil, and Jesus’ humanity to be something of an illusion, did not believe in his human birth.

It was customary for the Church in Egypt to administer the sacrament of Holy Baptism on the feast of Epiphany. Again, this related to the ancient cult of Osiris, and also to the gnostics. The Nile figured prominently in the festival of Osiris because he was viewed as a god of rebirth and transformation among other things. And naturally that river, with its cycles of flooding, was associated with those very same ideas. By administering baptism on this day the Church was showing Jesus Christ to be the true giver of life and rebirth.

Interestingly, it is the association of Epiphany with baptism that gives us the Advent season a few months earlier. Because baptism was administered on Epiphany a time of preparation beforehand, that included things like prayer, fasting, penitence, and study, was established. This period was called “St. Martin’s Lent” because it began around the feast of St. Martin (Nov. 11th). Later, however, when Christmas was established, this time came to be seen as a time of preparation for Christmas. Yet it retained some of penitential features from its earlier usage, some of which we still see in our own Advent practices and devotions.

The Eucharistic propers of the season (the Collect, Epistle, and Gospel) all convey in some way the manifestation of Jesus Christ. On Epiphany itself we hear the story of the magi. The first Sunday after Epiphany is

the story of Jesus being found in the temple, which, while undeniably highlighting his unique relation with God the Father, manifests him as truly man – the son of Mary. The second Sunday is the baptism of Jesus, where he is manifested not only as the son of Mary but as the Son of God! He is also manifested as the sacrificial lamb of God by virtue of the dove (a symbol of sacrifice) descending upon him. On the third Sunday we have the miracle at the wedding at Cana of Galilee, where Jesus turns water into wine. Here his glory is manifested. *“This beginning of miracles did Jesus in Cana of Galilee, and manifested forth his glory; and his disciples believed on him.”* (BCP p. 113) On the fourth Sunday after Epiphany we read of Jesus healing a leper and then the centurion’s servant. Here, and indeed in all of his miracles, he is manifested as the Son of Man whose miraculous signs show that the Kingdom of God is now present among men.

(The next two Sundays are known as “wandering” Sundays and do not have any special Epiphany theme. These sets of propers are used if Trinitytide goes beyond twenty-four Sundays, or, obviously, if Epiphanytide goes longer than four Sundays. The way it works is that if there is a long Epiphany season there is a short Trinity season, and vice versa.)

So manifestation is the key theme in Epiphany. But manifestation to whom? *To the gentiles!* Again, this is what the coming of the magi represent. We have no idea how many magi there were. That there were “three” is meant that the entire gentile race was represented in them. The propers especially emphasize the manifestation of Christ for the salvation of the gentiles. On Epiphany itself Saint Paul speaks of how his vocation was to preach Christ to the gentiles (Eph. 3:1 ff.). On Epiphany 4, the story of the centurion, Jesus proclaims that did not find such great faith in Israel as he found in the centurion. And then he goes on to say that *“many shall come from east and west and shall sit down with Abraham, and Isaac, and Jacob, in the kingdom of heaven.”* (Matt. 8:1 ff.)

We learn from the scriptures back in Genesis that God made a covenant with Abraham. He would be his God and Abraham and his children would be God’s people, and that the whole world would be blessed by Abraham. Epiphany is the fulfillment of this. God chose the people of Israel to be his people and through them to undo the effects of the fall and save the whole world, which he did through his Son Jesus Christ, who is *“a light to lighten the gentiles, and the glory of God’s people, Israel.”* (Lk. 2:29)

Let us manifest Christ in our lives for the salvation of the world this Epiphany season and always. ✠

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

A Kind Note

Last month the church received a small financial donation along with this very nice letter from one of the quilters who meets at the church with the quilting group each week:

Dear Father,

This is a gift for your church. It is inspired by the time I spend at your church using it for our quilting activities. I see you come to work with light on your face and humming or singing coming from you. I see you dress for Mass solemnly. You always have pleasantries for us even when we are loud. I was there the other night closing up after a class. I was putting a broom away when I noticed the vigil candle burning in the church. In my church the light is in a red glass holder. Yours must be in clear glass. That tiny light stood so clear and bright you could write a Christmas story about it. I knew when I turned out the lights in the meeting room that the only light in the whole building that that light. The only one we need. This time of year I hope you are at church at dark to see that light. I see that light in you. We never know when we pass Christ on to others. You do it by coming to work. Ten to eighteen women see you every week and we feel lots of love from your little church. Thank you.

Pat

Annual Carol Service and Gag Gift Exchange

On Sunday, January 1st, the feast of the Circumcision, we will be having one 9:00 a.m. service followed by a brunch and our annual “white elephant” gift exchange. Bring a silly gift to exchange with your fellow parishioners and dish to share. This is always a fun time. The service itself will be entirely musical. As is our custom, we will sing through the “Christmas Carol” section of the 1940 Hymnal that day and chant other parts of the service that are normally spoken. Be sure to come out for this exciting service of worship and the fun that will follow. Invite friend!

Epiphanytide House Blessings

It is an Eastern Christian custom for the parish priest to bless the dwellings of his parishioners on the feast of the Epiphany. It relates to the light of Christ coming to Jerusalem: “Arise, shine, O Jerusalem, for thy light is come: and the glory of the Lord is risen upon thee, Jesus, the Son of the Virgin Mary.” (from the *responsory* of the rite of blessing) If you would like to have your house blessed by the clergy of the church during Epiphanytide (Jan. 6th -

Feb. 11th) please sign up on the sign up sheet in the parish hall. This is a great way to begin a new year!

Mission Focus: India (By Fr. David Haines)

Ten Year Celebration for St. Francis Anglican Church, Arakatavemula

St. Francis Anglican Church, Arakatavemula, Kadapa District, Andhra Pradesh, in south India recently celebrated the tenth anniversary of its founding. The rector of the church is the Rev. Chandra Shekar. Several of the Anglican clergy from nearby congregations, including Bishop Jaya Rao and his wife Rebecca were in attendance for the celebrations. The guests were greeted in the traditional way with wreaths of flowers placed around their necks and they then processed to the church led by the village band and child dancers and performers. The Bishop then celebrated and preached at the Holy Communion that followed and the church hosted a celebratory meal for all in attendance following the service. During his visit, Bishop Jaya Rao also blessed a new motorcycle and presented it to Fr. Shekar. The motorcycle was recently purchased with funds that were collected and donated by All Saints Anglican Church, Charlottesville, VA. This brings to six the total number of motorcycles that have been purchased for India. They are used by the clergy to get to mission stations and churches in hard to reach, rural areas.

Good Shepherd School Allocated as APA Partner

Five years after funds were raised to build a school in a joint project with OM-India, the APA has been allocated a Good Shepherd School. The school is located in Kollur in the Mahbubnagar District which is part of the newly formed state of Telangana. The school is part of a larger rural development initiative among women and children at risk in this region. The initiative is directed most specifically towards temple prostitutes (Joginis) and their children and its purpose is to break the cycle of human trafficking that is prevalent in this area. The school has already been constructed and currently has three grade levels. Our funds will be used to expand the school and to complete the second phase of building necessary to house students through the sixth grade. The only drawback is that the location of the school provides no immediate benefit to any of the children in our existing churches as there is no APA affiliated church nearby. It is hoped that Bishop Jaya Rao will be able to establish a church in the area so that those children may at least benefit from the school. ✠