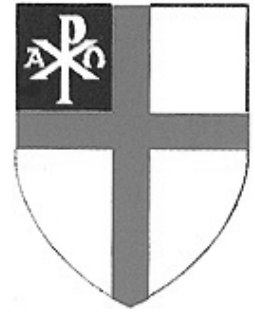


# The Centurion

The Parish Magazine of St. Alban's Church

1011 Old Joppa Road, Joppa, Maryland, 21085



My dear People:

A few months ago I received an e-mail from a parishioner, the subject line of which was "Feedback from Mom." The sender passed on some very helpful comments from his mother concerning one of our services (a major service) that she attended. Needless to say, plans are already in the works to address some of her concerns. I am still, months later, so very thankful for this e-mail. While some clergy are offended by receiving input and feedback - and they are sure to let you know it!! - I would say that most pastors are very happy to get constructive criticism from parishioners and others regarding services, parish life, etc. To this day I have a single parishioner and his comments to thank for helping me preach the right amount of time on Palm Sunday. The very first Palm Sunday that I preached I went for too long... I failed to take into account how the Liturgy of Palms and the extra long readings at Mass would lengthen the service, and so I preached what was for me back then a normal (long) sermon. It ruined the service because it was too long, and distracted from the celebration of the sacred mystery of the Holy Eucharist. This man made a very simple and helpful comment to me afterwards. As he smiled and shook my hand he politely but seriously asked with a smile, "What was that?" I knew immediately what he was referring to and have never made the same mistake again. At another church when I was preaching I was haphazardly flipping the papers containing the text of my sermon over in the pulpit. A wonderful lady, experienced in public speaking, told me afterwards that it was distracting and that I should *slide* the papers over to one side so as not to distract listeners. What great advice that turned out to be! And that is what I do with my text as I preach to this day! What is the point of these stories? *It is that feedback is very helpful, and it would be great to receive more of it.* Was a sermon helpful to you? Let me know! Was something wrong with the service? Tell me. Could something else at the church be improved in some way? Let a vestryman or myself know so we can work on it. Does an activity or event time need to be changed? Let me hear it! In short, it is impossible to improve things around the church if those in charge have no idea that something is wrong or askew! Clergy have many gifts, but mind reading is not one of them. We have been called by God to lead a small congregation of his people. But we cannot do so effectively if the people do not bring up concerns from time to time. So please, feel free and empowered to make helpful comments and offer constructive criticism where it is needed. Our mission at St. Alban's is to create an environment where people can meet Christ and grow into spiritual maturity in him. Your comments and feedback are invaluable in this process, so please keep them coming!

Affectionately, your Friend and Pastor,

*J. Gordon Anderson*

July 2014

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UPCOMING HOLY DAYS:

**July 4th - Independence Day**

Holy Communion at 10:00 a.m.

**July 25th - St. James**

Holy Communion at 10:00 a.m.

**August 6th - Transfiguration**

Holy Communion at 10:00 a.m.

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

Holy Communion at 10:00 a.m.

**October 18th - St. Luke**

Holy Communion at 10:00 a.m.

**October 28th - St. Simon &  
St. Jude**

Holy Communion at 10:00 a.m.

**November 1st - All Saints  
Day**

Holy Communion at 10:00 a.m.

**November 27th -  
Thanksgiving Day**

Holy Communion at 10:00 a.m.

THEOLOGY AND CULTURE: *How do we deal with the latent violence in our tradition?*

A number of months ago the History Channel ran a mini-series called "The Bible." Several parishioners who watched it commented on how violent it was. Anyone who reads the scriptures, especially the Old Testament, or even sacred texts from other traditions, such as the *Bhagavad Gita*, is no doubt struck by the amount of violence in some of the stories these volumes contain. In the bible, most of the violence is in the early books of the Old Testament. Sometimes the violence is explicit, such as in the story of Samson (Judges 13-16). Other times it is more subtle, such as in some of the Psalms (e.g. Psalm 144:1 "Blessed be the LORD my strength, who teacheth my hands to war, and my fingers to fight")

Conventional wisdom suggests that life was more violent in the ancient world, and the people far less compassionate, than today. But if we look at the news, and read the paper we are forced to admit that man is probably just as violent today as he was thousands of years ago. (Think of Sandy Hook, Northern Ireland, Iraq, the Holocaust, etc.) Bloodthirsty violence pervades our culture so much in fact that we even entertain ourselves with it in the form of movies (e.g. X-Men, The Terminator, The Matrix, etc.), television (e.g. the A-Team, 24, etc.) and "sports" (e.g. Ultimate Fighting). Hatred and brutality spews forth from a glowing screen and we think nothing of it! Why? Because the world today is just as savage, if not more, as it was thousands of years ago... even here in America.

But although we accept the fact of barbarity in the world, and even entertain ourselves with it, we are still sometimes surprised to encounter it in the bible or in other places in the tradition. Why is this the case? Perhaps because we do not read the

bible as we are admonished to, and so we are completely *unfamiliar* with it and its contents. And also perhaps - because our consumeristic American culture's conception of religion is of the therapeutic "put on a happy face and discover the wonderful plan God has for your life" variety - most people are simply unaccustomed to finding stories of war and violence, or anything negative for that matter, in the pages of our sacred text. And when they do they are usually scandalized and disturbed by it. Some people, however, have lived through religious violence - especially people from other countries. And so they look at the latent violence in religious texts and tradition with a much more personal and discriminating eye than does the average person.

Not a few Christians, however, have begun to protest against the violence of our culture. In the sixties and seventies we recall that many church ministers and laity protested things like the Vietnam War and nuclear weapons. Pope Paul VI even addressed the United Nations at one point and memorably said, "No more war, ever again!" But in addition to protesting political violence, a number of Christians in their desire to promote peace have taken to protesting elements of the Christian tradition that they perceive to promote violence. This is where some difficulties can arise.

One of the chief places where we see this happening is in the music and hymnody of the Church. Some classic hymns and spiritual songs are deemed to be too dangerous because they "promote violence" and so they are taken out of hymnals, or never sung. Some offending hymns and songs include Hymn 549 ("The Son of God goes forth to war"), the Battle Hymn of the Republic, and, of course, the most offensive of all, Hymn 557 ("Onward, Christian soldiers"). The

1940 Hymnal actually has a number of these hymns with warlike themes in the mid-500's Newer hymnals, such as the 1982 Hymnal of the Episcopal Church, have removed many of these old hymns in response to people's concerns.

The problem, however, with removing hymns and songs like these from the public worship of the Church is two-fold. First, it doesn't actually do anything to decrease violence in a community or in the world. If anyone thinks singing "Onward Christian Soldiers" once or twice a year at small country church, or any church for that matter, is suddenly going inspire people to commit gross acts of violence then I would say that individual has a very active imagination!

Second, and this is the more important point, *these hymns have nothing to do with earthly war and conflict!* It is amazing how hymns like these in our 1940 Hymnal are condemned after reading one line. If you read these types of hymns in their entirety you will see that they are indeed about battle and warfare, but it is *spiritual battle* and *spiritual warfare*. Hymn 554 ("Lead on, O King eternal") speaks of conquest and battle in the first verse, and then in the second verse it says what we are at war with... *sin*.

So while it is a laudable thing for Christians to promote peace in our culture of violence and death, to do so by gutting our tradition of certain classic hymns is not a good idea. It is in fact ineffective and irrelevant to the problem because these hymns deal with *spiritual warfare*. Moreover, it sets a bad precedent. If we do that, then why stop there? Why not cut out certain portions of scripture from the bible? Ephesians 6:10-18 would be gone, as would much of Revelation, the Old Testament, 1 Peter 2, and many other passages. (*cont'd on p. 4*)

SACRED MUSIC: *Ancient and Medieval Hymns Connect Us With Christians of Bygone Ages*

One of the things that sets traditional Anglican worship apart from that of most other contemporary churches is our musical tradition. Not only do we still sing hymns, which are being marginalized or even jettisoned by other denominations in favor of contemporary “praise” music, we also sing ancient and medieval chants. What this does is teach us that we are part of a larger, unbroken tradition that stretches back to Christ himself. Let’s look at some of our music so we can learn to better appreciate it.

Our main source of music is the 1940 Hymnal, a vast treasury of sacred works published by the Episcopal Church. It is well known for its fabulous collection of hymns and tunes composed by Wesley, Cowper, Watts, Handel, Vaughn Williams, and many other famous writers and composers from the modern. But some of the unsung (no pun intended) treasures found in the 1940 Hymnal are these ancient and medieval liturgical chants which link us to the Church of the Middle Ages and the early Fathers. We are familiar with the ones that form part of the liturgy in the Book of Common Prayer. There is the *Tè Deum laudamus* (p. 10) that is sung at Morning Prayer, or as its own service. The *Gloria in excelsis* (p. 84), which is sung at Holy Communion and occasionally at Evening Prayer. And then there is the *Veni Creator Spiritus* (p. 556) which is sung at ordinations to the priesthood and at episcopal consecrations.

*Tè Deum laudamus* dates from the early 4th century. According to a medieval legend it was composed spontaneously by St. Ambrose at the baptism of St. Augustine, hence it’s nickname, “The Ambrosian Hymn.” Most scholars, however, believe that it was composed by a bishop in Nish, a town found in modern day Serbia. *Tè Deum* is at once a hymn to the Blessed Trinity (the first section), and a hymn to Jesus Christ (the second section), that is followed by suffrages (the third section). Here at St. Alban’s, in addition to reciting this hymn at Sunday Morning Prayer most of the year, we sing it on special occasions at Mass, especially on Trinity Sunday.

*Gloria in excelsis* also dates from the 4th century. It is Greek in origin and is used in the Daily Offices (Morning and Evening Prayer) of the Orthodox Churches. It began to be included in the celebration of the Roman Mass in a limited fashion in the late 4th century. By the 12th century it had become part of the “ordinary” (the fixed part) of the Mass. At the time of the Reformation the English Church moved it from just after the ‘Kyries’ of Mass (“Lord, have mercy upon us...”) to its present position at the end of the service where it would be part of the post-communion thanksgivings. Though sometimes we still say it at the beginning of the service. Like the previous hymn, *Gloria* is arranged in three stanzas. The first is based on the angelic

praise to God heard in St. Luke’s Gospel at the Nativity of our Lord. The second stanza is addressed to Jesus in his passion and exaltation. The third stanza proclaims the holiness of our Triune God.

The last such hymn found in the Book of Common Prayer is the *Veni Creator Spiritus*. This means “Come, Creator, Spirit.” It is a medieval work of the 9th century in the Roman “pontifical” which is the book containing the order of service for ordinations, consecrations, and coronations. It is likewise found in the “pontifical” section of our Prayer Book, otherwise known as “The Ordinal” (pp.529-574) In this hymn we ask for the Holy Ghost to descend upon us, and teach, and guide us... especially those being ordained. The hymn weaves together various New Testament descriptions of the Holy Spirit.

But besides the three ancient and medieval hymns found printed in the Prayer Book, the 1940 Hymnal, which is also canonically part of our official liturgy, contains five other very important medieval Gregorian (or “plainsong”) chants called “sequence hymns” that by tradition are sung between the Epistle and Gospel at various services throughout the year. Some of these we have sung before. Others we have not, so we have been trying to incorporate these other ones into our worship as of late. Here are two we have sung:

*Lauda Sion* (Hymnal 193-194): Written in 1263 by St. Thomas Aquinas for the feast of Corpus Christi. We often sing this as a communion hymn.

*Stabat Mater* (Hymnal 76): Written in the 13th century, this is a meditation on the Seven Sorrows of the Blessed Virgin Mary. We sing this at the Stations of the Cross during Lent.

Here are two that have been introduced over the past few years:

*Victimae Paschali* (Hymnal 97): Dating from the 11th century, this is always sung on Easter Sunday.

*Veni Sancte Spiritus* (Hymnal 109): Known as the ‘Golden Sequence’ this dates from the 13th century and is sung on Whitsunday (Pentecost).

The only one we have not sung yet, but will soon when the time is right, is the 13th century piece called *Dies Irae* (Hymnal 468). It means “Day of Wrath” and is sung on All Souls’ Day, and may also be sung at funeral Masses.

Singing these chants found in the Prayer Book and Hymnal, as well as our usual Sunday hymns, is one of the links us to the ancient and medieval Church. It is a glorious part of our tradition that we should embrace and for which we should give thanks. ✠

(*cont'd from p.2*) We could even cut out the grisly bit about Jesus' crucifixion!

The fact is that violence is part and parcel to human existence. Because man is sinful and fallen there will always be violence in the world. And since God has revealed himself to man through events in history it is to be expected that the sacred texts, which are a testimony of his revelation, will sometimes reflect the not-so-pleasant aspects of the human condition.

The way to overcome this violence and to change the world for the better is for people's *hearts* to be changed. Put another way, we need to

be born again! We need new hearts and new lives in Jesus Christ, and need to be made new creations in him. This is done by being converted to Christ ourselves, and then by leading others to a personal, saving knowledge of Jesus. But O what a difficult task that is! Why? Because Satan is there to stop us every step of the way. The *spiritual* warfare in which we are engaged is an obstacle to us as we try to fulfill the Great Commission of Jesus Christ to make disciples of all nations.

It is this spiritual warfare that these classic old hymns and songs refer to. Were they to be removed

from the tradition altogether because of some sort of perceived violence in them, we would be worse off! For we need to be aware that we are engaged in a spiritual battle - a battle between good and evil - for our very souls. Because man is ignorant of that very battle, and becoming more so by the day, the world is getting more evil, and so more violent. The way to help bring about peace in the world is not by taking a razor blade to the Hymnal or Bible but rather to live in close communion with Jesus Christ and bring our lives into conformity with his by the power of the Holy Spirit. May we make this a priority in our lives. ✠

#### PARISH NEWS: *News, Updates, and Thoughts from St. Alban's Church*

##### **Diocesan and Provincial Synods**

From July 14th - July 18th our diocese will meet in synod in Oviedo, Florida. Our diocese covers the eastern seaboard and goes west as far as the Mississippi River. Then, in September, we will be having our provincial synod in Illinois. The *province* consists of all of the *dioceses* of the Church. Please pray for the Church, that we would have good, productive synod meetings both this month and in September.

##### **Wedding Blessings**

Congratulations to Holly Dixon and Tyler Phass who will be united in Holy Matrimony on July 26th at St. Mary's Episcopal Church in Abingdon. They have been graciously offered the use of the church for their wedding at which Father Anderson will officiate. Please keep them in prayer and ask that God would give them a long, happy, healthy life together and glorify his name through their new life together!

##### **Postulant for Holy Orders**

At diocesan synod in a few weeks Tyler Phass will be meeting with the Bishop's Advisory Committee and the Board of Examining Chaplains, as he seeks to move from "aspirant for Holy Orders" to "postulant for Holy Orders." All of that means that Tyler is testing a vocation to Holy Orders, or considering ordination. According to the canons, the process begins by becoming an *aspirant*... the man *aspires* to the priesthood. A number of things are required at this stage (reading, writing papers, assisting in the church, check-ups and evaluations, recommendations, etc.), and Tyler has faithfully done all of these things. Once all of the

requirements of the aspirancy stage are met he may apply for *postulancy*, which means the bishop has accepted him as a *candidate* for Holy Orders. During postulancy one attends seminary and receives priestly formation in a variety of ways. After postulancy, if all goes well, he is examined, and then ordained as a deacon, and then later, usually, a priest. (Some men stay deacons and are called "permanent deacons".) Please pray for Tyler and Holly in this exciting and difficult process, and please pray for priests.

##### **No Yard Sale This Year**

There will not be any parish yard sale this year, as we have to direct our energies toward getting our certificate of occupancy for the basement. Part of this means that the basement has to stay empty. So we have no place to store yard sale items. Please, therefore, do not bring anything to church to be sold at a yard sale this year. Keep your eyes peeled this fall as we unveil a way to make up for the financial shortfall this may cause us!

##### **What is your bounden duty as a member of the Church?**

My bounden duty 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)

##### **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) ✠