

# The Centurion

The Parish Magazine of St. Alban's Church

1011 Old Joppa Road, Joppa, Maryland, 21085



My dear People:

When I was a kid I used to love watching "The Joy of Painting" on public television. The star of the show was Bob Ross, a slight, middle-aged white man with an enormous afro and a soothing, gentle voice. In half-an-hour he would turn a small 18" x 24" white canvas into a beautiful landscape painting. His technique made painting look incredibly easy. Mountain vistas were painted in three quick strokes; pine forests were quickly tapped on with a fan brush; clouds and lakes were tackled with a few quick strokes of a two inch brush. Even better, Bob Ross declared that you could do whatever you wanted to do in your painting, because it was "your world." And there were never any mistakes in "your world"... only "happy accidents." Over the years Bob Ross inspired countless people to take up brushes and try their hand at painting. And who *wouldn't* be inspired to give painting a try when it was apparently this easy? One of the people he inspired was me. After watching him on TV for years I finally decided to buy some art supplies and venture into the wonderful world of painting... in the "Bob Ross" technique. But it wasn't long before I learned that Bob Ross and his painting technique were not held in exactly the highest esteem among artists. A very accomplished and successful artist finally told me that the problem with Bob Ross was that "he teaches there is just a little trick to painting." It has occurred to me lately that this is how some people think of the spiritual life - there is just a "little trick" to mastering it. Becoming a saint involves only a few short and easy steps that can be done in our leisure, or whenever we feel like getting around to them. How different this mentality is from the spiritual life as it is portrayed in the scriptures and tradition of the Church! The very name God gives his people in the Old Testament, *Israel*, means "I struggled with God." In the New Testament St. Paul expands the concept of Israel. "Israel" is Jesus' One, Holy Catholic, and Apostolic Church - which consists of Jew and Gentile. *But it is still Israel!* In a very real sense the path to salvation is marked by *struggling* with God. *We struggle* to put away sin and unrighteousness and grow in grace and holiness. *We struggle* to understand God's perfect will and plan for our life. *We struggle* to accept the spiritual tests that he often sends our way. In the tradition we see the great saints of the Church dealing with the struggle of the spiritual life... St. Anthony, St. John of the Cross, St. Theresa of Avila, and many others. The stories of St. Anthony and the other desert fathers are very interesting to read! (Check out the book about them in the parish library.) The fact is there are no shortcuts to becoming a saint - a holy and devout Christian. There are no quick, easy steps to salvation. The Christian life is a spiritual journey that begins at baptism. We must be nurtured on this journey by God and his grace, and grow into spiritually mature Christians through perseverance and prayer.

Affectionately, your Friend and Pastor,

*J. Gordon Anderson*

July 2015

IN THIS ISSUE:

*Christianity and Culture*, p. 2

*Obergefell v. Hodges and Church*

*Devotions & Instructions*, p. 3

*Wisdom from Church Tradition*

*Parish News and Updates*, p. 4

*Check out the important notices!*

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.

**August 24th - St. Bartholomew**

Holy Communion at 10:00 a.m.

**September 16th, 18th, 19th -  
Autumnal Ember Days**

Holy Communion at 10:00 a.m.

**September 21st - St. Matthew**

Holy Communion at 10:00 a.m.

**September 29th - St. Michael**

Holy Communion at 10:00 a.m.

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

Holy Communion at 10:00 a.m.

**November 26th - Thanksgiving  
Day**

Holy Communion at 10:00 a.m.

CHRISTIANITY AND CULTURE: *Can Obergefell v. Hodges Affect Life at St. Alban's Church?*

Last month in a long anticipated case the Supreme Court, by a 5-4 decision, ruled that same-sex couples have a right to marry nationwide. This decision invalidates same-sex marriage bans in more than a dozen states. Many people wonder what this means for churches and for people who are opposed to the redefinition of marriage. Are churches and clergy going to be forced to solemnize unions that go against their beliefs?

Some churches are being told to write into their by-laws strict statements regarding who may or may not be married. At St. Alban's we do not have to do anything like that because we are governed by diocesan and provincial canons that already define such important matters. Simply put, there are a number of "safeguards" for lack of better term in our "canons" that protect clergy and parishes from acting against their consciences in the matter of marriage.

First, let us quickly consider the "canons" of the Church. What are they? Canons are church laws that, in addition to other resources, such as our Constitution and Prayer Book, help determine how we are organized and governed. The canons of the Anglican Province of America, are based on those of our predecessor body, the Episcopal Church, which themselves were rooted in a heritage of Church law going back to the Church of England, through the Middle Ages, and to the ancient undivided Church. According to the Rev'd Powell Mills Dawley, many of our canons were first enacted in some form in the 3rd and 4th centuries! (The Episcopal Church and Its Work, p. 86) These laws themselves naturally go back to the scriptures and Old Testament law (Canon Law: A Handbook, p.33). Church law in large part laid the foundation for western law and is still very influential today. Daniel Stevick writes, "*Much of the actual legislation and many of the institutions from the Middle Ages continue to underlie both the ecclesiastical and civil life of the West.*" (ibid, p. 50) A link to our Constitution and Canons may be found on the parish website and also on the diocesan website.

Now that we have a basic idea of the "whence" and "wherefore" of our canons, let us see how they apply to the Sacrament of Holy Matrimony. The canon that lays out the rules and regulations of marriage are found in Canon 34. This is broken down into five sections. Section one states that a priest must conform to the laws of his local state in all things that pertain to marriage. This means in short that the Church does not recognize a marriage that the state does not recognize. Thus, the Church does not recognize "spiritual" marriages. For a priest to solemnize the union of a man and wife, that union has to be recognized by the state with marriage licenses, etc. being procured as required.

Section two declares that a couple may not be married in the Church if one or both of the parties are divorced. If that is the case the divorced person must apply for an annulment with the bishop. An annulment says there was never a sacramental marriage to begin with. Note that it does *not* declare that there was no marriage in a natural or romantic sense, and neither does it mean that children from that marriage are "illegitimate."

Section three requires the minister to inquire into the background of the marriage in order to determine that there is no fraud, coercion, consanguinity, and that other similar impediments to marriage are not present. Marriage must be a free decision on the part of both the man and the woman in order to be valid. This section also states that both parties must be baptized, and lists requirements for pre-marital counseling, how soon the sacrament may be celebrated, and how many witnesses are required, among other "housekeeping" items.

Section four details the minister's responsibility to have the couple sign the following declaration of intention: "*We, A.B. and C.D., desiring to receive the blessing of Holy Matrimony in the Church, do solemnly declare that we hold marriage to be a lifelong union of husband and wife as it is set forth in the Book of Common Prayer. We believe it is for the purpose of the procreation (if it may be) of children, and their spiritual and physical nurture, for mutual fellowship, encouragement, and understanding, and for the safeguarding and benefit of society, and we do engage ourselves, so far as in us lies, to make our utmost effort to establish this relationship and to seek God's help thereto.*"

And Section five states: "*It shall be within the discretion of any Minister to decline to solemnize any marriage.*" In other words, a priest may refuse to solemnize any marriage he wishes for any reason whatsoever.

While not relating directly to Holy Matrimony, Title III, Canon 37 states that our official Prayer Book and standard of worship is the 1928 American Book of Common Prayer. Article X of our Constitution says basically the same thing. This means that the service of Holy Matrimony as contained in that book is the only liturgy for that service that we may use. Anglican clergy are not allowed to "invent" liturgies for whatever service we may wish. We may only use what has been lawfully set forth by ecclesiastical authority.

It goes without saying that there are many irregular matrimonial situations that arise to which these canons are germane. Long before same-sex marriage came along there were - and still are - situations like forced marriages, multiple marriages and divorces, & etc. that necessitated the development of canons. (*Continued on the next page...*)

*(Continued from the previous page...)*

So one should not think that the Church dreamed up these laws in the last couple years as a way to discriminate against homosexual couples. Their application is much broader, and they place almost as many restrictions on the officiating clergy as they do on those desiring the blessing of the Church for their marriage. When we look at the history of the canons we see in fact that most discussion about them - most changes, and contention - are related to divorce and remarriage. (see White & Dyckman, *Annotated Constitution and Canons, Vol. 1 p. 354 ff.*). Ultimately, when we look at the canons on marriage we see that the Church makes it rather difficult for people to get married! This is a good thing, because marriage is a big commitment.

In the end the authorized liturgy of the Church and the canons state that marriage is between one man and one woman. So to solemnize any other type of union would be to violate our canons and constitution. Furthermore, the priest can refuse to solemnize any marriage he wishes. Therefore there is no danger

whatsoever of a priest being forced to solemnize the marriage of any couple against his will or a parish having to host any marriage service against its will. Maryland state law and (of course) the United States Constitution have protections built into them to account for the freedom of religion and conscience. While aspects of this are being challenged in terms of their application to *individuals* and some *businesses* in various places across the country, churches and religious institutions are fully protected. And finally, as the media and many politicians never tire of telling us, in America we have a wall of separation between the Church and State. And that is a two way street. The state cannot tell us how to be organized and what our policies should be. So, in sum, fears of a “government takeover” of churches in the wake of this Supreme Court decision are, at least at this point, unfounded, and so we can rest assured, and agree to disagree with the actions of those who chose to marry outside of God’s natural plan, and, in a spirit of civility and goodwill try to share life together with them in our pluralistic society as best we can. ☩

DEVOTION: *A Prayer to Do the Will of God*

Most benign Jesu, grant me thy grace, that it may be with me and labor with me and abide with me to the end. Grant me ever to do thy will and to desire that it is most acceptable to thee and most dearly pleaseth thee. Thy will be my will and may my will ever follow thy will and accord to it in all wise. Be there to me one willing and one not willing with thee; and let me not will nor not will but what thou wilt or wilt not. Grant me to die from all things that are in this world, and for thee to love to be despised and not known in this world. Grant me above all things desired to rest in thee and to poise my soul in thee. Thou art very peace of heart, thou art only rest: without thee all things are hard and out of quiet. In this peace that is in the one sovereign everlasting good may I sleep and rest. Amen.

*From “The Imitation of Christ” by Thomas a’Kempis, Chapter XVII*

SUNDAY SCHOOL REVIEW: *Christian Duties, Virtues, etc.*

**The Seven Capital Sins**

- Pride
- Anger
- Covetousness
- Lust
- Envy
- Sloth
- Gluttony

**The Seven Godly Virtues**

- Humility
- Forgiveness
- Generosity
- Purity
- Love
- Diligence
- Temperance

Notice that the way to fight the seven capital (deadly) sins is by practicing the corresponding godly virtue!

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

### **A Call to Fast and Pray**

Did you know that the Book of Common enjoins us to fast and abstain from meat on most Fridays throughout the year? (And in Lent on Wednesdays *and* Fridays, with each weekday of Lent being a day of fasting. See BCP, p. li, at the very top.) Please consider observing this spiritual discipline in some small way throughout this summer and the year. Find something from which to fast - it doesn't have to be food... it could be Facebook, TV, or some other activity - and use that time to pray! Fasting is a way to grow spiritually as individuals and corporately. Jesus regularly fasted and prayed. So should we. When you pray, please do so with the following intentions developed by a bishop of the Church: **1) That God would cause people to experience conversion of the heart and spiritual growth through our ministry; 2) that God would open new doors of mission for us; 3) that God would provide for all our needs.** Friday, the day of Jesus' death, is the ideal day to fast, but we may choose whichever day we want - save Sunday, which is never a day of fasting. God will do great things in our parish and in our lives if as many of us as possible corporately fast and pray!

### **Parish Yard Sale:**

Our yard sale will be Saturday, September 19th! Please continue to bring in salable items and place them on the appropriate table in the basement. Try not to place them on the floor, as the basement sometimes floods. We will need all sorts of help with the yard sale. Keep your eyes peeled for a sign-up sheet with ways to help.

### **Help Wanted:**

We need some people (2-3) to host our July Sunday morning fellowship breakfast. The last one we had in June was a huge success! If you are interested please see Karen Novakoski or Fr. Anderson.

### **Does God Exist?**

Join us on Tuesday evenings in September as we listen to fantastic and scholarly debate between an atheistic biologist and a Christian philosopher and theologian on the question of God's existence. Is Christianity incompatible with reason and science? You won't want to miss the answer! Fr. Anderson will provide commentary on the debate as it progresses, explaining some of the more confusing and abstruse points when they arise. As is our custom, we will begin with Evening Prayer and then have dinner, which will be provided. I hope to see you there!

### **Want to study theology?**

Check out the Ecumenical Institute of Theology in Baltimore. "Take your faith journey somewhere new! Study theology, Bible, and ministry at St. Mary's Ecumenical Institute in Baltimore, offering master's programs (degrees, classes, certificates) to men and women of all faiths. Apply now to enroll in fall classes, conveniently offered on weekday evenings and Saturdays." More information: [www.stmarys.edu/ei](http://www.stmarys.edu/ei); or contact Patty Rath at 410-864-4203 or [prath@stmarys.edu](mailto:prath@stmarys.edu).

### **Diocesan Synod:**

This year our annual synod will be held in Charlottesville, VA from July 28th-31st. The host parish is All Saints'. Fr. Anderson and Fr. Edelman will be heading down along with our official delegate, Frannie Flatau. Anyone else who would like to attend is most welcome! You have to cover your own travel, room, and synod registration. If you'd like to join us let Fr. Anderson know and check out more details about the synod at [www.anglicanprovince.org](http://www.anglicanprovince.org)

### **Episcopal Election:**

The diocese is electing a second suffragan bishop at our upcoming synod. The nominees are the the Rev'd Bradley Cunningham, the Very Rev'd William Perkins, and the Rev'd Canon Michael Ward. Pictures and basic biographical information on these men are posted in the parish hall. All of them are from Florida and will serve mostly the Florida parishes, though we may be able to get the new suffragan up here at some point so they can see the larger diocese. Please pray that the election goes well!

### **Art Show:**

Father Anderson will be having an exhibition of his paintings at the Liriodendron in Bel Air from July 12th - August 9th 16th. The show will feature icons and large scale oil paintings of various biblical themes. The oil paintings will be the large ones on display at the church, but the icons will be almost all brand new. The Liriodendron Gallery is open on Sundays from 1:00 p.m. - 4:00 p.m. Please come out on the opening day and check out the work and spread the word!

### **Quote of the Month:**

"It is easier to know man in general than to understand one man in particular" *La Rochefoucauld*, Maxims, 1665 ✠