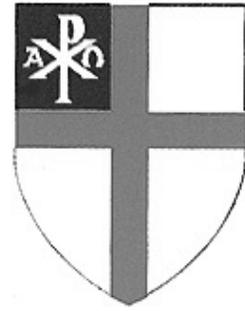


The Centurion

The Parish Magazine of St. Alban's Church

1011 Old Joppa Road, Joppa, Maryland, 21085



My dear People:

We hear a lot in the news today about the immigration crisis engulfing Europe and parts of North America. People from poor and war torn countries in North Africa and the Middle East are flocking to west in search of safety and opportunity. (That they are *not* fleeing to other Middle Eastern countries speaks volumes of them and those countries!). While there are many ways that one can think about this whole situation, an old college friend of mine gave me a unique perspective on it that I had not considered. *The immigration crisis presents a tremendous opportunity for the Church!* My college pal was once a successful trademark and patent attorney in California. Married with a few kids, he decided to leave practicing law behind in order to become a missionary. The whole family relocated to Europe where they are learning the local language and customs and working with a non-denomination agency to minister to and evangelize Muslim refugees. Having known a number of missionaries to the Middle East over the years I can tell you that it can be very hard for missionaries to get into those totalitarian countries and openly spread the Gospel of Jesus Christ. It is much easier to reach these people within the safety and security of a modern western democracy. Adult ("believer's") baptisms have shot up in countries like Germany and Austria due to the number of refugees converting to Christianity. In their own countries they would hardly have had the opportunity to hear the Gospel in the first place. And if they converted to Christianity from Islam there they would be killed, as death is the penalty in the Koran for leaving the Muslim religion. Honestly, the only obstacle the Church faces today in effectively evangelizing these refugees, and other immigrants for that matter, is from within. Many of the national churches (Church of England, Church of Sweden, etc.) and the Roman Catholic Church, have been imbibing from the conceptual wells of Marxism and postmodernism for so long that they quite frankly have little to nothing to offer the person who seeks the truth of God. The Church in these countries, and *everywhere* frankly, needs to recommit herself to her Lord and Savior, Jesus Christ, and be the powerful witness for his compassionate love and forgiveness that only she can be. Contrary to what some political pundits may think, the gross and repulsive materialism of contemporary western culture is not, and cannot be, the savior of these poor people. It cannot fill their empty souls, and it certainly cannot stand up to the scourge of fanaticism and terrorism. Why? because welfare states and riches cannot change people's hearts. Only God can do that. And God became a man, Jesus Christ, who died and rose again for the salvation of the world, and who started a Church to be a witness of what he did, and also the instrument by which he communicates himself to the world.

Faithfully, your priest,

J. Gordon Anderson

July 2017

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UPCOMING PRAYER BOOK

HOLY DAYS:

Jul 4th – Independence Day

Holy Communion at 10:00 a.m.

Jul 25th – St. James

Holy Communion at 10:00 a.m.

Aug 15th – Assumption of the BVM

Holy Communion at 10:00 a.m.

Aug 24th – St. Bartholomew

Holy Communion at 10:00 a.m.

Sep 8th – Nativity of the BVM

Holy Communion at 10:00 a.m.

Sep 8th – Nativity of the BVM

Holy Communion at 10:00 a.m.

Sep 14th – Holy Cross

Holy Communion at 10:00 a.m.

Sep 20th - Ember Wednesday

Holy Communion at 10:00 a.m.

Sep 20th - St. Matthew

Holy Communion at 10:00 a.m.

CHRISTIAN LIVING: *(Some of) Father Anderson's Favorite Movies*

I love movies. When I have found myself in difficult and crazy moments in my life good film has helped me relax and get through them. My favorite movies have deep philosophical and Christian theological messages, along with good storylines, development, and cinematography. Summer is a great time to watch movies. On those hot, muggy Maryland summer evenings what better thing is there to do at night than to crank up the air conditioning and watch a good movie? If you're looking for some good *thought-provoking* movies to watch (not of the "bang, bang, shoot 'em up", special effects variety of most Hollywood offerings) then please check out the following grown up movies or series of movies. This very short list is not presented in any particular order.

"Dekalogue" series by Krystoff Kieslowski (1988): Dekalogue is a series of ten short films, each one being based on one of the Ten Commandments. The famed Polish director wrote and directed these for Polish television during the 1980's. Each one is an intense look at each of the commandments and how we often do not really understand the depth of their meaning or their implications. The films in the series each contain an entirely different storyline and cast of characters. (Polish with English subtitles)

"Trilogy of Faith" series by Ingmar Bergman (1961-1963): This legendary Swedish director was one of the greatest filmmakers of the twentieth century. I don't think there is such a thing as a "bad" Bergman film. The three films that make up this series are *Through a Glass Darkly*, *Winter Light*, and *The Silence*. Each one of these beautifully shot, and excellently written and acted movies, explores God and his relationship with man... or, as the series ends up, lack of relationship. Be forewarned: these are very bleak films that speak a lot about Ingmar Bergman's own personal views of spirituality and religion. While they contain many different levels of meaning and ideas, I would say that in general they express in cinematic form how experience helps shape the understanding of the human person and God. (Swedish with English subtitles)

"The Mission" by Roland Joffe (1986): This highly acclaimed film is based on true historical events that took place in South America centuries ago during the colonial era. It is about a mission to native Americans run by the Society of Jesus (the Jesuits) in an area for which the Spanish and Portuguese are vying for control. One of the Jesuits assisting at the mission is a former soldier who had killed a person and out of guilt gave up violence and gave his life to God. Under Spanish authority, the mission is going very well, with the natives being Christianized, educated, and civilized. Then, due to apolitical treatise,

the Portuguese end up gaining control of the land. They send in an army to obliterate the mission and enslave the natives. What will the former soldier, now Jesuit brother, do in the face of the violence? Watch the film to find out.

"Au hasard Balthazar" by Robert Bresson (1966): This film by France's greatest filmmaker of all time is about a donkey named Balthazar. The animal is owned by various dysfunctional people throughout the film (each owner/episode represents one of the Seven Deadly Sins) and endures various levels of ridicule and abuse throughout. Through all of this he displays peace and sanctity, so much so that at one point he is declared to be a saint. The donkey actually represents Christian faith, and the life of the believer. In the end he dies from a wound, but then, in one of the most beautiful scenes in cinema, he is welcomed into the kingdom of God. (French with English subtitles)

"My Night at Maud's" by Eric Rohmer (1969): This is the third of six films in the directors "Six Moral Tales" series. It is the story of a devout Roman Catholic intellectual, Jean-Louis, who, though an old friend who happens to be a Marxist, is introduced to Maud. The three of them spend time discussing religion, atheism, love, morality and Blaise Pascal's life and writings on philosophy, faith and mathematics. Things take an interesting turn when John-Louis ends up spending the night with Maud, thus throwing himself into a moral crisis because his views on marriage, fidelity, and obligation are now challenged. (French with English Subtitles)

"The Passion of Joan of Arc" by Carl Theodore Dreyer (1928): This masterpiece of the silent film era is one of the greatest movies in history. It shows the passion and death of Saint Joan of Arc in medieval France. The acting and sets are absolutely amazing, as are the stunning camera angles. One critic wrote that Maria Falconetti's portrayal of Saint Joan "may be the finest performance ever recorded on film." Controversial in its day for how it portrayed the Catholic Church and the English, Dreyer edited it rather heavily. It later went through other edits. Through all of this the original cut was lost. But then, in 1981, a copy of the original cut was found in the closet of a Norwegian mental hospital. This version is the one to watch. In 1994 composer Richard Einhorn composed an accompaniment to the movie sung by the famous female vocal ensemble The Anonymous Four. This film (the original version with Einhorn's composition) is required viewing! ✽

CURRENT EVENTS: “*Religion and the Problem of Violence: A Critique of Atheism and Universalism*” – Fr. Phass

Nowadays, nearly every time we pick up the newspaper, turn on the TV or radio, or access the Internet, we are faced with the dark reality of violence. We are “notified” and “updated” on the happenings of domestic violence, racial violence, police brutality, mass shootings, suicides, and hostage situations, just to name a few. In addition to all of these crimes against humanity, we also regularly hear about violence carried out in the name of religion. It seems that this, perhaps even on a global level, is becoming the most popular type of news story to run.

As of late, the Media has become fixated with continuously informing us that men, women, and even children have been attacked or killed in the name of some god or religion. Oftentimes the victims of these violent acts are identified as being adherents to some “competing” or “opposing” religion, in contrast to the religion observed by the aggressor.

Through these stories, we cannot help but be influenced to believe that all of us, regardless of how we label our “religious views,” are in danger of becoming the victim of the next act of violence done in the name of religion. Whether or not the airing of these religiously charged news reports are meant to simply inform the populace of what is happening around the world or to serve as the means of some other unspoken motive is a question worthy of debate. *What is clearly discernable, however, is that people want an answer to the question of where violence comes from and, in our time, the Media is quick to answer that question by placing the blame on religion.*

An accusation against religion that is popular today is the claim that *it is the leading cause of war, murder, and violence*. This is the mantra of many individuals who would identify as atheists, although not all atheists would make this claim. For many atheists, the existence of violence (and other forms of suffering) in the world is what led them to forsake a former belief in a theistic universe. *Many atheists long for the day that man will evolve from his primitive ways and shed the weight of religion completely, thus enabling himself to freely live a truly altruistic life.* But are the atheists and all those against the practice of religion correct that religion is itself the problem? Is it even possible for mankind to forsake religion all together? Can man naturally evolve in such a way as to become capable of expressing only selfless love towards his neighbor at all

times? These are all questions concerned with truth, the nature of man, and the purpose of religion.

The argument that religion in general is to blame for the violence of the world is of very poor quality and is ultimately self-defeating. The argument is self-defeating because it claims that religion is the cause of violence while neglecting to acknowledge that nearly every major religion is concerned with the pursuit of some form of internal and external peace. If the pursuit of peace is an aspiration of nearly every major religion, how can religion itself be the source from which every motive contrary to that goal finds its origin?

Although the one who stands upon this flawed argument is incorrect, it does not mean that he is devoid of all truth. He is correct to note that religion and violence are closely related. Thus, the man holding to the belief that religion is the leading source of all violence is correct to acknowledge that *many acts of violence are, have been, and will be committed in the name of religion*. He is also correct to acknowledge that there are *some religions that are militaristic and violent in nature*. Where this man is wrong, however, is in his attack against all religions *on the basis of the violent actions of religious extremists throughout history and across religious faiths*. This is especially true when violence done in the name of religion is carried out by an adherent to a faith system that officially values peace and the well-being of one’s neighbor. Although some religions have historically been militaristic and violent, it is not fair or honest to say that they represent the religious practices of the majority of the faiths that have come into existence.

The real problem with this accusation against religion, therefore, is found in its failure to acknowledge that the cause of violence is found within man and not within any particular faith or belief system. The problem of violence is a universal one. Even the man who would have religion abolished is incapable of living a truly altruistic life according to his own strength; although man may will to commit only selfless acts for the benefit of others, he cannot bring himself to do it. At the end of the day, man will always love himself to the detriment of the well-being of his neighbor. ✠

To be continued in the next issue of the Centurion...



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

New Ministries to Support

Don't forget that in addition to supporting Welcome One Homeless Shelter that Saint is now supporting Char Hope Foundation. This foundation ministers to women overcoming addiction. It runs the Emory House, which is a safe place for them to live and learn skills to get reintegrated into society. We are also assisting Emory United Methodist Church with their Haiti mission. This mission involves taking pillow cases and turning them into sundresses for little Haitian girls to wear. Here is how you can help support these ministries and missions:

- 1) Welcome One Homeless Shelter needs food and paper good items. Gift cards for Target, Walmart, and Shoprite are also needed. Any type of household item that you can donate, preferably in large/bulk sizes, would be most welcome.
- 2) Emory Church needs pillow cases. They may be new or gently used.
- 3) Char Hope Foundation needs personal hygiene supplies for eight women (e.g. shampoo, conditioner, deodorant, toothpaste, razors, tampons, etc.) as well as standard household supplies (e.g. laundry and dish detergent, cleaning supplies, paper goods, trash bags, sponges, etc.

All donations may be put into the yellow box in the parish hall. From there they will be separated and sent to their respective ministries. Any questions? Please see Karen Novakoski.

Please Be Gentle

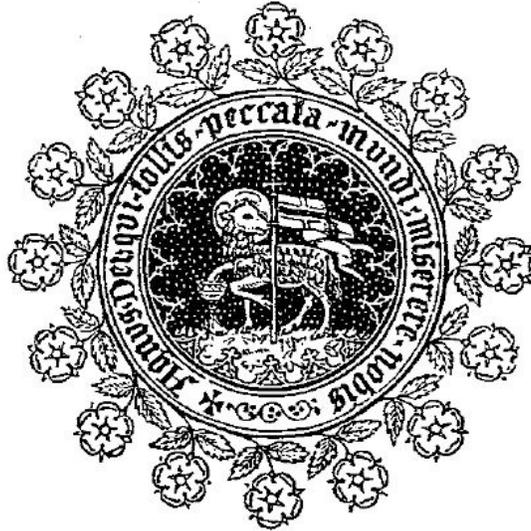
Our beloved 1940 Hymnals in the pews are expensive to replace. Please be gentle with them as a number of them are falling apart and have to undergo constant repair. Thank you!

Sick Visits

Please be sure to let the rector know if you or someone you love needs to be visited at home or in the hospital! Fr. Anderson is delighted to share God's healing grace with those in need, whether they are part of our parish or not. Also, if you need to go into the hospital for a procedure be sure to take your Book of Common Prayer with you among your personal effects so you can nurture your soul in prayer and devotion while you are recovering. This also makes it easier to say the responses when the rector to gives you Holy Communion.

Prayers for Phass Family

Please pray for Dcn. Tyler Phass, Holly, and Solomé. In August they will be traveling to a church in the diocese that wants to interview him for a full time curacy position. More information on the church and the results of the interview will be made known as soon as possible.



Mason Waldhauser's Last Sunday

Our new aspirant for Holy Orders, Mr. Mason Waldhauser is heading off to seminary in the fall. He'll be studying at Nashotah House in Wisconsin. While Nashotah House is one of the historic Anglo-Catholic seminaries of the Episcopal Church, today it finds itself

preparing men and women of all traditions for lay and ordained ministry. Please keep Mason in your prayers as he begins this important new adventure in his life. His last Sunday with us will be August 13th. There will be a reception in his honor after the 10:00 a.m. service that day. Please plan on being here to wish him well!

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) ✠