

The Centurion

The Parish Magazine of St. Alban's Church

1011 Old Joppa Road, Joppa, Maryland, 21085



My dear People:

Years ago in college I was fortunate enough to study abroad in Europe for a semester. I attended classes at a Jesuit university, in the Czech city of Olomouc (pronounced "Olum-oates"). This city was the capital of Moravia until the Thirty Years War when it was sacked and plundered by the Swedes. It recovered, of course, and these days it is considered, after Prague itself, to be the most important historical city in the Czech Republic. Living and studying there was life changing in so many ways. One of the things I remember most about my time there was Sunday mornings. The group from our college, Covenant College (Lookout Mountain, GA) gathered together in our professor/chaperone's flat for weekly worship. Though a professor of business at Covenant, Dr. Hoover had also been an ordained Presbyterian minister and was still licensed to serve as one, so he ably lead us in worship and even celebrated communion once. (That was my idea!) I will never forget what it was like walking to his and his wife's apartment early on Sunday mornings. There was a mist in the air. The cobblestone streets of the city were deserted. The gothic, baroque, and rococo buildings stood in solemn beauty. And everything was completely still and quiet. Then, all of a sudden, the churches in the city (there must have been about ten of them within the old city walls) began ringing their bells. The sound was glorious and almost deafening. I could hear the sound of the bells bouncing off the buildings in the narrow streets, and on into the main square, and beyond. It must have gone on for five minutes before it slowly died down and the silence returned. What a way to begin Sunday morning! The bells reminded me of what Sunday is all about: the "weekly remembrance of the glorious resurrection" (BCP p. 595) of our Lord Jesus Christ. They were also a great way for the churches to remind people of their presence and ministry. Years later, when living in Baltimore (for almost ten years) I wondered why I almost never heard church bells. I lived in Bolton Hill, Waverly, Charles Village, Upper Fells Point, and near Camden Yards, and had friends all over the city. Each neighborhood was packed with old churches, some very active... and yet they never rang their bells. The only one that did was the Cathedral of Mary Our Queen, and that only on Easter. I think church bells are gorgeous, and they remind people of Jesus' resurrection, and that the church is alive and active. What if more churches in the city (and elsewhere) asserted their presence and rang their bells? It would probably be a very different place. We ring our bell, the Rev'd. Jack Cooper Memorial Bell, before every service. It is catching on, as now the Methodists across the street are ringing theirs more and more. Wake up world! Jesus is alive! Come to church and offer to him the sacrifice of praise and thanksgiving, and worship him in the beauty of holiness!

Faithfully, your priest,

J. Gordon Anderson

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IN THIS ISSUE:

Ministry, p. 2

Reflections on Preaching

Liturgy, p. 3

The Thematic Lectionary

Parish News & Updates, p. 4

Important News and Other Items

UPCOMING PRAYER BOOK

HOLY DAYS:

June 5th & 6th – Monday and Tuesday in Whitsun Week

Holy Communion at 10:00 a.m.

Jun 7th, 9th, & 10th – Ember Days

Holy Communion at 10:00 a.m.

Jun 23rd – St. Barnabas

Holy Communion at 10:00 a.m.

Jun 24th – St. John Baptist

Holy Communion at 10:00 a.m.

Jun 29th – St. Peter

Holy Communion at 10:00 a.m.

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.

MINISTRY: *"Reflections on Preaching" by Father Anderson*

When I was first ordained over ten years ago and served as curate at Saint Alban's and later at Saint Mark's in Vero Beach, Florida I was blessed to receive regular feedback on my sermons. Usually this feedback was positive, but sometimes of course it was negative. The reality is that both types of feedback are helpful. But it seems the longer I have been ordained the less feedback I have been given. It started at Saint Francis' Church in Blacksburg, Virginia. I can remember getting feedback from only two people the entire time I was there, both positive. In fact one of those people would compliment me on sermon *every* Sunday. (But inasmuch as he was a mentally unstable sociopath who later tried to kidnap me his compliments rang hollow in my ears.) Here at Saint Alban's for the second time the trend of low sermon feedback continues. I'm not sure if that is a good thing or a bad thing. But I will say that if I hear nothing about my sermons it makes me wonder: are they good? Are they understandable? Do they not make sense? Are they irrelevant and unhelpful? Please feel free to tell me if you think something I say is helpful or confusing or even wrong. Feedback and constructive criticism is a very positive thing in my opinion. A few people do offer comments every now and then, and for that I am very grateful. I thought it might be helpful if I explained a bit about my method of sermon preparation, how I put them together, and what is the overall thought process behind them. Let me begin, however, by stating that the sermon is only *part* of the liturgy. It is not the "main event." That honor belongs to the Holy Eucharist, the mystery of our faith, the redemption of Christ made present to us, and the offering to him of ourselves, our souls and bodies. Word and Sacrament go together and compliment each other in the celebration of the Holy Eucharist. One does not trump another. With that in mind I can say that preparing sermons in our tradition is a very tricky business. Because the liturgy of the classical Book of Common Prayer is so prolix, and even at times verbose, the sermons have to be short and concise *in addition* to being informative and edifying. This is not always easy to pull off, especially when the audience is very diverse! Most of the time I'd say that my sermons are a combination of topical (focusing on one topic) and exegetical (explaining the text), all geared towards practical application. The whole process begins with prayer, and prayer sustains it throughout. My prayer is simple: that God would help me say to his people what *he* would have me say... not what *I* want to say, and that he would help me to understand the text and bring glory to himself through my feeble words.

My main goal is to make my sermons both didactic and edifying. To that end I typically try to mention something about where we are in the Christian Year and why a particular passage is where it is in the calendar. I also try to relate the sermon to the Prayer Book, mentioning the Catechism, other rites contained therein, etc.) so as to increase our familiarity with it. While I almost always preach on the Gospel I also try to tie in the Collect and Epistle in some way, and mention relevant passages from the Old and New Testaments. This helps increase our familiarity with the riches of sacred scriptures. In my preparation I always make sure to study the Gospel in Greek and Latin. This helps me discover different shades of meaning in the text. I will often insert a word from one of those languages in the sermon if I feel like it will help drive home a point. When I quote other passages of scripture I always do so from the Authorized (King James) Version, not only because it is the official bible translation of the province, but also because it compliments the language of the liturgy, is a great translation, and one of the most important literary works in the history of the world. Quoting from it (especially in this dumbed down day and age) helps keep it on the forefront of our minds. When I explain some aspect of the text I then, finally, try to draw some sort of application from it... a "take away" as it were. Adding elements of humor is something that I try to do, though I once read in a public speaking book that you should never *open* your speech (or sermon) with a joke because it automatically trivializes everything that comes after. Obviously, though, that is debatable. In addition I try to add one good illustration (or maybe more... I love to tell stories) along with a few suitable, well-placed gestures. I am trying to learn to pause more, to allow points to sink in. Like rests in music, moments of silence in a speech or sermon can be very helpful in getting the overall point across. Finally, I try very hard to relate the sermon to the sacramental life, especially the Holy Eucharist which immediately follows the sermon. So that is the sort of stuff I have going on in my mind when I am formulating a sermon. There's more course. Needless to say it is very hard to get all of that done in about 1,000 words. Try to listen for some of this in the sermons... the references to the various texts, the Church calendar, the tie ins to the Prayer Book and hymns. All of that is to help us see how the equipment of our faith life gels together into a unity. I sincerely hope that God answers my prayer and that the words I speak each week are his, not mine. And I pray that Jesus uses my words to glorify his name, edify his saints, and magnify his body. ✠

LITURGY: “*The Thematic Arrangement of the Lectionary*” by Father Phass

One of the greatest assets of the Church is the lectionary. This is not always self-evident, however. Day after day and week after week, the Church reads assigned portions of the Holy Scriptures known as lections. These lections cause us to experience the life of Our Lord, since they are the inspired words of divine revelation. They also make clear to us the dogmas and doctrines of Christ’s most holy religion. Furthermore, the lectionary unites Christians one to another in a way that transcends both time and space; *it does so by placing us in a linear tradition of common prayer and worship with the whole people of God.*

The tradition of using an established lectionary for the public reading of the Scriptures is a very ancient practice, one that predates even Christianity itself. When we read from the lectionary, we follow in the steps of our forefathers. *The use of the lectionary is so ancient that it even links us to the worship practices of the faithful people of God who lived centuries before Incarnation of Our Lord.*

From the texts of Holy Scripture, we learn that the use of a lectionary was practiced in the synagogue and temple worship of the Jewish people. Jesus himself even read the Scriptures from a lectionary, as we are told in Luke 4:17, 20-21: “And there [in the synagogue] was delivered unto him [Jesus] the book of the prophet Esaias...And he closed the book, and he gave it again to the minister, and sat down. And the eyes of all them that were in the synagogue were fastened on him. And he began to say unto them, ‘This day is this scripture fulfilled in your ears.’” In the above text from Saint Luke’s Gospel, Jesus receives the appointed text to be read on that day of worship, reads it, and teaches the people through preaching on the same. This pattern is still followed today by our ministers who first discern which text is to be read from the lectionary, read the assigned text in the presence of the people, and then proceed to preach upon the teachings of the same.

It is important to note that the appointed texts of the lectionary are not random or loosely related to one another, but rather, are carefully chosen so as to construct the many themes that together make up the greatest theme of the Church: the Liturgical Year. Often times, when we pray the Daily Office or go to Mass, we miss out on the thematic arrangement of the lections that are read. This is to our great disadvantage. Even though it can be difficult to discern at times, and quite frankly, requires a bit of work on our part, we ought to spend both time and effort reflecting on the lectionary and its themes. Some ways to go about practicing and developing this beneficial practice is to either think about how the Gospel and Epistle lessons relate to one another each Sunday or by

thinking about how the theme of each Sunday relates to the themes of the preceding and following Sundays.

For example, if we look at the appointed Gospel texts from the most recent Sundays of the Liturgical Year, we can see that the theme currently set before us by the lectionary is *the Ascension of Our Lord and the Descent of the Holy Ghost*. This theme spans from the Third Sunday after Easter, throughout Ascensiontide and Whitsun Week, and up to Trinity Sunday. Read in succession, these Scripture lessons bring to our remembrance the promise of Our Lord: *that he would ascend to the right hand of the Father and that the Holy Ghost would descend to dwell within the hearts of God’s faithful people, enabling them to live holy lives.*

Before Ascension Day, the lessons focus on the ascent of Christ and descent of the Holy Ghost. After Ascension Day, there is an intensification of focus, and the lessons begin to center specifically on the work of the Holy Ghost as manifested in the life of Saint Peter and the other apostles. By reflecting on this theme from the lectionary, we fortify ourselves in the faith. By devoting ourselves to this meditative practice, we enter into a tradition of meditation and interpretation so much larger than just ourselves.

As Members of the One Body of Christ, it is important for us to remember that the Bible belongs to the Church as One Body, and not just to individual members that make up a body. We must never think that the Bible belongs to us as individuals, so as to empower each man with the authority of private interpretation. As Saint Peter reminds us, “...no prophecy of the scripture is of any private interpretation” (2 Peter 1:20; KJV). Likewise, we must never think that the Bible belongs only to some of the members of the Body, so as to neglect the importance of catholic consent within the One Body.

We must always read, mark, learn, and inwardly digest the Holy Scriptures in the One, Holy, Catholic, and Apostolic Church. Every day, through the words of the Creed, we confess our belief in the Communion of Saints. Each day as we make that confession, may we reflect not only on how we are connected to the saints through the Sacraments and the Liturgy but also through the thematic mediation upon and dogmatic interpretation of the Scriptures made available to us through the Lectionary.

“O Almighty God, who hast knit together thine elect in one communion and fellowship, in the mystical body of thy Son Christ our Lord; Grant us grace so to follow thy blessed Saints in all virtuous and godly living, that we may come to those unspeakable joys which thou hast prepared for those who unfeignedly love thee; through the same thy Son Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen.” (BCP, 256). ☩

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

Guest Preacher for Saint Alban's Day

As is our custom we will be transferring our patronal feast of Saint Alban the Martyr from June 22nd to the following Sunday, June 25th. (This is the one feast in the entire Christian year that Father Anderson transfers.) On this day we will welcome the Rev'd Scott Bailey to preach and assist at both services. Father Bailey is a priest of the Anglican Church in North America (ACNA) and is married with a daughter. Currently he directs clergy and other people in the CPE program at Upper Chesapeake Hospital, and on Sundays he assists at an ACNA parish in Northern Virginia. Immediately following the 10:00 a.m. service we will celebrate Saint Alban Day with cake and ice cream in the parish hall!

A Tree Grows in Joppa

The trees in the church yard were all donated years ago as memorials when the church was first established on this gorgeous, park-like property. We would like to get a few more trees for the west side of the church in order to provide shade for the parking lot during the summer and fall and to set off the church from the houses boarding that side of the property. A Japanese Maple was donated and is doing well, and some seedlings of Dogwood and Weeping Willow trees are being grown as well. Other trees that have been recommended for us are Blue Spruce and River Birch. Please let Fr. Anderson know if you'd like to beautify the property in this way, or if you have any questions.

The Bishop's Epistle

Bishop Grundorf publishes a quarterly newsletter called "The Bishop's Epistle" that contains diocesan and provincial news items. It is always posted on the "Diocese" bulletin board in the parish hall, and on the parish website. Please do read it as it always contains interesting news reports and encouraging exhortations from our beloved diocesan bishop, the Most Rev'd Walter H. Grundorf, D.D.

Summer Reading

Looking for a good book (or books) to read this summer? How about reading a book that will deepen your devotion to Christ and increase your understanding of the Christian faith? Father Anderson is always happy to recommend suitable books. He'll even lend you one if you promise to return it when you are done! Please see Father if you'd like some reading ideas.

Special Thanks from Bishop Grundorf and Saint Philip's Church

To the APA Clergy and People,

The following article is to give you an update on the progress that has been made at our Lenten Project in Blacksburg, Virginia, St. Philip's Church. We are nearing our goal of \$100,000 and I want to encourage those who have not sent in your parish Lenten gifts to do so as soon as you are able. If you were thinking about helping and have not done so as of yet, it is not too late.

Thanks for your help and blessings to all,

+Walter

"On May 13-14, Bishop Grundorf and Mary visited St. Philip's in Blacksburg, Virginia. What a tremendous change from previous experiences in Blacksburg! No musty smell due to moldy carpets or a drenched basement. The grounds were mulched with fresh flowers. The inside of the building was bright and clean with new paint and glowing hardwood floors. Bishop Grundorf marveled at how different the place looked and smelled. As wonderful as the upgrades to the building were, the new people, which included young children, were the sounds of life. Easter has happened at St. Philip's Anglican Church in Blacksburg, VA! On Sunday May 14, Bishop Grundorf confirmed 3 new members and welcomed another 6 as communicant members. In a place that did not even average 9 parishioners on a Sunday less than two short years ago, now to welcome 9 new members, and to have 45 people in worship was astonishing for a place that was all but dead. This wonderful weekend took place at the same time that graduation was happening for Virginia Tech and other area colleges, so there were some who could not attend. Since August 2015, St. Philip's is making tremendous progress in their goal of being a self-supporting parish. About 70% of the money needed has been raised. Please consider giving or encourage your parish to give so that the goal of our Lenten Appeal will be complete, and great things can continue to happen at the mission of St. Philip's in Blacksburg. Thank you for all your prayers and financial support. It is greatly appreciated!" *Fr. Wade Miller, Rector*

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) ✠