

The Centurion

The Parish Magazine of St. Alban's Church

1011 Old Joppa Road, Joppa, Maryland, 21085



My dear People:

When I was young I really enjoyed watching the cartoon sitcom *The Simpsons*. The witty writing was, and remains, absolutely superb in most respects. There was one episode where Lisa Simpson, the “socially conscious” older daughter, learned of an oil spill that had polluted the coast and all of the wildlife. Moved with compassion for the oily seals shown on TV, she rushes into the kitchen to convince her mother, Marge, to drive her to the coast so she can help save the animals and environment. Upon arriving at the beach Lisa bounds out of the car with a huge smile on her face exclaiming how she is going to rescue a baby seal and then some otters... only to be met by a government bureaucrat who informs them that all of the animals have been “reserved” for cleaning by celebrities and politicians. But then he tells Lisa not to worry because there are plenty of rocks that need to be cleaned. Lisa and Marge turn their heads to behold miles and miles of rocks along the beach covered with black crude oil. The next scene shows them on hands and knees with toothbrushes scrubbing rocks. Marge says dryly, “Hmm... I’ve rocks at home that need cleaning.” What that scene conveys is that many of the most important jobs in life are not necessarily glamorous. Those rocks needed to be cleaned, but Lisa didn’t want to clean them. She only wanted the “sexy” and high profile job of cleaning the cute baby animals. That’s how the spiritual life can be sometimes. We proclaim that we want to serve God, and do whatever he calls us to do. But then when he calls us to do something simple, and perhaps even unnoticeable, we decide that that is beneath us and we refuse to do it, or we give up on it after a while. I once read of a priest once who had an illustrious pastoral and scholarly ministry who, in his retirement, found that the only ministry to which God called him was taking care of his ailing wife. No lecture series, no book offers, no TV appearances... just taking care of his wife at home. Glamorous? No. Important? Very much so! Likewise in church there are faithful people who do the simplest tasks, such as launder linens, count money, straighten up the kitchen, fold bulletins, decorate, and more. All of this is critically important for our parish. In short, we shouldn’t look askance at doing little things to serve God. If we are faithfully doing them for him they are of supreme importance no matter what they are or how small they appear to be in our eyes.

Faithfully, your priest, *J. Gordon Anderson*

June 2019

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UPCOMING SERVICES:

Jun 10th & 11th - Monday and Tuesday in Whitsun

Holy Communion at 10:00 a.m.

Jun 17th - 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 6th - Transfiguration

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.

LITURGY: *Worship Wars*

One of the biggest trends in church worship services in recent years is to make them “seeker sensitive.” A “seeker” is understood to be an unchurched person who is becoming interested in God and religion. A church that tries to be “seeker sensitive” is a church that attempts to cater its activities and services to meet the perceived needs of these pagan, secular “seekers.”

What many churches have done to make their worship “seeker sensitive” is simplify their services by dumbing them down. Hymns, vestments, orders of service, traditional language, and basic structure are tossed aside in favor of “contemporary” styles because, it is thought, a “seeker” will not understand them, or perhaps will even find them offensive.

Churches that do this betray their profound ignorance as to the true nature and purpose of worship. The basic, fundamental principle that they just do not understand is this: the worship of the Church is for almighty God! *He* is the audience and focus of the worship of the Church, not us, and not “Timonium Tim,” as a famous Maryland-based Roman Catholic (!) megachurch pastor calls the unchurched in his community.

Advocates of “seeker sensitive” worship would likely be shocked to learn that in the ancient church non-Christian “seekers” were dismissed from the liturgy halfway through the service because they were not permitted to behold the sacred mysteries of the Church!

One can only imagine what kind of “disciples” these “seeker sensitive” churches are making, or if they are even making any at all. (One “seeker sensitive” megachurch pastor in North Carolina said in a television interview that on any given Sunday his church could gain or lose 3,000 people and he wouldn’t even know it!) Are they making and forming true disciples of Jesus Christ whose lives are marked by sanctity and holiness, or are they merely providing feel-good “religious entertainment” to the postmodern, secular consumer?

Often it is the latter. And once the religious consumer has consumed enough at one church he goes off to another church for a while, and then to

another, and then another... all in search of the next religious-flavored “buzz.” Sometimes people who believe that the worship of the church is all about them simply drop out of church altogether because they get to a point where they don’t “feel the need” to go anymore. Dropping out of church altogether is the ultimate extreme of the “worship/church is all about me” attitude.

Thankfully as Anglicans with our traditional Book of Common Prayer we are insulated to a large degree from this consumeristic mindset. But believe it or not there are still some Anglicans out there (just as there are some Roman Catholics) who insist on pandering to the consumeristic zeitgeist by downplaying all that is distinctively and traditionally Anglican... again, all to be “seeker sensitive.” Christians today need to get it through their heads that worship and evangelism (i.e. sharing the Gospel with unbelievers or the backslidden) are two different things!

The motivating factor for why we gather together to worship God week after week is not because we need or want something from him. Our attitude should not be “what can God do for me?” but rather “What can I do for God? What can I offer to him in thanksgiving for all that he has done for me?” True Christian worship is “eucharistic” in the sense that it is about thanksgiving, which is what “eucharist” means in the Greek.

Years ago President John F. Kennedy in his inaugural address made the famous statement: “Ask not what your country can do for you —ask what you can do for your country.” We should have the same attitude when we gather to worship God. As we grow in spiritual maturity we do not seek so much what God will do for us because we know he will always take care of us and bring us to eternal salvation. Rather, as we grow in love for God, who first loved us, a burning desire to love him and serve him, and offer our lives to him, wells up within us. Sunday mornings are our corporate expression of this. They are about God, not about us. ✠

PARISH LIFE: *Summer Reading*

As we head into summer it is time once again to start thinking about one those classic pastimes: summer reading. Many times we read novels or self-help books during this time. But why not try reading something more directly related to our lives as believers? Here are a few suggestions, all by Anglican authors, that do not require a degree in theology to understand that you may wish to consider reading this summer, or if you can't at some point later. Each of these books is currently in print and can be purchased on Amazon.

A History of the Church in England, by J.R.H. Moorman. This classic book is about 500 pages but thanks to the author's fantastic literary style it reads very quickly. Bishop Moorman covers the history of Christianity in England from the days of the Roman Empire up to about 1972. Moorman (1905-1989), who was Bishop of Ripon, was a prolific author and brilliant scholar whose books on spirituality and history are still very widely read.

The Book of Common Prayer: A Biography, by Alan Jacobs Published just a few years ago by a humanities professor at Baylor University, this excellent little book (200 pages) is a concise and fantastic introduction to the main book (other than the Bible) of our tradition. He discusses its background and development with the historical context as well as its legacy, which is still unfolding. An absolute gem!

Christian Proficiency, by Martin Thornton This is a classic in Anglican spirituality. The author was a prominent priest and scholar of the Church of England who wrote many books on history, spirituality, and pastoral care. This particular volume is required reading for all postulants of the Anglican Province of America. The thrust of the book is how to develop your own personal "Rule of Life" which is a sort of "framework" of devotions and disciplines that we take on in order to grow spiritually. Everyone who reads this book finds it incredibly edifying and helpful. (165 pages)

God's Secretaries: The Making of the King James Bible, by Adam Nicholson

This book tells the story of how the Authorized Version (a.k.a. the "King James Bible") came into being. It touches on political history, church politics, spirituality, bible translation, and much, much more. After reading this book you'll realize just why the King James Bible is so enduring and has made such an impact on world culture. It will make you appreciate this Bible, which is the official Bible translation of the Anglican Province of America, in a way that you never did before. (250 pages)

The Challenge of Jesus: Rediscovering Who Jesus Was and Is, by N.T. Wright

Wright, the retired Bishop of Durham (Church of England) is arguably the top New Testament scholar in the world. He has written many books, all critically acclaimed, on Jesus, Paul, and various aspects of theology. Despite all of this he has an incredibly accessible writing style. In this book he challenges us to rediscover Jesus, and look at him and the Gospel narratives about him in a fresh light. He brings great clarity to the major events of Our Lord's earthly ministry pulling out new meaning from the same stories we've read over and over. Highly recommended! (200 pages)

The Christian Mind: How Should a Christian Think?, by Harry Blamires

Blamires was a disciple and associate of the great C.S. Lewis. His books were a regular fixture of the old "Episcopal Book Club" from decades ago. He was head of the English department at King Alfred's College in Winchester, UK, and wrote many books on theology, history, and philosophy. This book, written in 1963, was one of the earliest books to deal head on with postwar secularism that was encroaching upon the Church. Part one examines the lack of the Christian mind and its consequences, and part two examines the hallmarks of the Christian mind. Recovering these hallmarks is the recipe for the restoration not only of the Church but the world. (180 pages) ☩

PARISH NEWS & UPDATES: *Building Updates***Mugs**

For the first time in many years Saint Alban's Church will have her own mugs! The standard size white coffee mug will have our Saint Alban shield/logo on the front... the same one that is on the front page of this newsletter. This is not an "original" logo but rather an ancient, heraldic, public-domain image that we've appropriated. It symbolizes, of course, Saint Alban the Martyr, who is our patron saint. Above the shield will be the name of the parish, and below it in Latin will be our official motto: "*Amare Deus et Proximum.*" ("To love God and Neighbor") On the back will be our address and contact information. This mug will be perfect for everything: coffee, tea, water, soda, ice cream, pens and pencils... you name it! The cost? \$10 each. Be sure to pick up your Saint Alban's mug as soon as possible before they sell out!

Seminarian Update

Dear Friends,

It's summertime! I've completed my middler year of seminary and made it through finals week. Between my two research papers, the other written work for exams, and two sermons, I cranked out about seventy pages of content that week.

I am writing from Denver, Colorado, on my way out to California for my summer internship at St. Matthew's, Newport Beach. I left campus the day after commencement and am 1,100 miles and two days into the trip so far. My mom and my aunt are making this trip with me, which is fun. This is a beautiful city, and last night, we went to a Colorado Rockies game because they're playing the Orioles! It was beautiful seeing the mountains in the background, and the O's won 9-6. There were more people there wearing orange than I expected.

This morning, I'm worshipping at an Anglican parish out here which I visited last summer, and tomorrow, I'll get back on the road and try to make it halfway through Utah. I've been surprised so far at how different our country is in scenery from state to state.

I don't have many details about what the day-to-day will be like for this internship, but I know it's a

very large parish, with several hundred people, so I'm most looking forward to learning what it is they're doing right.

I've brought a little work with me on the trip. I have a summer class with Nashotah's online program in order to free up a little space in senior year, and I'm working on my canonical exams, which are a series of written tests I need to complete in order to be considered for ordination. I'm learning a lot, because these exams are really comprehensive. I finished the Bible exam last month. This theology one is open-book, and I'm almost done, leaving only the Prayer Book exam left. The pastoral questions have been the most fun to answer. "How would you respond to this situation in a parish" or "to this question of a parishioner." It's interesting to picture myself in those contexts actually doing pastoral ministry, and I'm very thankful for all the time I've spent at St. Alban's and my relationship with you all, although you're a lot less crazy than all these scenarios in the test!

Now off to church. Praying for you all. See you this July when I return!

Mason ☩

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)