

The Centurion

The Parish Magazine of St. Alban's Church

1011 Old Joppa Road, Joppa, Maryland, 21085



My dear People:

I hope everyone is having a holy Lent. How are you coming with your Lenten discipline? If you've failed to keep it don't get discouraged! Just get back in the saddle and keep on keeping on! Holy Week and Easter are fast approaching.

As Lent continues on there will be a few changes to our schedule. Please make a note of them. The first change will be on Tuesday nights. Beginning after Easter, we will still have Evening Prayer and hopefully dinner, *but I will no longer be doing my usual topical studies*. Instead we will turn it into an ongoing inquirers class. It will be a good place for new members to learn about the Anglican tradition, old members to brush up on their knowledge of the faith, adults to prepare for Confirmation, and for everyone to ask the rector whatever questions they want! We will use an excellent guide prepared by St. Matthew's Church in Newport, CA. This will begin after Easter. The second change is on Thursdays at noon. *We now have a weekly bible study going through various books of the bible*. It will be "brown bag" (i.e. bring your own lunch), or you can join us at Bob Evans for lunch at 1 p.m. Several people in the community have asked me about having one, so we will give it a try. Studying the bible will help us grow in knowledge and love of God, and also give us the opportunity to explore many other areas. I hope that these changes will help increase involvement in parish life during the week and prove to be healthy changes for the church overall, and that people not already involved in an activity will consider getting involved in these or something else that the church offers.

On another note, I want to commend everyone for their excellent singing of the new Mass setting, which will become our standard for the season of Lent. For those who don't like it, or think it is too difficult, please consider the following: 1) We will continue to sing the old settings at various points in the year. They are *not* being permanently "retired." 2) As much as *you* might hate trying something new, such as a new Mass setting or hymn tune, remember that *others* in the church hate always having everything the same. The parish church is a *community* of people, and we must, as much as we are able to *within the bounds of liturgical orthodoxy and catholic tradition*, try to appeal to as many people as possible, and sometimes this involves making minor musical and other changes here and there.

Affectionately, your Friend and Pastor,

J. Gordon Anderson

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UPCOMING HOLY DAYS:

March 24th - Holy Week

March 24th - March 30th

April 1st-3rd - Monday and Tuesday in Easter Week, and Annunciation (Transferred)

No services. Fr. Anderson out of town.

April 25th - St. Mark

Holy Communion @ 10:00 a.m.

May 1st - Ss. Philip and James

Holy Communion @ 10:00 a.m.

May 6th - 8th - Rogation Days

Holy Communion @ 10:00 a.m.

May 9th - Ascension Day

Holy Communion @ 7:00 p.m.

Prayer Book Holy Day Masses last a little over half an hour and, when celebrated in the morning, always include the office of Morning Prayer. Please make time to come out for these important days as you are able!

LITURGY & THEOLOGY: "...and he is the Propitiation for our sins."

At every celebration of the sacred liturgy just after the absolution we hear the famous *Comfortable Words* (BCP, p. 76). This portion of the liturgy, which is unique to the Anglican tradition, reads, "Hear what comfortable words our Saviour Christ saith unto all who truly turn to him." A selection of scripture passages follows which are meant to give us encouragement and *strength* (which is what the word "comfort" means in its Latin root, *confirmito*).

The Comfortable Words are one of the most cherished parts of the classical Anglican liturgy. It is not unusual to see people mouthing the words along with the priest, speaking them to themselves and God in their hearts whilst he recites them aloud. However, despite their popularity and familiarity, their meaning can be somewhat difficult to understand. This is the case with the last set of Comfortable Words, which comes from St. John's first epistle (ii. 1,2). It reads: "*Hear also what Saint John saith. If any man sin, we have an Advocate with the Father, Jesus Christ the righteous; and he is the Propitiation for our sins.*" The inclusion of the word "propitiation" can make it hard to grasp the meaning of what is being said. So what does this word mean? Why is it so important that it is said at each service of Holy Communion?

In his excellent book, *Knowing God*, the venerable evangelical Anglican theologian and scholar James I. Packer, masterfully unpacks the meaning and spiritual

significance of the word *propitiation*. To "propitiate" means to avert God's anger by the offering of a sacrifice. Thus, when in the Comfortable Words we quote the passage from St. John, "*Hear also what Saint John saith. If any man sin, we have an Advocate with the Father, Jesus Christ the righteous; and he is the Propitiation for our sins,*" we are saying that Jesus Christ is the sacrifice for sin that has averted God's wrath upon us. One sometimes hears priests recite that passage in the following way: "And HE is the propitiation for OUR sins." This emphasizes that Jesus satisfies the wrath God has on us because of our sins. Jesus' sacrificial offering of himself on the cross of calvary not only takes away our sins, but also averts God's wrath upon us.

Some modern translations of the bible has replaced the word *propitiation* with the word *expiation*. What, if anything, is the difference? According to Dr. Packer the difference is that "expiation" has only half of the meaning of "propitiation." He writes, "Expiation is an action that has sin as its object; it denotes covering, putting away, or rubbing out sin so that it no longer constitutes a barrier to friendly fellowship between man and God. Propitiation, however, in the Bible, denotes all that expiation means, *and the pacifying of the wrath of God thereby.*" (Knowing God, p. 163-164. Packer's emphasis) This is an important difference.

The bible speaks of God as having wrath against man for his sins. In Romans 1:18 St. Paul

writes, "*For the wrath of God is revealed from heaven against all ungodliness and unrighteousness of men, who hold the truth in unrighteousness.*" We should take sin very seriously because it makes God angry. The wrath of God is not an arbitrary, capricious wrath like that of the Greco-Roman gods and goddesses. Rather, sin is an affront to the very person and being of God, who is holy and righteous, so his anger against sinners is perfect and just. In the first four chapters of his epistle to the Romans Paul comments on the wrath of God towards sinful man.

But then in Romans 5:10 the tune begins to change, as Paul speaks of how the death of the Son has reconciled us to God, saying: "*We were reconciled to God by the death of his Son.*" Thus, as Dr. Packer says, "*By his sacrificial death for our sins Christ pacified the wrath of God.*" (Knowing God, p. 165)

What is amazing is that propitiation is first and foremost an act of God. In pagan religions deities are propitiated by their followers offering sacrifices. In the Christian religion the entire work of salvation is accomplished by God in Christ. Packer writes, "*It was God himself who took the initiative in quenching his wrath against those whom, despite their ill-desert he loved and had chosen to save.*" This is all "Good News" indeed, and very spiritually "comforting." The next time we hear those Comfortable Words may we thank God in our hearts for his lovingkindness in forgiving our sins *and* putting away his wrath. ✠

MORAL THEOLOGY: *The Four Cardinal Virtues*

During pre-Lent and Lent we have been studying the four Cardinal Virtues on Tuesday nights. What are they and why do they matter for the Christian? The study of human behavior and ethics from the moral and theological perspective is traditionally called moral theology. The study of the *virtues* - the four Cardinal Virtues and three Theological Virtues - was always, at least until the late 1960's, a huge part of the field of moral theology. A *virtue* may be thought of as a good habit: a stable and not easily alterable way of being. A *cardinal* virtue is a basic, and primary virtue that all of the other virtues presuppose, or boil down to. They embody the essential conditions of *every* virtue. The western tradition has reduced these virtues to four: *prudence*, *temperance*, *justice*, and *fortitude*.

The cardinal virtues were first articulated in the ancient world by Plato and Aristotle. This is what is meant by "western tradition" above. In their books *The Republic* and *Nicomachean Ethics*, Plato and Aristotle respectively expounded on the the concept and importance of virtue for human society. Their writings were picked up and elaborated on by St. Augustine and St. Thomas Aquinas, and became firmly ensconced in western theology and tradition through their teaching. It is important to remember that because Plato and Aristotle were the first people who systematically wrote on this topic, and because they happened to be ancient pagans, it does *not* follow that there is no truth to what they discovered! "All truth is God's truth." People who are pagan are clearly able to discern the truth in many different areas of life. What the later Medieval, Christian thinkers realized, thanks to divine revelation, was that these acquired moral virtues of prudence, temperance, justice, and fortitude, have to be elevated by the divinely infused virtues of faith, hope, and charity, to be spiritually effective in people's lives.

Let's quickly look at the the four cardinal virtues. The cardinal virtue of *prudence* is the most basic, and chiefest of the virtues. It is the virtue that enables us to choose the best means for attaining the good life, which is what the natural moral virtues are all about. Prudence deals with practical matters and always issues forth in action. It carefully judges and weighs the means and ends of an action so as to do what is

necessary to attain the good life. The cardinal virtue of *temperance* consists in the restraint and moderation of man's natural appetites according to the dictates of reason. Traditionally, it is concerned with the so-called "pleasures of touch" - namely, eating, drinking, and sex, which are our strongest animal desires. It doesn't seek to take away any all pleasure, but only to regulate them in a way that is conducive to the good life. The cardinal virtue of *justice* governs our relations with other people. To be just is to render to each person his right and due. Justice is both positive and negative. In terms of the former, it consists of giving to someone his or her right, and in terms of latter it consists in not violating his or her right. Justice pertains only to people, and their must be a right that is owed another person, which right must be fully rendered for justice to be complete. The last cardinal virtue is the virtue of *fortitude*. This is virtue of courage in adversity. Specifically, it is bravery for the sake of good and the good life. Thus, a brave criminal is not exercising the virtue of fortitude!

As you have no doubt noticed by now, the end of the natural moral virtues is the *good life*. But it is important to remember that from the Christian perspective one cannot have the good life apart from his final end, which is God and salvation. Hence the need for the cardinal virtues to be elevated by the theological virtues. But by the same token, we should remember that the theological virtues build upon the cardinal virtues. It is much harder for the the Holy Spirit to work in a person's life if he or she is lacking in the cardinal virtues of prudence, temperance, justice, and fortitude. It takes a *prudent* man, for example, to realize his need for salvation. One must be *just* before he can be loving, and so on. The interplay between the cardinal and theological virtues is a perfect example of how God's grace elevates human nature and man, who, though fallen, is made in God's image and likeness. So we study the cardinal virtues to help us become better people and to live the good life. And through the divine grace of God the good life as we experience it here and now can flower into everlasting light and life, as God infuses us with supernatural virtues to attain our spiritual destiny in Christ forever. ✠ (*Note: For a scholarly, yet accessible book on this topic read "The Four Cardinal Virtues" by Josef Pieper*)

BISHOP GRUNDORF'S 2013 LENTEN APPEAL:

As I write this letter for our Lenten Appeal 2013, my heart is burdened by the great need in the Philippines. In recent correspondence with Bishop Belmonte he has expressed his heartfelt desire to build up the Anglican Church in the Philippines and in so doing to spread the Gospel of Jesus Christ. While the country is listed as being Christian with about 92% of the population claiming to be so, this number is deceptive. Many are Christian in name only and many areas in the Philippines are not served by any churches or missionaries. Most mainline denominations work only in the larger metropolitan areas and avoid the smaller rural villages and towns. Bishop Belmonte's focus though has been just the opposite seeking to serve those in the rural areas who have been largely ignored by the larger churches. Working in these outlying areas is tougher, less financially rewarding, and requires more trained clergy and evangelists to serve these smaller scattered communities.

Bishop Belmonte has been training clergy for this enormous task and recently ordained five deacons to assist in this work. However, many more are needed. This task would be made easier and far more effective if he were able to establish a permanent clergy training center where men from the various regions in the Philippines could stay in order to complete the training necessary before they return to their respected areas to establish and build churches there. Bishop Belmonte is currently looking for a suitable property on which to establish such a training center in a convenient and central location in the Philippines. Before our Lord ascended into heaven he commanded the Disciples to go and teach all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost. This is our opportunity to help fulfill this great commission in the Philippines.

Therefore, our Lenten Appeal Project 2013 challenge will be to raise \$50,000. This money will be matched dollar for dollar by a \$50,000 matching grant that has already been secured for this purpose. This means that for each dollar you contribute a second dollar will be contributed to our appeal! This money will be used to purchase the land with suitable buildings to house and establish the clergy training center that is so desperately needed in the Philippines. Over the years our contributions from the APA to the Philippines have helped to build and maintain our few existing churches but we can not spread the Gospel beyond those few places unless there are trained men to carry the Gospel to the other regions. The Clergy Training Center will be an important first step in this most needed endeavor.

I am asking each individual or family to make a Lenten offering of a minimum of \$1.00 a day for the 40 days of Lent, or more as our Lord leads you. We need 100% participation. Your gift(s) will enable the Clergy Training Center to become a reality and for the Gospel to be spread throughout the numerous islands that make up the Philippines. Please pray every day during Lent that God will use our offerings to show his great mercy on the people of the Philippines and this endeavor to spread the Good News of Jesus Christ. Checks should be made payable to your local church with a notation in the memo field "For Philippines Clergy Training Center." We ask each church treasurer to combine the checks and send one church check to the APA Treasurer designated for the Philippines Clergy Training Center. ✠

PARISH NEWS AND NOTICES: *Please make a note of these important announcements and events!*

Special thanks to Joe Zellar for polishing the church's brass! Joe has been faithfully shining various church appointments that have gotten tarnished and pitted over the years. Thank you, Joe, for your hard work! Everything is looking great.

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) ✠