

The Centurion

The Parish Magazine of St. Alban's Church

1011 Old Joppa Road, Joppa, Maryland, 21085



My dear People:

In the phenomenal third volume of his 'Christian Origins and the Question of God' series, the retired Bishop of Durham, N.T. Wright writes: "Judaism was never a religion of speculation or private devotion only. It was rooted in daily, weekly, and annual observances and worship." (*The Resurrection of the Son of God*, Wright, p.146) The same is true for Christianity, which began, of course, as something of a sect of Judaism. These words are especially relevant to us as we begin another Lenten season. Lent is a forty day period of fasting and penitence during which we prepare for Easter by taking on various disciplines. Typically this involves doing something with the three Christian duties of prayer, fasting, and almsgiving. In terms of prayer we might make a special effort to ramp down on our prayer life by setting aside a daily time of prayer. Or we might attend special services here at the Church. In terms of fasting we make an effort to eat smaller meals, avoid snacking, avoid meat on Wednesdays and Fridays, and give something up. And in terms of almsgiving we might give towards the bishop's Lenten appeal and to our special parish appeal. Our gorgeous altar crucifix, handcrafted in Madrid, is the result of a past parish Lenten appeal. However we choose to put the three Christian duties into practice the point is that we ought always to *do* something to mortify the flesh and grow and mature as believers. The spiritual life is a life of *action*. Lent is a great time of year to remind ourselves of this and take *concrete steps* to bring the appetites of our flesh under the control of our intellect and spirit, all for the glory of God, and so that we might become more mature in Christ . The Lenten observances, which can be so easy to take for granted, are deeply rooted in the scriptures and in the tradition and teaching of the Church, and I invite each of you to make a serious effort to do something extra to grow spiritually. Please join us for special weekday services and events, which are always announced at Sunday services, posted on the website, and sent out via e-mail. We will be having more liturgical offerings this year, so by all means take advantage of them. Please, if you are physically able, make an effort to observe the Church's rules and regulations regarding fasting (BCP p. li, top) and also pick something to give up for Lent. And finally, please consider giving towards our diocesan and/or parish Lenten Appeals.

Affectionately, your Friend and Pastor,

J. Gordon Anderson

March 2014

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News, Updates, and Upcoming Events

UPCOMING HOLY DAYS:

March 5th - Ash Wednesday

Holy Communion @ 10:00 a.m. & 6:30 p.m.

March 12th, 14th, and 15th - Ember Days

Holy Communion @ 10:00 a.m.

March 25th - The Annunciation of the Blessed Virgin Mary

Holy Communion @ 6:30 p.m.

April 13th - 19th - Holy Week

Services TBA

April 21st - 22nd - Monday and Tuesday in Easter Week

Services TBA

April 25th - St. Mark

Holy Communion @ 10:00 a.m.

May 1st - Ss. Philip & James

Holy Communion @ 10:00 a.m.

May 26th, 27th, and 28th - Rogation Days

Holy Communion @ 10:00 a.m.

CHRISTIANITY AND CULTURE: *The Prayer That Never Was*

Recently I received a letter from state senator J.B. Jennings inviting me to Annapolis to open one of the days of the 2014 legislative session with prayer. I gladly accepted, as the 1928 Book of Common Prayer, the authorized liturgy of the Church, contains such a prayer. This is the prayer: *“O GOD, the fountain of wisdom, whose statutes are good and gracious and whose law is truth; We beseech thee so to guide and bless the Legislature of this State, that it may ordain for our governance only such things as please thee, to the glory of thy Name and the welfare of the people; through Jesus Christ, thy Son, our Lord. Amen.”* (BCP p. 35)

No sooner did I accept than I received an e-mail from one of the senator’s assistants asking to see a copy of my prayer. It also contained the senate policy for inclusive prayer. The policy, developed by some organization called “The National Conference for Community and Justice”, essentially says that prayers offered on such occasions should not name any particular deity because the religious makeup of the senate is very diverse. Upon receiving this notice I immediately informed this person that I would *not* be offering any prayers for the opening of the legislative session! The assistant, obviously anxious to avoid rocking the boat with anyone, sent me a long thank you letter.

There are at least two reasons why I backed out. The first is that because I am a priest of the Church I am not authorized to just “make up” my own public prayers. The Church is governed by laws called canons, and the canons state what

our official liturgy is. They also list other additional service books that we are authorized to use, so if there is no prayer in the Prayer Book for a certain occasion we can look in some other books and try to find them there. This may seem unduly rigid, but there is a point behind it. The Church has an authorized liturgy to preserve the orthodox faith and tradition “once delivered to the saints,” which has been handed down since ancient times. If clergy could simply invent their own prayers and services whenever they wanted to all hell would break loose. The concept of “Common Prayer” would be lost, and all sorts of strange heresies could be introduced. The clergy of the Church are *part* of the Church, and so we have no right to arbitrarily change the liturgy on our own, or at the behest of “The National Conference for Community and Justice” or any other group!

The second reason I declined to offer the prayer was because the invitation proved to be something of a “bait and switch.” The letter from Sen. Jennings suggested that he wanted to invite clergy from his district to offer prayers so the diversity of his district would be made known and appreciated. Fine enough. But then they send out a policy for inclusive prayer that essentially says to the clergy, “We are not interested in you because of your beliefs.” What happened to the interest in the diversity of the community? And that these people would presume to tell a clergyman how and to whom to pray is not only arrogant but also preposterous! Maybe since everyone else tells them how to do their job they feel it

is only fair for them to tell others how to do their job! Who knows?

Honestly, I wonder to whom these politicians and the “The National Conference for Community and Justice” expect a Christian clergyman to pray? If you invite a Christian minister to come and pray would you not expect him to pray in the name of Jesus? If I was at a public event and a prayer was being lead by a Muslim imam I would be most surprised - even scandalized - if he did not pray to Allah. Furthermore, I would in no way be offended if a religious leader from another faith tradition offered a public prayer at an event like the opening of session. I venture to guess that most of the people in the senate could care less about who is up there offering a prayer and what he or she is saying and to whom!

Based on the fawning response I received from the senator’s assistant I got the impression that they have had a few clergy do a “bait and switch” on them over the years! I can picture it now: some preacher sends in his prayer ahead of time, and it and he are okayed. But then, the morning of the prayer, the Holy Spirit (or Allah, or Buddha, or whomever) suddenly inspires him to “change” the prayer and utter a word (i.e. some deity’s name) that is on the state’s “Index of Forbidden Divine Names!” Security guards rush the platform and seize the offending holy man, as some horrified senators howl with anger that they have been “offended.” Others pass out on the floor and have to be revived. Senate is scuttled for the day and all of the politicians have to go home... Gee, maybe I should have after all! ☩

LITURGY AND TRADITION: *It is customary to practice the following traditions during Lent*

Fast: The entire forty days of Lent (save Sundays) are days of fasting. (BCP p. li) While the literature on the subject is so vast that it is impossible to establish a universal norm as to what constitutes fasting, it generally means that we should reduce the amount of food that we eat at meals and avoid snacking between them. (*Note: the sick and elderly are not required to fast.*)

Abstinence: We should try to refrain from eating flesh meat on Wednesdays and Fridays.

Lenten Discipline: A subset of abstinence, this means that we choose to give up something we enjoy - usually a food item, but it could also be something like social media, etc. (*Note: on Sundays the discipline is lifted.*)

Attend Special Services: The Church offers extra opportunities to worship the Lord and grow in holiness this time of year. Take advantage of these. It is amazing how few people at St. Alban's - even those with lots of free time - come out for special weekday services!

Lenten Reading: Pick a special spiritual book to read and study throughout the Lenten season. If you never read and study the Bible this is a great time of year to begin doing so.

Confession: Make a private confession of sin to a priest. Confessions are always heard by appointment. If you do not feel comfortable confessing to the rector Fr. Edelmann would be most happy to hear your confession. ☩

DIOCESAN NEWS: *Our bishop has given the diocese a new challenge for the 2014 Lenten Appeal!*

As I write this letter for our Lenten Appeal 2014 I am pleased to report that the school project for Dalit children initiated in 2011 with our global partners Operation Mobilization (OM) is finally underway. Following my recent visit to India (December 2013) an appropriate parcel of land was selected and is in the process of being purchased. The money from the 2011 Lenten Appeal, together with additional funds is being used to purchase the land and to establish the initial buildings (consisting of five classrooms and two offices) and to pay for the initial operating costs.

Our commitment to our global partners (OM) has always been to complete a second phase of building so as to expand the school through both the primary and secondary grades (the equivalent of a K-12 school in the USA).

This school will change the lives of numerous Dalit children as well as provide numerous benefits to the surrounding village communities. Through the spread of the Gospel and an English- medium education, future generations of children will be able to escape the crippling poverty and oppression resulting from the Caste system to lead full and productive lives in Indian society.

My heart tells me that I must speak to you on their behalf. I MUST be bold in asking for your help.

Therefore, our Lenten Appeal Project 2014 challenge will be to raise \$100,000 for the second phase of the Dalit Education Center in Jammalamadugu, Andhra Pradesh, India in partnership with OM.

I am asking each individual within our churches to make a Lenten offering of a minimum of \$1.00 per day for the 40 days of Lent, or more as our Lord leads you. We need 100% participation in order to achieve this goal. Please make this a family project for Lent. Your gifts will enable Dalit children to be liberated from the bondage of poverty and oppression.

Please pray every day during Lent that God will use our offering to show His great mercy on the Dalit children of India.

Checks should be made payable to your local church with a notation in the memo field "India School." We ask each church treasurer to combine the checks and send one church check to the APA Treasurer designated for the India School. Please make your Lenten Offering by April 20 at the latest. Remembering that in all things, He is able, I remain faithfully yours, ☩

*Fr. David Haines, Vicar General for Global Partnerships,
APA*

PARISH NEWS: *News and Updates from St. Alban's Church*

Introducing Our New Lending Library: As most of us know by now the parish book sale rack has been phased out. Its original purpose was to provide a home for old, unwanted books and generate some income for the church. Well now that it is all cleared out the empty book case is slowly being transformed into a parish lending library! Whereas the old book rack contained volumes on all sorts of topics, the new lending library's focus will be biblical and theological books recommended by the official *ensor librorum* of the parish (AKA the rector). These books will help people draw closer to God and grow into spiritual maturity. The library will be categorized by topic: Biblical studies, theology, philosophy, history, spirituality, art, etc. While most of the books are written by Anglicans there are many others in the library written by folk from different traditions, such as Roman Catholic, Orthodox, or other Protestant traditions. As these books have been donated for this purpose please be sure to sign them out, take good care of them, and return them in a timely fashion.

2014 Regional Meeting of the Evangelical Theological Society: St. Mary's Seminary and University in Baltimore is hosting this meeting on March 21st and 22nd. The keynote speaker is the Rev'd Dr. Gerald R. McDermott, who is Jordan-Trexler Professor of Religion at Roanoke College, and also an Anglican priest. The topic is "Evangelicals in a Pluralist Society." Many other distinguished guests and speakers will be speaking as well. Registration is \$35. Those who register by March 15th will receive a \$10 voucher for books at the book table. More information may be found at www.etseastern.org

Parish Lenten Appeal - Rose Vestment Set: Don't forget that we are still raising money for our rose vestment set. This distinguished set is used on two very special Sundays in the church year: Guadete Sunday (Advent 3) and Laetere Sunday (Lent 4). The set, per the request of the major donors, will be designed and executed by famed

vestment maker Davis d'Ambly of Philadelphia, who has designed vestments and liturgical art for some of the most prominent Anglo-Catholic parishes on the east coast. His work is unparalleled in its excellence... just ask for a close up look at the green and white sets by Davis that we currently use and you will see the quality of his work! As we all know, however, you have to pay for quality. This rose set will cost about \$3,000. The high cost is partly due to the fact that we have to buy an altar frontal and pulpit fall, and that adds to the cost significantly. Thanks be to God, though, we are approximately halfway there, having raised money from donations and quilt raffles. Anyone wishing to donate towards this new set for the parish - a wonderful thing to do during Lent - should write a check and put "rose vestments" in the memo line. *(Note: These vestments will be the property of the parish... not the rector, or any other clergyman associated with this parish!)*

2014 Schedule of Lenten Services and Activities: Join us for some of these special activities during Lent this year:

Tuesdays at 6:30 p.m.

Evening Prayer followed by dinner and the amazing DVD series called "Faith Lessons" (www.faithlessons.net) We meet in various parishioners homes and dinner is always provided!

Wednesdays at 10:00 a.m.

Holy Communion

Thursdays at 11:30 a.m.

Morning Prayer followed by Bible Study

Fridays at 12:00 p.m.

Stations of the Cross & Benediction of the Blessed Sacrament. ☩