

The Centurion

The Parish Magazine of St. Alban's Church

1011 Old Joppa Road, Joppa, Maryland, 21085



My dear People:

We certainly live in amazing times. The scientific and technological advances that have been made in the last one hundred years (or even the last twenty five years!) are truly astounding. The advent of the internet has brought the world closer together. It is possible to order an item on your computer from another continent and get it in a matter of days. Mobile phones enable us to communicate with anyone anywhere at anytime. Breakthroughs in energy exploration have made fossil fuels incredibly abundant and affordable. And as technology becomes more efficient less fuel will be able to be used more and more efficiently and cleanly. Food production has soared due to advances in agricultural science and technology. In fact, the World Food Program of the United Nations says there is more than enough food for everyone on the planet and more, in part thanks to all of the advances in farming technology. Advances in medicine have made the lives of millions of people easier and saved the lives of countless others. It is amazing to consider how pre-born children can even be operated on in the womb, as we see on the television program "Twice Born" on PBS. We could go on and on at how amazing the times are in which we live. From a spiritual perspective, we may see these triumphs as gifts from God, who has enabled people to discover them. We should be careful though lest all of these scientific and technological breakthroughs make us think we can live our life apart from God. That is unfortunately what ends up happening with a lot of people in our secular, post-Christian society. Why bother with God when science and technology supposedly has all of the answers to life's questions? Inevitably, however, some sort of tragedy occurs that humbles us and reminds us that we are still very much mortal, and that life will always be extremely fragile. A natural disaster like Hurricane Katrina happens and the city descends into complete chaos. A terrible disease strikes. Technology is used for nefarious purposes by rogue states and people to harm weaker people. And on and on. In other words, even though we have made and continue to make incredible advances in the areas of science and technology we still have to deal with many of the same old problems that we always have. In fact, strides in science and technology often bring about whole new sets of problems for people! And so we are inevitably faced with the reality *that we still need God*, and his abiding and abundant mercy to help us make sense of the trials of the life, and lead us through them. No matter how much progress we make we will never reach the point where we do not need God and the new life in Christ that he offers to us. God is source and origin of everything that is, and he brought it into being and sustains it for his glory and honor. That includes you and me, his beloved children.

Affectionately, your Friend and Pastor,

J. Gordon Anderson

May 2015

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UPCOMING HOLY DAYS:

May 1st - Ss. Philip and James

Holy Communion at 10:00 a.m.

May 11th - 13th - Rogation Days

Holy Communion at 10:00 a.m.

May 14th - Ascension Day

Holy Communion at 5:00 p.m.

May 25th - 26th - Monday and Tuesday in Whitsun Week

Holy Communion at 10:00 a.m.

May 27th, 29th, & 30th - Ember Days

Holy Communion at 10:00 a.m.

June 11th - St. Barnabas

Holy Communion at 10:00 a.m.

June 24th - St. John Baptist

Holy Communion at 10:00 a.m.

June 29th - St. Peter

Holy Communion at 10:00 a.m.

July 4th - Independence Day

Holy Communion at 10:00 a.m.

THEOLOGY: *A Mother's Day Reflection on the Blessed Virgin Mary*

One of the biggest highlights in the month of May is Mother's Day, that special Sunday where we recognize and give thanks for mom. It is almost universally recognized that there are few people in life more important than mothers. In the 19th century the American poet William Ross Wallace wrote a poem in praise of motherhood entitled, "The Hand That Rocks the Cradle is the Hand that Rules the World." In our own day the famous talk TV queen Oprah Winfrey has commented on countless occasions that being a mom is, in her opinion, the hardest and most important job in the world. Indeed everyone recognizes the importance of mothers. Why? Because mom nurtures us from the moment of our conception, and has a unique role in forming who we are.

But often in life we revere other women as mothers in addition to our own mothers. "She was like a second mother to me," people will say from time to time about a teacher, a family friend, or a neighbor. Case in point, two parishioners who live across the street from each other both remarked to the rector how the other was like a "second mother" to her children!

While almost all of us have had these other mother-like figures in their lives, *every* Christian has *another* special mother that nourishes, protects, and guides him spiritually, and helps form him into the person God wants him to be. This is none other than the Blessed Virgin Mary, the mother of our Lord Jesus Christ. We learn in the New Testament that Mary was chosen by God the Father to bear the Christ child. Although it was a frightening prospect Mary said yes to God. "*Be it unto me according to thy word,*" she answered to the Archangel Gabriel. Her humility before God is indeed an example to us all.

And so because she said yes Jesus was conceived in her womb by the power of the Holy Ghost. Scholars call this the "virginal conception" of Jesus, which is a more precise term than "virgin birth." Orthodox Christology teaches that Jesus Christ has two natures: a human nature and a divine nature united in one person. He receives his human nature from Mary his mother. She, of course, eventually gave birth to the baby in her womb, and Jesus, the Christ child, the savior of the world, was loved and reared by Mary and Joseph. This is a narrative with which most of us are familiar.

The question might arise, however, as to how Mary goes from being the mother of Jesus to being our mother. After all, we hear very little about her in the Gospels and almost nothing in the rest of the New Testament. Is not all of this interest in Mary and this business about devotion to her nothing more than a heresy that developed in the Middle Ages? Hardly. Quite the contrary in fact. That Mary is the mother of the Church - and therefore the spiritual mother of all believers - follows logically from the person of Jesus Christ and the theology of the Church.

The scriptures teach that the Church is the Body of Jesus. (Eph. 2) In order to distinguish this aspect of his Body from his Body in the Blessed Sacrament, and his heavenly/resurrection Body, we refer to his Body the Church as his *mystical* Body. Through faith and baptism we are incorporated into Jesus and made living members of his Body. (Rom. 6:3-4, Gal. 3:27) Therefore in Christ, we too are now sons and daughters of God! And so, by extension, in Christ, Mary is not only Jesus' mother, but our mother too.

While the scriptures do not give us a lot of detailed information about

the Blessed Mother they do give us enough to form a good portrait of her love for God. We already saw how the fact that she said yes to God revealed her great humility. But later in the scriptures we see her there with Jesus in the final days and hours before his death on the cross. She was right there when he died, and Jesus entrusted her care to John, his beloved disciple. This is an indication that Mary probably did not have any other children after Jesus. If she did, would not *they* have looked after her after Jesus died? It is passages like this that lend credence to the pious Christian tradition of Mary's perpetual virginity. But getting back to Jesus' death on the cross, and his Blessed Mother's presence at that moment, just as she was there for him, so she is no doubt there for us in our suffering, as *we* die daily with Christ. She prays for us because we too are her children by virtue of our union with Jesus Christ, her blessed and holy Son. Like all of the saints - living and dead - she intercedes on our behalf to God, offering her prayers and love, and presenting our petitions to our heavenly Father (Rev. 5:8). That beautiful moment in John 2:3, where she said to Jesus, "They have no wine," is an earthly foreshadowing of the unique role she has in interceding on behalf of all of God's children.

As we honor our mother this month on Mother's Day let us take some time to think about Mary, the mother of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ and honor her as well! May is after all the traditional "Month of Mary." A great way to honor her is to incorporate into your daily prayer life the scriptural prayer known as the "Hail Mary." It goes: "*Hail Mary, full of grace. The Lord is with thee. Blessed art thou amongst women, and blessed is the fruit of thy womb, Jesus. Holy Mary, Mother of God, pray for us sinners, now and at the hour of our death. Amen.*" ❧

THE CHRISTIAN YEAR: *The Feast of Pentecost*

Fifty days after Easter falls the feast of Whitsunday, better known as Pentecost (BCP pp. 180-183). The roots of this feast actually go all the way back to the Old Testament. Pentecost was a feast day of the Hebrew people that commemorated the giving of Law on Mt. Sinai. Fifty days (“pentecost” means “fiftieth”) after the Passover and their exodus from Egypt the Hebrews arrived at Mt. Sinai. There, Moses went up into the mountain and God gave him the Law by which the people were to live. When he had finally received all of the Law - summed up in the Ten Commandments - he came down the mountain and presented them to the people. They agreed to follow the Law thereby entering into a “covenant” (i.e. “contract”) with God. Like the other great Hebrew feasts Pentecost also had an agricultural dimension to it. It was also known as the “Feast of Weeks” and was the time when they celebrated the completion of the wheat harvest. Special sacrificial gifts of bread were offered to commemorate the harvest.

It was on this day many hundreds of years later that the Holy Spirit of God descended upon the Church and the apostles, which we read about it in Acts 2 (BCP pp. 180-181). Fifty days after Jesus’ glorious resurrection the disciples were waiting in Jerusalem for the promised gift of the Holy Spirit. Jesus had previously told them that unless he ascended into heaven the “Comforter” (another word, which means “strengthened,” that he sometimes used for the Holy Spirit) would not come. This “Comforter” would indwell them, and go with them everywhere they went, even to the ends of the earth. It would have been impossible for them to fulfill the Great Commission (Mt. 28) if the Spirit did not come, because they all struck off in different directions, and if Jesus remained on earth how would he have possibly gone with each one of them? He couldn’t have. But the indwelling of the Holy Spirit, who is the third person of the Holy Trinity, means that he is indeed always with each and every one of them. This same Holy Spirit also gave them gifts - spiritual gifts - to help fulfill their mission... healing, speaking in tongues, and more, that we read about all throughout the Acts of the Apostles.

The relationship between the Old Testament feast and its New Testament fulfillment is rather interesting. Whereas on Mt. Sinai Moses came down the mountain with the Law engraved in stone, In Acts 2 it is the Holy Spirit who comes down and fills the hearts of God’s people. This fulfills the prophecy of Jeremiah 31:33 that one day God’s Law would be written on his people’s hearts. There is even a New Testament fulfillment of the old agricultural side of the feast. Whereas in the Old

Testament world they celebrated a harvest of *wheat* on this day, in the New Testament we see a harvest of *souls*. The Church receives the Holy Ghost to go out into the world and fulfill the Great Commission given to her by Jesus who said, “*The harvest is plentiful, but the laborers are few: pray ye therefore the Lord of the harvest, that he send forth laborers into his harvest.*” (Lk. 10:2)

Pentecost, as a specifically Christian celebration, is one of the earliest and most important feasts of the Christian Calendar. In his magisterial book *The Shape of the Liturgy* the great Anglican liturgical scholar and monk, Dom Gregory Dix, wrote that long before Christmas and Easter were viewed as the principle celebrations of the Church, it was *Pentecost* and Easter that were seen as most important. The ancient service in fact was preceded by a long vigil similar to that of Easter with extra readings (“prophecies”), blessings, baptisms, etc. The name “Whitsunday” (short for “White Sunday”), by the way, was used in England for this feast *because* of all of the baptisms done during this time, and people wore white when being baptized. In the Middle Ages a special “Sequence Chant” known as “The Golden Sequence” (Hymnal 109) was composed to be sung only on this day.

The Anglican tradition reveres the feast of Pentecost, as it is celebrated as an Octave and has its own proper preface to the Mass. The Sunday service has two sets of liturgical readings, and then there are Holy Day services all week following (Monday and Tuesday in Whitsun Week and the Whitsun Ember Days). All of this shows us the great importance of this feast and the high esteem in which it has always been held by the universal Church.

We should consider Pentecost to be a very important feast as well. For just as the Holy Spirit indwells the disciples on that amazing day recounted in Acts 2, so He indwells each one of us who have been baptized into Christ (BCP p. 280). In the sacrament of confirmation we receive an *additional* gift of the Holy Spirit, the so-called “seven gifts” of the Spirit (BCP p. 297). The Holy Ghost strengthens us for service to almighty God, and goes with us wherever we go. Each one of us has received a spiritual gift from the Holy Ghost to be put to use in spreading God’s Kingdom and glorifying the Him. What do we do with our spiritual gifts? Do we even know what they are? If not, we should find out so we can use them in the way God intended. The rector has several good “spiritual gift inventories” that you may use to help discover your special spiritual gifts. May God grant us a blessed and holy Pentecost on Sunday which falls this year on Sunday, May 24th. See you then! ✠

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

Ascension Day Service and Supper:

Join us on Thursday, May 14th at 5:00 p.m. for our Ascension Day service followed by our annual spaghetti supper! We are going to try to have the supper earlier this year to maximize participation, particularly for those with families. The service should be no more than an hour and then we'll immediately begin feasting! Please sign up in the parish hall. *Note: if you can't make it to the service because of a legitimate reason such as commute time or something like that but would still like to come to the dinner by all means do come to the dinner! We'd still love to see you!*

Diocesan Synod:

This year our annual synod will be held in Charlottesville, VA from July 28th-31st. The host parish is All Saints'. Fr. Anderson and Fr. Edelman will be heading down along with our official delegate, Frannie Flatau. Anyone else who would like to attend is most welcome! You have to cover your own travel, room, and synod registration. If you'd like to join us let Fr. Anderson know and check out more details about the synod at www.anglicanprovince.org

Art Show:

Father Anderson will be having an exhibition of his paintings at the Liriodendron in Bel Air from July 12th - August 9th. The show will feature icons and large scale oil paintings of various biblical themes. The oil paintings will be the large ones on display at the church, but the icons will be almost all brand new. The Liriodendron Gallery is open on Sundays from 1:00 p.m. - 4:00 p.m. Please come out on the opening day and check out the work and spread the word!

Summer Intern:

Last summer we were approached by our friends at Church of the Resurrection (Anglican, ACNA) in Greenspring Valley about working with their summer intern, Mr. Bryan Biba. I had the opportunity to with this incredibly godly and talented young man for a few days, as he preached and assisted at a few of our liturgies. Incidentally, Bryan is doing great! He graduates from Duke Divinity School in a few months and is mulling over various ministry options once he is ordained. Please keep him in your prayers as he discerns where God is calling him to serve. Well, once again, we are planning on working with Resurrection this summer when they host a new seminarian from Trinity School for Ministry in Pennsylvania. The rector will be meeting with some of the

leadership of Resurrection in a few weeks to work out the details. This is a great opportunity not just for the seminarian but for the Anglican congregations in Maryland to get to know each other better and partner in spreading the Gospel of Jesus Christ. Thank you, Church of the Resurrection, for inviting us to work with you in this way!

Special Thanks:

Those who have been in the entrance porch off the main church recently have no doubt noticed the large vestment chest sitting there. This was a gift from St. Mary's Church and Fr. Thomas Allen. St. Mary's recently had their sacristy/vestry redesigned, and were relocating all of the old furniture to other places on their property... everything but this vestment chest, that is... so they generously gave it to us! We will be moving it into either the vestry or the parish hall at some point. Thanks again, Fr. Tommy and St. Mary's Church!

Pentecost Choir:

Mr. Glock is trying to get a choir organized to sing on Whitsunday, May 24th. If you would like to sing with the choir that Sunday it would be greatly appreciated! Meet Warren at the organ after the 10:00 a.m. service on Sunday, May 17th to practice. Let's get as many people as possible to come together and "make a joyful noise unto the Lord" on this important Holy Day.

Quote of the Month: Medieval vs. Modern

"Medieval Christian society was like Columbus' ship: simple and unluxurious, but on a great voyage to Somewhere. Modern secular society is like the Love Boat: luxurious and self-indulgent, but cruising in a circle to nowhere" *Peter Kreeft*

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)

"My bounden duty [as a member of the Church] is to follow Christ, to worship God every Sunday in his Church; and to work and pray and give for the spread of his kingdom." (BCP, p. 291) ✠