

The Centurion

The Parish Magazine of St. Alban's Church

1011 Old Joppa Road, Joppa, Maryland, 21085



My dear People:

This month on November 6th is Election Day. Please remember to vote. Although we may be jaded about all of the political division and gridlock that we see on the nightly news we should remember that in many places in the world people are not allowed to vote or participate in the political process. So let us be thankful for the opportunity that we have to vote, and more important *take advantage* of that opportunity on Election Day. Front and center this election cycle is the economy. No doubt all of us have been effected by the economic downturn in one way or another. I do hope that if your income has been effected, and that if you are not able to give as much to the church as you would like that you would still come to church. I am told that some people in various churches feel that they should not dare to show their face on Sunday unless they have money to put in the offering plate! Please do not feel that way. The giving of alms and offerings is only *part* of our worship. We also offer God praise and thanksgiving, and ourselves - our souls and bodies - in the sacrifice of the Holy Eucharist. So although we may have little to nothing to offer in the way of alms and offerings, we certainly have a lot of other additional things to offer to God each Sunday at divine service. On Sunday mornings the place to be is in church, with God's people, singing His praises and glory and offering the sacrifice of the Holy Eucharist. This month on the 18th we have our annual parish meeting which will follow the 10:00 a.m. service. We will elect new vestrymen, approve the 2013 budget, and conduct other parish business. Our annual meetings go very quickly and are usually lots of fun too, so please be sure to come out to the meeting and support your church at this meeting. On that note I would like to encourage everyone to get involved in the church. We now have many different opportunities for people to get involved including choir, hospitality, lector/acolyte ministry, altar guild, classes, ushers, prayer group, holy day services, visiting shut-ins, and more. Every single person has something that he or she can do here at St. Alban's. If you'd like to get involved but can't figure out how please see me and I will point you in the right direction. As we continue to grow we will need more people available to serve and help out in various capacities! Thank you, and may God bless and keep you now and always.

Affectionately, your Friend and Pastor,

J. Gordon Anderson

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UPCOMING HOLY DAYS:

November 1st - All Saints' Day

Holy Communion (only) @ 6:30 p.m.

November 21st - Thanksgiving (eve)

Holy Communion (only) @ 6:30 p.m.

November 29th - St. Andrew (eve)

Holy Communion (only) @ 3:00 p.m.

December 19th - Ember Day

Holy Communion @ 10:00 a.m.

December 20th - St. Thomas (eve)

Holy Communion @ 3:00 p.m.

Prayer Book Holy Day Masses last a little over half an hour and always include Morning Prayer! Please make time to come out for these important days as you are able!

FAITH AND POLITICS: *St. Thomas Aquinas on the Nature and Purpose of Government*

St. Thomas Aquinas (1225 - 1274) was one of the most important theologians and philosophers who has ever lived. He wrote on almost every aspect of philosophy and religion, and these writings still exercise considerable influence today. He also wrote on many other topics such as science and politics. As we are in the midst of an election season it might be interesting to consider what this great saint of Church had to say about the nature and purpose of government.

As in most other areas of his thought, the political theory of St. Thomas is based on that of Aristotle. There are some important differences between their views, however. The most important is that for Aristotle the end of man is natural and attained through life in the State, whereas for St. Thomas the end of man is supernatural and fully attainable only in the next life.

For both Aristotle and St. Thomas the state is a natural institution that is founded on the nature of man. Man is not an isolated individual. He can only attain his end in community with his fellow man. If society is natural to man so, therefore, is government. Human society would crumble unless there was someone to take thought for the common good and direct the activities of individuals with a view to the common good.

If human society and government are natural to man and prefigured in human nature, then it follows that they have a

divine justification and authority, since human nature has been created by God. This means that the State, far from being the result of sin as St. Augustine seems to have tended, is a legitimate institution in its own right, with an end and sphere of its own. The end of the State is the common good of the citizens. To that end it promotes peace among its citizens, the unified direction of the activities of its citizens, and the adequate provision for the needs of life. The government of the State is instituted to secure these necessary conditions for the common good. The Church has a supernatural end, which is higher than that of the State, and so she is a superior society to the State, which must subordinate itself to the Church in matters bearing on the supernatural life. But that does not change the fact that the State is a perfect society that is autonomous within its own sphere.

Although there are these two spheres of Church and State it is important to bear in mind that man does not have *two* ends, a temporal end which is catered for by the State and a supernatural end which is catered for by the Church. Man has just *one* final end, and that is the enjoyment of God. It pertains to the state to procure the good life of his subjects with a view to the attainment of eternal beatitude. While the Church has no power over the State with regard to economic concerns, the preservation of peace, etc., the State must remember to care for these concerns with an eye on the supernatural end of man. In other words, the State may be a perfect

society, but the elevation of man to his supernatural end means that the State is very much the handmaid of the Church.

How does the individual relate to the State in St. Thomas' model? The part (the individual) is always ordered to the whole (in this case, the State). An individual citizen is subordinated to the whole of which he forms a part. Thus the laws of the State should promote common happiness rather than the whims or wishes of specific individuals. While this would seem to subordinate the individual to the State to a remarkable degree St. Thomas insists that he who seeks the common good of the multitude seeks his own common good as well, since one's own good cannot be attained unless the common good is attained.

While the State is responsible for enacting laws (called "human positive laws"), all such laws must be rooted in the natural law. Every human law is a true law only insofar as it is derived from the laws of nature. The ruler is not entitled to enact laws contrary to nature or to the divine law of God. Thus the legislator has very limited power according to St. Thomas.

In sum, St. Thomas' political theory forms an important part of his general philosophical and theological system. The State is neither God nor Antichrist: it is one of the means by which God directs the creation to its end. ☩

Adapted from Frederick Copleston's "History of Philosophy" Vol. 2 Pt. 2. (1950)

THE CHRISTIAN YEAR: *A Meditation for All Saints' Day by the Rev'd. Lesley Wilder (1961)*

"Who, in the multitude of thy Saints, hast compassed us about with so great a cloud of witnesses that we, rejoicing in their fellowship, may run with patience the race that is set before us, and, together with them, may receive the crown of glory that fadeth not away." (Book of Common Prayer)

There are three major themes running through this Proper Preface of All Saints' Day (BCP, p.79) like golden threads, each of which we shall discuss in turn. The first has to do with the things we see. For instance, what does a pastor see when he looks at his congregation Sunday after Sunday? For one thing, he sees a number of faces, some of which are young and fair; others, old and tired. But is that all he is able to see - just a number of faces? What about the joy which he knows is present in the hearts of some, especially the very young? What about the hope he knows is so strong in some of the college students as they face the years ahead? What about the love which literally fills the air when a bride and groom stand before the altar, repeating their marriage vows? What about the heroism and sacrifice which are the daily bread of some of our older people? Experiences such as these lead us to conclude that the things we cannot see with our eyes are more important than the things we can. And this, of course, is one of the great themes of All Saints' Day.

Referring to the great cloud of witnesses that surround us, the Preface goes on to tell us that *"rejoicing in their fellowship, we may run with patience the race that is set before us."* In other words, we do not have to run the race by ourselves nor on our own. Is there anything more terrible than loneliness? It is bad enough to bear when things are running smoothly. But when the race of life grows hard and steep, then to have to do it on one's own is a bitter thing indeed! That is why the Church this day asks us not only to open our eyes and behold the great cloud of witnesses that surround us, but also to rejoice in their fellowship, laying hold upon their sustaining strength and grace. Life does not have to be a lonely and dreary affair. It can be like one of Chaucer's *Canterbury Tales* if the Christian but joins ranks with the Pilgrims to Canterbury - not only those who are stumbling along in this life, but also with the triumphant company of heavenly host who march with songs of victory and banners unfurled. We can

run with patience the race that is set before us if we do not try to run it on our own, but join the company of saints and rejoice in their fellowship. That is our second great theme.

The final theme has to do with a promise. It urges us to behold the saints who surround us and to rejoice in their fellowship in order that *"together with them we may receive the crown of glory that fadeth not away."* The world is starving for a bit of glory - for the sight of a man who would rather die than betray a confidence or principle. There can be no glory apart from God, for he is the King of Glory. And may I remind you that this Glory of God is not confined to his heavenly kingdom. As Francis Thompson puts it:

*The angels keep their ancient places,
Turn but a stone and start a wing.
'Tis ye, 'tis your estranged faces
That miss the many-splendored thing."*

And until we begin to discover something of the glory in a stone, a leaf, a shifting cloud, we cannot expect to perceive the glory of heaven. Will you not try during this season to look beyond the things you see to the beauty of the unseen, to join as pilgrims with the saints, rejoicing in their fellowship, and together with them receiving the crown of glory which fadeth not away? Has anyone described more beautifully than John Milton that eternal glory which is reserved for those who love God, and which fadeth not away? In his poem "Lycidas" Milton pays this tribute to a dear friend who has drowned at sea:

*Weep no more, woeful Shepherds, weep no more,
For Lycidas, your sorrow, is not dead
Sunk though he be beneath the watery floor;
So sinks the day-star in the ocean bed,
And yet anon repairs his drooping head,
And tricks his beams, with new-spangled ore,
Flames in the forehead of the morning sky.
So Lycidas sunk low, but mounted high,
Through the dear might of Him that walk'd the waves,
Where, other groves and other streams along,
With Nectar pure his oozy Locks he laves,
And bears the unexpressive nuptial song.
In the blest kingdoms meek of joy and love.
There entertain him all the Saints' above,
In solemn troops, and sweet societies,
That sing, and singing in their glory move,
And wipe the tears forever from his eyes. ❧*

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

Join us during the month of November for our study on the Christian doctrine of marriage. Meet at church on Tuesday nights at 6:30 p.m. for Evening Prayer followed by dinner (provided) and our study.

Choir: Are you interested in joining the parish choir? They currently sing once a month but are hoping to sing a lot more regularly. To this they just need singers! Please see Tom and Lynne Care or Barbara Jones for more information.

Daylight savings time: Don't forget on Sunday, November 4th to set your clocks back one hour!

Intercessory prayer group meets on Thursday November 8th at 7 p.m. at the church for a time of sharing and prayer for those in need in our parish community.

Annual meeting will take place on Sunday, November 18th at 11:00 a.m. immediately following the service. At this meeting we will approve our budget for 2013 and elect new vestrymen.

Joint service of Choral Evensong will be held on Sunday, December 16th at Grace Reformed Episcopal Church in Havre de Grace. Join us as we revive this tradition of worship and fellowship. ☩

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SPIRITUALITY: *Rules for the Pious Life, by St. Platon (Originally printed in "The Messenger" of All Saints' Church)*

Force yourself to get up early and on a set schedule. As soon as you wake up, turn your mind to God: make the Sign of the Cross, and thank Him for the night that has passed and for His mercies towards you. Ask Him to guide all your thoughts, feelings, and desires, so that everything you say or do will be pleasing to Him.

After washing yourself, get down to morning prayers. Pray kneeling, with concentration, and with reverence. Ask Him to give you faith, hope, and charity, as well as calm strength to accept all that the coming day may bring to you - its hardships and troubles. Ask Him to bless your labors. Ask for help: to accomplish some particular task that you face; to steer clear of some particular sin.

If you can, read something from the Bible, especially the New Testament and the Psalms. Read with the intent to receive some spiritual enlightenment, inclining your heart to contrition.

Try to devote at least fifteen minutes to spiritually contemplate the teachings of the Faith and the profit to your soul in what you have read.

Start every morning as if you had just decided to become a Christian and to live according to God's commandments.

As you enter upon your duties, strive to do everything towards the glory of God. Start nothing

without prayer, because whatever we do without prayer later turns out to be futile or harmful. The words of the Lord are true: "*Without me, you can do nothing.*"

If your labors are successful, give thanks to the Lord; if not accept all hardships as penance for your sins - in the spirit of obedience and humility.

Before every meal, pray that God will bless the food and drink; and after the meal give thanks to Him and ask Him not to deprive you of spiritual blessings. In everything, avoid excess. Following the example of Christians of old, fast on Wednesdays and Fridays.

Ask God to take away from you every thing that feeds your pride, even if it will be bitter. Avoid being harsh, gloomy, nagging, mistrustful, suspicious, or hypocritical, and avoid rivalry. Be sincere and simple in your attitude. Humbly accept the admonitions of others, even if you are more wise and experienced.

When you feel slack, or a certain coolness, do not leave off the usual order of prayer and pious practices which you have established. Everything that you do in the name of the Lord Jesus, even the small and imperfect things, becomes an act of piety.

If you desire to find peace, commit yourself completely only to God. You will find no peace until you calm down in God, loving Him alone. ☩