

The Centurion

The Parish Magazine of St. Alban's Church

1011 Old Joppa Road, Joppa, Maryland, 21085



My dear People:

This month there are a lot of important things happening at St. Alban's. On All Saints' Day, November 1st, we celebrate the work and ministry of Barbara Jones' here at St. Alban's and had a wonderful retirement party for her after the Mass. Barbara is now our official "Organist Emeritus" and will have more time to enjoy with Ron and their wonderful family. The next day our new organist, R. Warren Glock starts. He has some fantastic music worked up for the next few months and wants to meet with people who are interested in forming an Advent/Christmas choir after the 10:00 a.m. service. Please be sure to introduce yourself to him and talk to him about choir if you are at all interested! November 2nd is traditionally All Souls' Day, but since it falls on a Sunday this year it is transferred to Monday. (This is because Requiem Masses - Masses for the Dead - are traditionally not held on Sundays.) Unfortunately, since Monday is my day off, and since All Souls' is not a Prayer Book Holy Day, we will not be offering a special All Souls' service this year. The other exciting events this month are our Annual Meeting on the 16th, the episcopal visitation with Bishop Jones on the 23rd, and the First Sunday in Advent on the 30th. The annual meeting will follow the 10:00 a.m. service. Please be sure to stay for the meeting or come back for it if you go to the early service. At this meeting we will look back at where we've been and forward to where we are going. We will approve a budget for 2015 and elect two new vestrymen. Standing for election this year are Karen Novakoski, who finished out Roy Siegel's term as treasurer when he moved to SC, and Steve Tillinghast, who will replace David Wallace who rotates off, who himself has been filling out someone else's term. Karen and Steve are the perfect people to serve on the vestry. They give tirelessly to the church of their time, talent, and treasure. Serving on the vestry is a spiritual duty of the utmost importance, and so we only want people on the vestry who have their spiritual lives in order as indicated in large part by their giving of these things. Bishop Jones, sometime rector of this parish, will be here on the weekend of the 23rd. The day before we will have a vestry and clergy dinner with him at Burt residence, and then the next day he will preach at 8 a.m. and preach and celebrate at 10 a.m. The following Sunday, the 30th, is the beginning of the new year... the new *ecclesiastical* year that is. The flowers on the altar and *Gloria* from the Mass will go away until Christmas, and the green vestments will give way to violet which marks this season of quiet expectation. The Advent Wreath will be blessed on that first Sunday, and later that month the Christmas Creche will be decorated by the children of the parish and blessed on the Fourth Sunday in Advent just before Christmas. Exciting times! Be sure to be here with your parish family to celebrate them.

Affectionately, your Friend and Pastor,

J. Gordon Anderson

November 2014

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UPCOMING HOLY DAYS:

November 1st - All Saints Day

Holy Communion at 6:00 p.m.

November 27th - Thanksgiving Day

Holy Communion at 10:00 a.m.

December 1st - St. Andrew

Holy Communion at 10:00 a.m.

December 17th, 19th, 20th - Ember Days

Holy Communion at 10:00 a.m.

December 22nd - St. Thomas

Holy Communion at 10:00 a.m.

December 24th - 25th Christmas

Holy Communion at 6:00 p.m. and 8:00 p.m. on Christmas Eve, and at 10:00 a.m. Christmas Day.

December 26th - St. Stephen

Holy Communion at 10:00 a.m.

December 27th - St. John

Holy Communion at 10:00 a.m.

January 1st - Circumcision

Holy Communion at 10:00 a.m.

STEWARDSHIP: *Tithing and the Mission of the Church, by the Rt. Rev'd Stephen Scarlett***A. Sin and the human vocation**

We are in the Octave of All Saints. All Saints is a sort of “catch-all” feast for unknown holy people who don’t have their own day. However, since we are all called to be saints (1 Corinthians 1:2), it is, prophetically, our own feast day. The “multitude which no man could number of all nations, and kindreds, and peoples, and tongues” (Revelation 7:9) is a timeless vision of all who persevere in faith through tribulation and stand victorious before God’s throne.

This is, “The Communion of the Saints;” the fellowship of all who are bound together in Christ through the Spirit. It consists of all believers, whether they are currently living in the body or in the intermediate state, awaiting the resurrection. The restoration of our relationship with God in Christ necessarily restores us to union with all who belong to him.

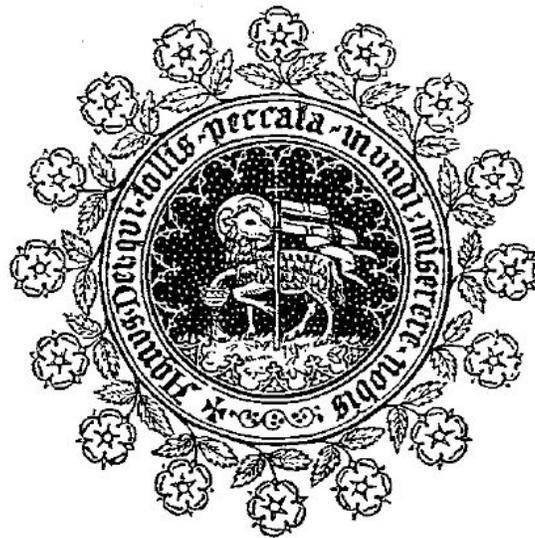
Sin severed our union with God; but is also alienated us (and continues to alienate us) from each other. After the original sin, the next sin was that one human being killed another—a murder that was a result of offerings made to God. Cain made an offering that was rejected by God. Abel made an offering that was accepted. For that reason, Cain killed Abel (Genesis 4:1-8). In Christ, this pattern is reversed. When we turn from sin and put our faith in Jesus, our offering is accepted; and, rather than killing each other, we are reconciled and learn to work for one another’s good.

Redemption in Christ restores us to the vocation that we lost through sin. We were made to be priests and kings of the creation. We were made to take the creation that God gave us

and offer it back to God in thanksgiving; and we were made to rule over the creation righteously. The paradox is that only when we give the creation back to God as an offering in thanksgiving—only when we let go of the creation—do we fully possess it and rule over it. When we hold on to the creation, it becomes an idol, and it rules over us.

B. The story of Cain and Abel and its implications.

Let us look at the story of Cain and Abel. Genesis tells us, “In the



process of time it came to pass that Cain brought an offering of the fruit of the ground to the Lord. Abel also brought of the firstborn of his flock and of their fat. And the Lord respected Abel and his offering, but He did not respect Cain and his offering.” (Genesis 4:3-5).

The language of Genesis 4 suggests the problem. Abel offered the first and best of his flock. In the Bible, the first and best represents the whole. By this offering, Abel exercised his priestly duty. He took what God had given him and he offered it back to God in thanksgiving. God accepted Abel and his offering. Cain brought

“an offering.” Cain knew he was supposed to give, but did not want to; so he brought something he thought he could spare. This attitude is a consequence of the fall. Fallen man says of the creation, “This is mine.” He clings tightly to the creation as though he were the owner and not a steward; as though it was a possession and not a gift. As Hebrews says, “By faith, Abel offered to God a more acceptable sacrifice than Cain, through which he received approval as righteous, God bearing witness by accepting his gifts” (11:2).

Throughout the Bible, the righteous follow in Abel’s footsteps by giving back to God the first and best of what God gives to them. The first and best is represented by the tithe. Abraham tithed to Melchizedek (Genesis 14:18-20). Jacob made the following vow to God: “Of all that thou givest me I will surely give the tenth to thee” (Genesis 28:20-22). Various tithes were established in the Torah, the chief of which went to support the ministry of the Priests and Levites in the temple (Leviticus 27:30-32). At the end of the Old Testament, when

the temple languished because Israel neglected to tithe, God accused his people of robbing him. God promised that if his people would repent and give the tithe he would pour down his blessing upon them (Malachi 3:8-12). In the New Testament Jesus criticized the hypocrisy of the scribes and Pharisees, but he commended their meticulous practice of tithing (Matthew 23:23). It is the will of God that the ministry of the church, which is the temple of the Holy Spirit and the successor to the Old Testament temple, be supported by the tithes of the people of God. (*cont'd on p. 4*)

LITURGY & WORSHIP: *The History and Symbolism of Vestments, Part 2 - Ecclesiastical Colors*

Last month we learned about some of the vestments worn at various church services. This month we will learn about the colors used during the different seasons of the church year. As we know, the Christian Year is divided up into different seasons, the whole of which reveals the life of Jesus Christ to us and allows us to continually experience anew his person and work. Each of these seasons have particular liturgical colors associated with them. These colors have varied somewhat in the history and tradition of the Church. What we follow here at St. Alban's is, generally speaking, the typical "western" color scheme as practiced by the Roman Catholic Church since the Baroque era. Here are the seasons and their colors:

Advent: This is the beginning of the Church Year. It always falls in December. During this season we remember the first "advent" or "coming" of our Lord and look forward to his second coming. The color of Advent is violet, the color of penitence, because of its penitential overtones... though strictly speaking it is not a penitential season.

Christmas: Christmastide begins on December 25th and lasts twelve days. During this time we celebrate the nativity, or birth, of our Lord. It is a season of joy and celebration, so white is used. The name "Christmas" comes from "Christ Mass" - the Mass of the Nativity.

Epiphany: Epiphanytide begins on January 6th and can last anywhere from two to six weeks. Generally speaking the longer Epiphanytide, the shorter Trinitytide, and vice versa. During Epiphany we celebrate the manifestation (which is what "epiphany" means) of our Lord Jesus Christ to the gentiles which began when the "Three Wise Men" came to see the baby Jesus. The color of Epiphany and its Octave is white, while that of the season is green. Green indicates a time of spiritual growth and learning. (Think of growing plants.)

Pre-Lent: The pre-Lenten season consists of Septuagesima, Sexagesima, and Quinquagesima. These stand for 70, 60, and 50 days before Easter. They are a time to prepare for Lent, which is a time to prepare for Easter. Like Advent, they quasi-penitential. The color is violet, and the *Gloria* is not sung at Mass.

Lent: This season begins on Ash Wednesday and lasts about forty days excluding Sundays. The First Sunday in Lent is sometimes called *Quadragesima*. It is a penitential season where we try to draw closer to God through the mortification of the flesh and works of charity. The word "Lent" comes from an old word that means "spring." Lent ends on Holy Saturday. The color for this season is violet.

Easter: Eastertide follows Lent and also lasts for forty days. This is a time of joyous celebration of Jesus' resurrection, so the color is white.

Ascension: Ascension Day occurs 40 days after Easter. On this day and its octave (eight day celebration) we use white vestments because of Jesus' ascension.

Whitsuntide: This is the season of the Holy Spirit. It is also called *Pentecost* because it occurs 50 days after Easter. During this this time we recall the gift of the Holy Spirit who descended on the Church on the Day of Pentecost. The color of this season is red, which always symbolizes the Holy Spirit.

Trinitytide: This is the time of the Church Year to delve into the mysteries and teachings of the Church and focus on our growth in doctrine and discipline. As a season of spiritual growth the color is green. (Though the color for Trinity Sunday itself is white.)

This is a very basic overview of the colors as they are used in the different liturgical seasons. There are some other colors that are used occasionally in certain churches, such as blue in Advent (and other seasons), plain linen during Lent, red during Passiontide (the last two weeks of Lent), rose on two Sundays of the year, gold on Easter Day, black on All Soul's Day and Good Friday, and so on. What colors are used when and where depends on parish custom more than anything else. We also use certain colors for certain saint days and occasions. For example, white is worn on feasts of Our Lord and Our Lady. Red is worn for saints who are martyrs (St. Peter, St. Paul, etc.). White is worn for saints who died a natural death (St. John, St. Francis, etc.) Violet is used for the Rogation Days and Ember Days. There are even variations of these colors uses! For example, blue is worn in some places for feasts of Our Lady, and yellow is used for some saints and martyrs, and so on. Again, this is where local custom prevails. Note that the trimmings on vestments (the bands of color and patterns, which are called "orphreys") are not considered part of the vestment. They are just decorations, and so they can be any color. Thus we see white chasubles trimmed in blue, or red, or gold. Green vestments trimmed in red, blue, etc. Needless to say there is lots of artistry involved in choosing the right colors from all of the various shades and tints, and also the patterns, linings, trimmings, and sometimes embroidery. Some of the work is so elaborate that, when decommissioned, the vestment ends up in a museum! It is important for us to realize, however, that all of this stuff - the vestments, the colors, and traditions, are for the glory of God and not ends in itself. We convey God's truth through artistic means handed down to use in the tradition of the Church. ☩

(cont'd from p. 2)

C. Tithing and trusting God.

We tithe when we take the income God gives to us and give the first tenth as an offering to God. The tithe should be the first check we write. This is how we imitate Abel and offer God our first and or best. This is one way we fulfill our vocation as priests of the creation.

Some will say, "I can't afford to tithe." Of course, this is literally false; the first and best are always there to give. What this really means is, "I am afraid that if I tithe I won't have enough left over for the rest of my needs." This is precisely what makes the tithe an expression of faith. We give God the first and best trusting that God will make the rest sufficient to meet our needs. As Hebrews says, "Without faith it is impossible to please [God], for he who comes to God must believe that He is, and that He is a rewarder of those who diligently seek Him" (Heb 11:6).

God's faithfulness is illustrated by the story of the prophet Elijah and widow of Zarephath. During a severe famine, God sent Elijah to the widow to ask for food. She told Elijah that she only had a little food.

She was about to prepare for herself and her son as a sort of last meal before they died of hunger. Elijah told her, "Do not fear; go and do as you have said, but make me a small cake from it first, and bring it to me; and afterward make some for yourself and your son. For thus says the Lord God of Israel: The bin of flour shall not be used up, nor shall the jar of oil run dry, until the day the Lord sends rain on the earth." 1 Kings tells us, "She went away and did according to the word of Elijah; and she and her household ate for many days. The bin of flour was not used up, nor did the jar of oil run dry, according to the word of the Lord

which He spoke by Elijah" (1 Kings 17:8-16). The widow gave first to God, and the rest was made sufficient to meet her needs.

D. The corporate dimension of tithing.

The mission of our 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) This means that it is the mission of each of us to use our gifts in service, take our part in church's life of prayer and support the church with our tithes—and with other offerings as we are able.

Our participation in the mission of the church is not just for our own benefit; it is our part of the mission and work of the church. If any of us



fails to do our part, the mission of the church is less powerful than it ought to be. The church is the army of God; if any soldier in God's army does not man his post and fulfill his calling, we are less able to fight and conquer the enemy.

People sometimes ask how they can help the church; they are looking for some special thing they can do. However, what the church really needs is not so much the periodic act of heroism; what the church really needs is for all of its members to be committed to our mission; to be faithful in the regular habits of following Christ, worshiping God and working, praying and giving for the spread of his kingdom.

Ordinary faithfulness makes people heroes in the church. What

God has done through the ministry of St. Matthew's Church has been made possible by those who have been faithful, year in and year out, to take their part in our mission. This is particularly true with regard to money. We have always been able to do more than what our size would suggest because so many of our people have been faithful in their tithing. We have often had year-end deficits erased by people who experienced financial blessing from God and, as always, were faithful to give. Expansion of our ministry has been made possible by new people who join us and begin to support our ministry with their tithe.

We are committed as a church to mission. We believe that God is calling us to reach out beyond ourselves and share with others what God has given to us. A church that merely wants to survive—that merely wants to pay the bills for another year—might sustain itself with an offering of some of the left over grain. But a church with a mission, the army of God dressed for battle, requires our first and our best, our tithe.

Think of the church as a canoe and of each member as an oarsman. When all row in harmony, the mission of the church moves forward efficiently and effectively. When some choose not to row, others have to row harder to make up for those who do not row. When some are difficult, others have to row harder to make up for the oars that are dragging in the water. As we begin to plan for next year, we are asking all of our members to get on board and row with us. We believe is calling us to do great things. The more people who get on board and row with us, the more people who work and pray and give for the spread of the kingdom, the greater will be the works that God will do through us. ✠