

The Centurion

The Parish Magazine of St. Alban's Church

1011 Old Joppa Road, Joppa, Maryland, 21085



My dear People:

One time I was shopping at a local hardware store to find some solutions to a couple of annoying little problems around the house. One was a toilet seat that was not working. It wouldn't stay up by itself. Because of this we assumed that the floor was not level - I think I actually stuck a level on it at one point and found that it was not perfectly level. Or maybe the toilet hadn't been installed correctly. Who knew what was going on? The other problem was our heating system. The radiators on one side of the house barely got warm, while the ones on the other side of the house got way too hot. Trying to balance the system by bleeding them did nothing to help and neither did numerous calls to plumbers. So it was off to the store to find some answers to these vexing problems. Flaggging down an associate, I asked what could be done about these problems. "Well," he said about the toilet seat, "the process of re-seating a toilet is time consuming and a little tricky, so you might not want to do that. *But you know what you could do? You could buy a little piece of velcro to hold the seat up!*" Velcro? Are you kidding me?? My wife would *not* go for that. Then I asked him about the heating system. "I had the same problem in my kitchen at my house," he said, "*and what I did was just buy a space heater.*" A space heater?? Who the heck is this guy? Needless to say I didn't go with any of his half-baked ideas. Instead we ended up buying a new toilet seat which solved that problem, and then we researched the heating problem online and discovered that all we needed was a new circulator pump for the system. My dad happened to have one laying around that he gave us, so we drained the boiler, installed the new pump, and had a very cozy winter for the first time in years! It took longer to do all of that, but we were got everything fixed the right way. Shortcuts rarely pay off in life. And do you know what? They *never* pay off in the spiritual life. Many of us take shortcuts in the spiritual life. Instead of getting up for church we sleep in and then watch a TV preacher. Instead of reading the bible and really becoming familiar with it we are content to read just one verse from a daily devotional, or just the proper passage appointed for each Sunday, and so we never really get to know God's word. Instead of spending substantial time in prayer we offer up a few one or two sentence "quickie" prayers while brushing our teeth and checking our voicemails. These are all spiritual shortcuts, and while they may do some good on a certain level, if they are the sum total of our spiritual life we will never be truly converted and we will not grow to maturity in Christ. Let us not take the path of least resistance in terms of our walk with God. Because the only ones who suffer when we do that is we ourselves! As the old gospel song goes, "Take time to be holy!"

Affectionately, your Friend and Pastor,

J. Gordon Anderson

October 2015

IN THIS ISSUE:

Christian Living, pp. 2

Ten Years of Marriage

Current Events, pp. 3

A Very Brief Primer on the Papacy

Parish News and Updates, p. 4

Check out the important notices!

UPCOMING HOLY DAYS:

October 28th - Ss. Simon & Jude

Holy Communion at 10:00 a.m.

November 26th - Thanksgiving Day

Holy Communion at 10:00 a.m.

November 30th - St. Andrew

Holy Communion at 10:00 a.m.

December 16th, 18th, 19th - Advent Ember Days

Holy Communion at 10:00 a.m.

December 21st - St. Thomas

Holy Communion at 10:00 a.m.

December 24th - Christmas Eve

Holy Communion at 5:00 p.m. and 7:30 p.m.

December 25th - Christmas Day

Holy Communion at 10:00 a.m.

December 26th - St. Stephen

Holy Communion at 10:00 a.m.

December 28th - Holy Innocents

Holy Communion at 10:00 a.m.

CHRISTIAN LIVING: *Some Reflections On Ten Years Of Marriage*

Just as September was very special for me because it marked ten years of ordained ministry, so October is very special to me because it marks ten years of marriage to my beloved wife, Valerie.

Valerie and I met at a Christmas party in December 2004. One of my roommates was dating a woman with whom Valerie had gone to graduate school. Jack, my roommate invited me to the party which was held in the Federal Hill section of Baltimore City. There I met Valerie. She was dark and mysterious with beautiful long hair. We were introduced and soon discovered that we were both artists. We exchanged e-mails and began writing to each other. On January 14th we went on our first date - dinner at Holy Frijoles in Hampden. We dated throughout the winter and then, in the spring, I proposed to her (again, at Holy Frijoles).

On October 1, 2005 we were united in Holy Matrimony at St. Mary's Church, which Fr. Bill Smith graciously let us use. Fr. Unterburger, then rector of St. Alban's, solemnized our union and celebrated a beautiful nuptial Mass, and the Rev'd Canon Chandler Holder Jones (now Bishop Jones) preached. Assisting were (the now Rev'd) Don Sackett and Mike Minshall. Our reception was held at the Liriodendron. We went on a fantastic two week honeymoon to Italy. We spent the first week in Tuscany and drove in our rented car to Sienna, Florence, San Gimignano, Arezzo, Castiglione de Lago, Cortona, Montepulciano, and many other towns and cities. The second week was spent in Rome. On the drive down we stopped in Assisi and saw the gorgeous basilica of St. Francis, known for the amazing frescos of the life of St. Francis by Giotto. In Rome we stayed near the Coliseum and saw all of the major tourist sites and churches. I bought a beautiful white chasuble and cope at a vestment shop near the Pantheon that I wear on special occasions. When we came back to the United States we resided in the Charles Village neighborhood of Baltimore City until about June or July. Then we moved to Vero Beach, Florida so I could take a full time job as curate at St. Mark's Church. It has been a wonderful journey!

Not everyone is called to be married. Some, like St. Paul, are called to be single and celibate. Though I was open at one point to being a single and celibate priest I discerned fairly early on that I had a vocation to marriage. And I am glad that I have that vocation, because I believe that being married to Valerie has made me a better person. Marriage is tough at times - there is no doubt about that. This is because, as the Bishop of London said at the marriage of Will and Kate a few years back, "Marriage is a union of two sinners, not two angels!" But marriage is also

a sacrament, so even though marriage in the natural state is challenging, God gives grace in the sacrament of Holy Matrimony to help the husband and wife live out their vows, and to love and cherish each other, even when the going gets tough.

Occasionally Roman Catholic clergy will ask me about what it is like to be married and ordained. Their number one question is always: Is marriage a distraction to ministry? The answer: sometimes yes and sometimes no. I imagine they would give the same answer if I asked them about celibacy! Ultimately *everything* in life, and *every* state of life, is difficult and "distracting" at times. God calls certain people to live in certain ways for specific purposes and for the ultimate purpose of salvation. Quite simply, we deal with the hand we are dealt, and God in his goodness always gives us grace and strength so to do. I was blessed in that Valerie knew what she was getting into when she married me. I was already in the process to be ordained, and so she did not, as many other clergy wives, have to deal with a "career change" and all the stress that brings to a marriage. Having an understanding wife is essential to having a successful ministry. Indeed she is part of the ministry, as is the whole family. I am very thankful for the sacrifices that they make for the Kingdom of Heaven, and God will bless them for those offerings of love in the resurrection, and in the new heavens and the new earth. I truly believe that I would not have survived in ministry this long had it not been for being married to Valerie.

Those of us who are married should always remember to pray for our spouse and love him or her as we love ourselves. We sometimes forget that at Mass when we hear the Summary of the Law ("Thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy heart... and thy neighbor as thyself...") our *neighbor* also includes our spouse! The Nuptial Blessing in the "Form of Solemnization of Holy Matrimony" in the Book of Common Prayer (p. 304) reminds us that the way we live with our spouse in this world will have a bearing on our eternal salvation: "...that ye may so live together in this life, that in the world to come ye may have life everlasting." Marriage, in short, is one of many institutions and means that God uses to communicate his grace to us and and make us fit for salvation in Jesus Christ. Through the ordinary and sometimes extraordinary events of daily life with our spouse we are given unique opportunities to grow in humility, sacrificial love, service, forgiveness, courage, and many other virtues.

So let us who are married be *thankful* for our spouses. I thank God for these ten years with Valerie, for our beautiful kids, and look forward to a long life of happiness and wonder together! ✠

CURRENT EVENTS: *A Very Brief Primer on the Papacy*

Last month the country was abuzz with excitement because of the visit of Pope Francis. The coverage in the news impressed on us the history and importance of the papacy. What is the papacy? And why is the pontiff (another word for ‘pope’) so important to Roman Catholics and to other Christians?

For starters, the pope is a bishop - the Bishop of Rome. The Church has only three levels of ministry: bishop, priest, and deacon. This bishop has always been first in honor and importance in the Church because of the history and significance of the city of Rome. As the city of martyrs - especially St. Peter and St. Paul - and as the capitol of the ancient world, the Bishop of Rome was held in higher esteem than bishops of other cities.

The pope is also believed by Roman Catholics to be the head of the universal Church... the “Vicar of Christ” on earth. Every Roman Catholic bishop is under his direct authority, and with the help of advisors, he appoints every single one of them on the planet. The First Vatican Council, held in the late 19th century, declared that the pope, when speaking “*ex cathedra*” (“from the chair”) on matters of faith and morals, was infallible. Until the Second Vatican Council in the 1960’s, anyone who was not in communion with the pope - anyone who was not Roman Catholic - was believed to be going straight to hell. This was because there was no salvation outside of the Church, which is the body lead by the pope according to the authority of Christ himself rules (Matt. 16:13-20). We should note, however, that since Vatican II, however, the Roman Catholic Church has changed its stance on this.

The authority of the pope - spiritual and political - developed slowly over the centuries. In the ancient Greco-Roman world all of the major cities of ecclesiastical and often political importance were in the east. These included cities like Constantinople, Antioch, Alexandria, and Jerusalem. In the western half of the empire the only such city was Rome. It is no wonder then, as history went on, that the Church in the east (which came to be called Eastern Orthodox Churches) developed a collegial episcopal system (bishops ruling the Church by consensus), while the Church in the west developed into a top down model with the Bishop of Rome (the “papa” or “pope”) at the top. When the western half of the Roman Empire collapsed under the onslaught of endless barbarian raids the only institution left to maintain order and learning was the Church. During the Middle Ages and the early modern period the papacy was intimately involved in

world affairs. Popes would use their influence to get leaders to do certain things they wanted done (as when they divided up lands in the new world), or pronounce the legitimacy or illegitimacy of monarchs (as with Elizabeth I of England). They also sent missionaries all over the known world. In 597 Pope St. Gregory the Great sent St. Augustine of Canterbury to Britain to spread the Gospel and establish the Church on British soil. So there is a very long tradition of popes being involved in national and international affairs. (It is worth mentioning that sometimes this involvement would come back to bite the popes in the rear end!)

These days we marvel at the heroism and piety of the popes. Pius XII was renown for his asceticism, and also the way that he helped the Jews during WWII. (So great was his witness that the chief rabbi of Rome converted to Catholicism after the war!) There was Paul VI’s stand for human life in his famed encyclical *Humane Vitae*. There was John Paul II’s stand against communist dictatorships. And Pope Francis’ concern for the poor and the environment. These are saintly men indeed. But not all popes in history have been so devout! Some in fact have been quite worldly and even wicked. This was especially the case during the Renaissance. Pope Sixtus IV, 1471-1478, used the power of the papacy to promote his own personal wealth and the influence of his family. Other popes, like Alexander VI (1492-1503) had illegitimate children and lived openly licentious lives.

The Anglican attitude towards the papacy has always essentially been that of the Eastern Orthodox Churches. We believe that he is a true bishop of the Church, and also the “first among equals” in honor, *but that he does not have universal jurisdiction over Christ’s One, Holy, Catholic, and Apostolic Church!* Richard Hooker, an early Anglican apologist and theologian, was very clear on this. Despite our measured esteem for the pope, in the centuries since the Reformation there was great hostility towards the pope and Roman Catholics in England. At one point Roman Catholicism was even outlawed in England! This attitude was due mainly to unfortunate historical factors. But since the mid-20th century the two churches have come together and mended fences in remarkable ways. Finally, in the early 1980’s Pope John Paul II prayed with the Archbishop of Canterbury, Robert Runcie, in Canterbury Cathedral!

Want to learn more about the papacy? A great book to read on the lives of some of the popes is “*Saints and Sinners: A History of the Popes*” by the renowned English historian Eamon Duffy. ✠

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

Does God Exist? - Tuesdays in October

Join us on Tuesday evenings in October as we listen to fantastic and scholarly debate between an atheistic biologist and a Christian philosopher and theologian on the question of God's existence. Is Christianity incompatible with reason and science? You won't want to miss the answer! Fr. Anderson will provide commentary on the debate as it progresses, explaining some of the more confusing and abstruse points when they arise. As is our custom, we will begin with Evening Prayer and then have dinner, which will be provided. I hope to see you there!

The Dunning Lecture - November 18th

This fall, world-renowned biblical scholar, Dr. N. T. Wright, will be in Baltimore at St. Mary's Seminary & University. On November 18, he will deliver the free Dunning Lecture, sponsored annually by St. Mary's Ecumenical Institute. This year's topic: "The Puzzles of the Cross." The following day, November 19, Dr. Wright will lead an all-day conference on "The Royal Power of the Cross." And November 18-20, EI faculty members will lead a 3-day, 3-credit course, N.T. Wright on Cross & Atonement, to include an a session with Dr. Wright himself. More information: www.stmarys.edu/ei.

Episcopal Visit and Confirmation - November 1st

Mark your calendars! Bishop Grundorf will be here on Sunday, November 1st (All Saints' Day) to administer the Sacrament of Confirmation and visit the parish. A luncheon will follow the 10:00 a.m. service. Sign up to help with the luncheon on the sign-up sheet in the parish hall.

Annual Parish Meeting - November 22nd

Mark your calendars! Our annual parish meeting will take place on Sunday, November 22nd at 10:00 a.m. *We will have just one worship service that day at 9:00 a.m!* We need as many people as possible at this parish meeting to discuss the mission and future of our parish! A light breakfast will immediately follow the Mass and then will come the meeting.

Bake Sale and Christmas Bazaar - December 13th

The altar guild will be sponsoring a holiday bake sale on this day! We will have a few other holiday gift items available for purchase as well, such as Colleen Harback's lovely "Church Mice." Do you have a little craft that

would like to include in the sale? Please see Fr. Anderson and/or Claire Burt.

Blessing of the Creche and Decorate the Church for Christmas - December 20th

Be sure to be in church this day when we have the little children of the parish decorate the Christmas Creche after the recessional hymn! The clergy will then bless the creche, and then we will decorate the church and parish hall for Christmas!

In Times of Illness

Please remember to let Fr. Anderson know if you or a loved one is ill and in need of prayer and anointing. A home or hospital visit is just a phone call away! Healing prayers are also offered at the altar at Holy Communion. Please let Fr. Anderson know if you would like to have the laying-on-of-hands for healing at that time. Let us always remember the words of James 5:14, *"Is any sick among you? let him call for the elders of the church; and let them pray over him, anointing him with oil in the name of the Lord."*

2015-2016 Choir Schedule

Sunday, October 25, 2015 from 12:30 p.m. - 1:30 p.m. - Rehearsal

Sunday, November 1, 2015 at 10:00 a.m. - Sing anthem at 10:00 service (Episcopal Visit)

Sunday, December 13, 2015 from 12:30 p.m. - 1:30 p.m. - Rehearsal

Thursday, December 24, 2015 at 7:30 p.m. - Sing at the Christmas Eve service

Sunday, March 6, 2016 from 12:30 p.m. - 1:30 p.m. - Rehearsal

Sunday, March 13, 2016 at 10:00 a.m. - Sing anthem at 10:00 a.m. service (Palm Sunday)

Sunday, March 13, 2016 from 12:30 p.m. - 1:30 p.m. - Rehearsal

Sunday, March 27, 2016 at 10:00 a.m. - Sing anthem at 10:00 service (Easter Sunday)

Sunday, May 8, 2016 from 12:30 p.m. - 1:30 p.m. - Rehearsal

Sunday, May 15, 2016 at 10:00 a.m. - Sing anthem at 10:00 service (Pentecost)

Note: Each Sunday service is preceded by a 1/2 hour rehearsal/ review! ☩