

The Centurion

The Parish Magazine of St. Alban's Church

1011 Old Joppa Road, Joppa, Maryland, 21085



My dear People:

I recently asked for prayer on behalf of another person from some acquaintances via e-mail. One them replied to me that he would keep that individual "in his thoughts." To be completely honest I get tired of hearing from people that they will only be keeping me or someone or something else "in their thoughts." How is that supposed to do anything? While it may do us some good in terms of our health - positive thinking can do wonders in our bodies and in our own lives - what are someone else's thoughts supposed to do for anyone or anything? People who use that phrase are more often than not secular atheists (or "agnostics"). They don't "pray" for people because they think God and religion is irrational, and so they don't believe any of it. But what is more rational? Thinking about something and expecting a change or something good to randomly and mysteriously happen? Or praying to a sovereign God who reins over the whole universe, who is personalistic, and who loves and cares about us, who can actually *do* something and providentially guide the course of our lives? The answer is pretty obvious. I much prefer being prayed for over being thought about when I am in need. While prayer obviously includes thinking about a person or a need, it goes a lot further because it can actually effect a positive change by bringing *God* into the picture. Here's an illustration: if someone I know is broken down on the side of the road and in need of help I could A) think about that person, or B) pray to God that he would somehow, in some way, help him. *Prayer* stands a better chance of changing the man's situation then does merely thinking about him. The thing to keep in mind about prayer, however, is that when we pray we should consider that perhaps God will use us to answer the prayer. If we pray for our neighbor to have enough money to pay his heating oil bill, for example, when don't we, if we are able, offer to give or loan him the money to do so? If we pray that God would cheer up a despondent soul why don't we ring that person on the telephone and see how they are doing and offer them some encouragement? God answers prayer. Period. But he doesn't always do so in the way the want or expect him. He can bring about the most amazing change in people's lives because he is God - all-powerful, all-knowing, all-good, our loving heavenly father - and that is why we come to him and "cast all of our cares on him who careth for us." (1 Peter 5:7) But maybe he wants to use us to bring about the desired change. We are the mystical Body of Jesus, after all! Perhaps he wants us to pick up our friend who is broken down on the side of the road. Whatever the case may be, we can be absolutely certain that it is better to pray to God about something than to merely think about it. May we pray for those who need and be open to allowing God to use us to answer those prayers!

Affectionately, your Friend and Pastor,

J. Gordon Anderson

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News, Updates, and Upcoming Events

UPCOMING HOLY DAYS:

**September 17th, 19th, 20th -
Ember Days**

Holy Communion at 10:00 a.m.

October 18th - St. Luke

Holy Communion at 10:00 a.m.

**October 28th - St. Simon &
St. Jude**

Holy Communion at 10:00 a.m.

**November 1st - All Saints
Day**

Holy Communion at 10:00 a.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.

SPIRITUALITY: *Using the Book of Common Prayer as Part of a Rule of Life*

In past issues of *The Centurion* the whole notion of having a “Rule of Life” has been discussed. You will recall that a “Rule of Life” is basically a spiritual action plan. It is a set of activities that we commit ourselves to doing to grow spiritually. Just as we might come up with a “work out” plan to get into better physical shape, so we might come up a Rule of Life to get ourselves into better spiritual shape. If we do not have a Rule of Life we need to come up with one. We need to do specific things each day to deepen our relationship with God and grow in grace, holiness, and spiritual maturity. The question is: where do we begin? For Anglicans, the basic foundation of a Rule of Life is found in our beautiful and incomparable 1928 Book of Common Prayer. The English spiritual tradition is built on three things: Office; Mass; and Private Prayer. And the Book of Common Prayer gives us the framework for all three of these. Let us take a closer look at these.

The “Offices” are another name for Morning and Evening Prayer. Thus, when we speak of “saying our daily office” it means that we are reading Morning and Evening Prayer, either at home or work on our own, or at church when it is offered. These daily offices are the official prayers of the Church. They are descended from the old monastic offices chanted by monks and nuns for centuries upon centuries. They consist of Old Testament and New Testament passages read in course throughout the year, Psalms, the Apostles Creed, the Lord’s Prayer and other prayers (many of which go back to the earliest days of Christianity), and also canticles that may be read or sung. Morning and Evening Prayer are the official prayers of the Church. When we pray these offices we are praying and reading the scriptures with Christ’s whole catholic Church

militant here on earth. We are reading in many cases the exact same passages of scripture and saying the same prayers as people all over the world, so God is constantly being praised and glorified in one united voice. The Book of Common Prayer has an index in the front that tells what passages are to be read when. It is very easy to follow and do at home on your own. The rubrics (small, italicized print) tell you what parts of Morning Prayer may be left out or changed so as to customize it according to your circumstances and schedule, so be sure to read them!

The second part of the Anglican spiritual framework and Rule of Life is Mass, also known as Holy Communion, or the Holy Eucharist. The Book of Common Prayer was revolutionary when first released over 400 years ago in part because it required the faithful to be present for many more communion services than did the old Medieval rites. Including the Sundays throughout the year, there are over 70 Holy Days in the Book of Common Prayer. Each month we have *at least* two saints days (“Prayer Book Holy Days”) that are celebrated! The Holy Eucharist is given such prominence in the spiritual life because it is the perpetual memory of Christ’s atoning death on the cross, and our sacramental participation in his heavenly intercession on our behalf before God the Father. The Prayer Book contains “proprs” - special Collects (prayers) and scripture passages appointed for each of these holy days. Also, the daily office lectionary has special scripture readings appointed for the various saints’ days. (Note that if you can’t make it Holy Day services at church you can always read the special “proprs” for that day in the Prayer Book at home or at work!)

The final part of the Anglican spiritual framework is private prayer.

This is our own prayer time where we can talk to God in our own words and prayer for very specific requests, such as healing of the sick, career problems, etc. Just as we read the Offices every day, so we should have a private prayer time each and every day. Indeed, we should be so close to God that we pray to him constantly throughout the day, and offer up spontaneous prayers immediately whenever the need arises.

That is the basic foundation of an Anglican “Rule of Life” - Offices, Mass, and Private Prayer. We might add other elements to our Rule of Life as we see fit: regular private confession of sin; spiritual reading; rosary; going on retreats; etc. The key thing to remember is that the details of a Rule of Life will obviously vary from person-to-person, as each one of us is unique.

But we would be making a huge mistake if we missed the most obvious, basic tool of the spiritual life that is right there before us in church and (hopefully) at home... namely, the Book of Common Prayer. Don’t just use the Prayer Book once a week at church! Get one for home (Fr. Anderson will be glad to help you do this) and use it daily to grow in your spiritual life. What you will find, as you use it day in and day out, month after month, and year after year, is that you begin to memorize parts of the Psalms and other scripture passages. (The poetic language of the 1928 Prayer Book lends itself to memorization.) Its poetry and repetition will begin to form you spiritually and you will draw much closer to God. If you start and end each day with Morning and Evening Prayer, and punctuate the rest of the day with private prayer, and the occasional Holy Day service (and *certainly* church every Sunday), indeed, if you establish and practice a Rule of Life, you will grow spiritually. ✠

THEOLOGY: *“God is the Audience” by the Rt. Rev’d. Albert A. Chambers*

“God is the audience” is not an irreverent title, if it is used to give fresh emphasis to the basic principle and fundamental law of Anglo-Catholic worship. The Anglo-Catholic is a sacramentalist. He believes that God takes and uses such things as bread and wine and water to impart spiritual grace. At the center of the sacramental life is the Altar, the focal point of worship and the place where the miracle of the Real Presence of Our Lord in the Sacrament of Holy Communion takes place. The Altar, therefore, is the center of the Anglo-Catholic’s whole life. The rhythm of his practice of religion has three accents – to the altar, at the altar, and from the altar.

The first of these is “to the altar.” Central in the Anglo-Catholic’s life is the frequency with which he goes to the altar, his spiritual home, to worship and praise Almighty God. He may have many personal needs. He may have much on his mind and in his heart that troubles and bothers him. Yet he does not go to Church to get, but rather to give, knowing that in any love relationship, and supremely in his relationship with God, what one receives is simply the by-product of what one gives.

This tremendous fact of life, so central to Catholic worship, is brilliantly shown in that the communicant is not asked to deprive himself in giving, but to offer a sacrifice of praise and thanksgiving which is his greatest fulfillment. The worship, therefore, that the Anglo-Catholic engages in, is an offering of love which he continually strives to purify and increase. To the Anglo-Catholic, the central fact of this worship is the Mass itself. All the other services of the Church, including the Daily Offices of Morning and Evening Prayer, are secondary to that service which he believes Our Lord instituted and commanded as central.

The action of the Mass is emphatically God-centered, toward God and before God – presentation: God is the audience. The priest leads the congregation in worship and strives to lose his personality and to be simply the instrument that God uses in that action. The Choir sings to praise God and to lead the congregation in the music of the itself. Their voices and their talent are used to honor the One for whom the whole service is performed. The members of an orchestra who are striving to unite their different talents in a perfect performance do not think of their own entertainment. Likewise, the members of the congregation must remember that they are there, not to be entertained, but to be led by the priest and the choir to the reality of God’s presence. Nor can they be passive. The congregation’s part in the action of the Mass is one of constant participation – outwardly through the responses and their singing of the Creed and the Our Father;

inwardly through the active offering of love through worship.

The service of the Holy Communion is a pilgrimage to the Throne of Grace. The detail of all that happens “at the altar” representing this pilgrimage has been the subject of many volumes and is beyond the scope of this article. However, we must underline again that all that is done at the altar is done to glorify and praise God and to cooperate with Him in fulfilling His command. The candles, the vestments of the priests, the incense used, the Missal, the genuflections that are made, the sign of the Cross, the reverent bowing of the head at the Sacred Name – these are some of the outward marks of Catholic worship which are part of the ritual offering of love, praise and thanksgiving.

The intercessions of the Prayer for the Church, the penitential exclamations of the Kyrie and Agnus Dei, the General Confession, and the Prayer of Humble Access all acknowledge man’s sinfulness and his unworthiness to offer the fullest and best worship that God deserves. But these are all part of the pilgrimage which leads to the climax of the service, when the people come to the altar to receive the Body and Blood of Christ, and actually take Him unto themselves. Just as they have come to give the fullest possible expression of their love, so He comes to give of Himself in the manner He appointed and commanded.

The Anglo-Catholic believes that, just as he himself uses his body to communicate with his fellow man, so God uses His Body and Blood to be the physical instruments through which He expresses Himself and makes Himself known. The great mystery of sacramental grace remains a mystery, but the Anglo-Catholic draws near with faith and in complete trust that what Our Lord said He meant, and that, therefore, He is really present in the Sacrament of His Body and Blood. At the center of his Communion, the devout worshipper lifts his heart and mind in awe and wonder, even as he praises and adores his Lord. At the altar, man meets God and God comes, because of His love for man, face to face with man.

The altar is only the beginning. The Christian is committed to carry the life which he has received “from the altar” out into the world of everyday living. The Christian’s life must reflect, in all he does and feels, the light and life which have come to him in his receiving God unto himself.

The message of John 1:1-14, read at many parishes, including my own, at the conclusion of Mass is pertinent, for it is the message that the Christian must carry out into the world.

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This passage is much more than a commemoration of the Incarnation. It gives the keynote for the God-centered life. "As many as received Him, to them gave He power to become the sons of God." The Anglo-Catholic must go into the world as a son of God, strengthened by God's presence to face the problems and difficulties of life as well as to bear

witness to the redeeming power that has come to him. The responsibilities that have been laid upon him because he has willingly and gladly accepted the love-relationship between Him and God are unlimited and must reach every area of his life. Every routine task, every humdrum requirement of his daily life, is sanctified and made holy as it is put into its proper perspective and as it is

a fulfillment of God's will. "To the altar, at the altar, from the altar" thus characterizes the rhythm of the Christian life. In each stage of this rhythm is the awareness that God is the audience; it is for Him that all the tasks of life are performed, that they may be well-pleasing in his sight, and that His applause may be man's most precious gift. ✠

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

Sunday School

Beginning this October we will have a Sunday school for children at the 10:00 a.m. service. A few volunteers have stepped up and offered their services so young children do not have to sit in the church and create a disturbance during the celebration of the Holy Eucharist. While a child's behavior in church might not disturb his or her parents it may very well (and often *does* I have been told) disturb others. Sunday school will give these kids a chance to be themselves and learn the stories of the Bible and about the Book of Common Prayer and the Christian faith in a kid-friendly way, and allow parents and adults to focus on worship. If you are interested in helping out please see Father Anderson. *Note: Per diocesan policy all Sunday school workers and anyone in the church who works with kids has to have a background check.*

Prayer Book Society

A new feature of the parish literature table is the magazine *Anglican Way*, which is the official publication of the Society for the Preservation of the Book of Common Prayer, or simply "The Prayer Book Society." This society, which has branches in Canada, England, and Scotland, seeks to preserve, protect, and promote the use of the traditional Prayer Books of the Anglican Communion. Its members and leadership include Anglicans in the mainline Episcopal Church, Church of England, Church of Canada, as well as many Anglicans in the continuing churches, ACNA, and Reformed Episcopal Church. Fr. Anderson serves on the board of directors of the society. The quarterly magazines are free and contain some good articles. Please feel free to take one. Also, check out the Prayer Book Society's *excellent* website which is full of good Anglican and Christian resources: www.anglicanwaymagazine.com. The Prayer Book Society also publishes numerous books and pamphlets on interesting historical and theological topics and occasionally sponsors writing contests. At

one point fully one quarter of Episcopalians were members of the Prayer Book Society! Over the years membership has declined somewhat, so we are always looking for new people to join and support our work and mission of preserving the classical Anglican liturgy of the Book of Common Prayer, which, along with the King James Bible, was instrumental in forming not only the Christian faith of millions upon millions of people all over the world, but also highly influenced the development of modern English.

Fall Parish Work Day, September 13th

Pencil in on your calendars Saturday, September 13th for a parish work day! We will meet at the church in the morning and gussy up the property a bit. There is a lot of work to be done, but many hands will make it light. (It will also make it lots of fun.) After we are done the work we will grill up some food and have a picnic together! Make plans now to join us for workday.

Savory Bake Sale Sunday, September 14th

Attention St. Alban's Cooks! Sunday, September 14th please bring some friends to church to partake of our first annual *St. Alban's Sweet & Savory Bake Sale*, sponsored by the altar guild! Think fall days and bring in your favorite dishes, cakes, pies, or casseroles. Make sure containers do not have to be returned! Don't forget to bring cash or checks and take home your dinner or dessert! *Claire Burt, Altar Guild Directress*

Ladies Night Out, September 27th

All ladies of the church are welcome to the home of Beth Dixon in Fallston, MD on Saturday, September 27th from 5:30 p.m. - 9:00 p.m... Bring a dessert or appetizer to share. Come enjoy a relaxing evening with friends, food, games, and a bonfire. Please contact Beth Dixon or Father Anderson for the address.