

# The Centurion

The Parish Magazine of St. Alban's Church

1011 Old Joppa Road, Joppa, Maryland, 21085



My dear People:

In an effort to get the parish magazine delivered at the beginning of the month and not the end (as has been the case the last few months) this month's issue contains articles reprinted from earlier editions. Did you know that you can read every edition of *The Centurion* —over ten years worth of material!— on our parish website? It's got some very good articles in it if I do say so myself. Not all of them are written by me, of course. Many, as you will see in this issue, are copied from other sources or written by other writers. Personally, I consider the parish magazine to be a vital part of our spiritual formation here at St. Alban's, which is why I persist in producing it. The *Centurion* covers all sorts of topics that I simply cannot cover in a sermon, rector's forum, or lenten study due to time constraints. It is also chock full of resources: lists of books to buy, websites to visit, podcasts to listen to, and more. And of course it contains parish news and updates. So please, I beg you, avail yourself of this resource. Give copies to friends. Share it with the world.

Our fundraising campaign for the building project has officially begun. We are trying to raise \$150,000 for Phase 1A, the details of which are shown in the display in the parish hall. The entire project is divided up as follows: 1A (exterior work), 1B (completion of all exterior work), 2A (interior work — parish hall, kitchen, restrooms), and 2B (interior work — nave expansion). Please consider donating to this important project which will help us as grow and expand in the future. Donations can be made via cash or check in the offering plate, the kiosk in the parish hall, or online at our website. No donation is too small!

We will be without our organist on Sunday, August 13th, but rather than find a replacement for that one day we will sing the service 'a cappella'. It is very difficult to find decent organist replacements, and when we do it is a real pain in the neck trying to acclimate them to our service. So the easiest and funnest thing to do is just have no instrumental accompaniment. Our former organist, Mr. Glock, used to say that having one or two Sundays in the year without instruments (e.g. organ) is actually very musically healthy for the congregation. We happen to have a great bunch of singers for such a small church, so I am not worried at all about singing a cappella one Sunday! Though, of course, it will be nice to welcome Jim back on the 20th, as we love his playing and his sweet and gentle demeanor.

Faithfully, your priest,  
J. Gordon Anderson

August 2023

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UPCOMING PRAYER BOOK  
HOLY DAYS:

**Aug 24th - St. Bartholomew**

Holy Communion at 10:00 a.m.

**Sep 20th & 22nd - Ember Days**

Holy Communion at 10:00 a.m.

**Sep 21st - St. Matthew**

Holy Communion at 10:00 a.m.

**Sep 29th - St. Michael**

Holy Communion at 10:00 a.m.

**Oct 19th - St. Luke**

Holy Communion at 10:00 a.m.

**Oct 27th - Ss. Simon & Jude (vigil)**

Holy Communion at 10:00 a.m.

**Nov 1st - All Saints'**

Holy Communion at 10:00 a.m.

**Nov 23rd - Thanksgiving**

Holy Communion at 10:00 a.m.

Please see the parish website for the complete list of Sunday and Holy Day services offered each month.

[www.saintalbansjoppa.org](http://www.saintalbansjoppa.org)

THEOLOGY: *The Eucharist and The Resurrection — A Sermon by the Rev'd E.L. Mascall*

The Catechism of the Church of England, in reply to the question 'Why was the Sacrament of the Lord's Supper ordained?' answers that it was for the continual remembrance of the sacrifice of the death of Christ and of the benefits which we receive thereby. And we have just heard Paul declare in the words of my text that '*Christ, being raised from the dead, dieth no more. Death hath no more dominion over him.*' (Rom. 6:9) We might, therefore, be tempted to suppose that the Lord's Supper, the Mass, was simply a kind of memorial service to commemorate something that happened a long time ago, but is all finished with now - the death of Christ. And indeed there have been Christians who have thought about it in that way. I think that this is one of the reasons why in many Christian bodies the celebration of the Lord's Supper, in spite of the intentions of the Reformers, did, in fact, become a very occasional thing.

I remember hearing that the father of a theological student, when his son told him that, in the particular seminary where he was, the Holy Eucharist was celebrated every morning, replied: 'Surely it is a very dismal way in which to begin each day, to commemorate the last sad meal of our Lord with his Apostles.' As I said, people have often thought of the Eucharist in that way: as being a mere commemoration, either of the death of our Lord on the Cross or of the meal which he had with his Apostles the night before he died. And if that was the whole truth about it, then the Eucharist would be something primarily concerned with a past event: a very important past event no doubt, but a past event, and one consisting chiefly of death.

Now, of course, we must never allow ourselves to belittle the absolutely central significance of the death of our blessed Lord. When God took human flesh, and came into this world, as man, in order to make that perfect offering of a human life which we men had failed to make, it was, so far as we can see, inevitable that that offering would take him to death. And the fact that it took him to death is the measure of the completeness of that offering in a fallen, sinful world. But we shall have a very inadequate view, both of our Lord's sacrifice and of the nature of our religion as a whole, and also of this Blessed Sacrament in which we are now engaged, if we allow ourselves to think of our Lord's sacrifice as simply something which took place in his death on Calvary. Calvary was, indeed, the central point of it, the crucial point; and I may remind you that the English word 'crucial' does, in fact, come from the Latin word which means 'cross.' But if we are to think

of our Lord's sacrifice in its fullness, we must think of it as something which extends onwards from the moment when he took human nature in the womb of his blessed Mother, and which now is made perpetual in heaven in his ascended glory. For what happened when the Son of God, the Second Person of the Holy Trinity, took flesh, was that he communicated to human nature that offering of filial response, of response of a son to his Father's love, which he was making from all eternity, and in all eternity, in the Life of the Blessed Trinity, the Godhead itself.

When he became man, he took a human nature into that perfect filial offering under the conditions of a human life in a way which, as we have seen, in a sinful world took him to the death of the Cross. But the death of the Cross was not the end, and if it had been the end, we should clearly see that this filial offering had culminated in a defeat.

The death on the Cross was followed by the Resurrection, and the Resurrection by the Ascension. And Jesus now is the ascended, risen, glorified Lord. The Ascension, as no doubt we are all aware, does not mean that our Lord went away from us; it means that his human nature, in which he rose from the dead, has been liberated from the last restrictions of spatial and of normal material existence, so that now it is something universally accessible to all men and women everywhere and at all times.

'*Christ, being raised from the dead, dieth no more.*' He is, now and forever, the risen, glorified man who makes for ever to the Father the offering of Sonship, the filial offering, which man as God's creature and son is bound to make.

Where, then, does the Eucharist come into this? Simply because it is the placing of that heavenly offering in the Church. The Church, the Body of Christ, of which you and I are members, is constituted not by our allegiance to Christ, important as indeed that is, but by the fact that we have been made his members. To quote the catechism again: 'My Baptism wherein I was made a member of Christ, and a child of God'; for if we are members of Christ, members of the Son, sharers in his sonship, then we are God's children. We are *sons in the Son*. Our human nature has been incorporated into his, so that by the operation of grace we may be made more and more into his likeness.

*The article continues on page four.*

WORLD RELIGIONS: *What is pantheism and is it compatible with Christianity?*

Recently in a couple sessions of our Tuesday evening “Confirmation for the Confirmed” class (or, if you are new, our “Inquirer’s Class”) we got onto the topic of eastern religion and what some of the major differences are between them and orthodox Christianity.

One of the most critical differences that we discussed is that eastern religions, such as Hinduism and Buddhism, are essentially *pantheistic* while Christianity is *monotheistic*. The word *pantheism* comes from the two Greek words: “all” (pan) and “god” (theos). So *pantheism* is the belief that God is everything and everything is God. The word *monotheism* also comes from the Greek. It means “one” (mono) “god” (theos). Thus, Christianity, as well as Judaism and Islam, believe that there is one God who is separate and distinct from the world.

Far from being abstract and unimportant, this difference of understanding concerning the nature of God has far-reaching implications in terms of how we understand ourselves and the world.

While pantheism may sound good on the surface, what this notion that “god is everything and everything is god” actually implies is the unreasonable notion that the material world is illusory and evil. Matter is “illusory” because the only thing that is real is the impersonal, universal “one” (“god” or “Brahman” in classical Indian thought). Matter is “evil” because the realm of the finite represents a separation from the ultimate, unchanging reality of which everything is a part. Thus, in eastern thought, if there was a “fall” of man it consists in his creation and his material aspect, whereas “salvation” consists in escaping from the material world and ultimately, after many reincarnations, being completely absorbed into the universal one of which all are a part. Indeed, the Dalai Lama himself in various places writes of a “Primordial Buddha” in which all phenomena (things), pure and impure are dissolved and eventually reborn, as being an empty, impersonal space.

All of this is directly opposed by orthodox Christian teaching. One of the things that the creation narratives in Genesis 1-2 teach is that there is one God who is personal, and who created the heavens and the earth, which are distinct from him. The Creeds which we recite in the sacred liturgy reiterate this: “I

*BELIEVE in one God the Father Almighty, Maker of heaven and earth.”* (Nicene Creed) And “*I BELIEVE in God the Father Almighty, Maker of heaven and earth.”* (Apostles’ Creed).

For the Christian, life is real, and a gift from God. Man was created as the pinnacle of a *real* creation, and as a separate and distinct being to be in fellowship and communion with God the Holy Trinity, who is love. Moreover he was created as a material being, with a physical dimension that is an integral part of who he is. Although man has a fallen nature because of sin, material nature itself is in no way evil or illusory. If it were then God himself could not have become flesh, as orthodox churchmen in ancient times proclaimed to certain gnostic heretics. Most important, by the grace of God the fallen world is redeemed and recreated, beginning with man himself, and continuing with the whole of creation by the incarnation of Jesus Christ. Salvation in the Christian religion is new life in the new heavens and earth! Not a “disembodied” absorption into a universal, impersonal “One.”

We do not have to do too much thinking to understand how this basic difference - that the material world is evil and illusory; or good but fallen and capable of redemption - plays out in different areas of human life. Here is one example: if the material world is evil then we do all that we can to escape from it. Therefore what we do in or with our bodies is of no consequence and of little importance to anything whatsoever. But most westerners - even “armchair Buddhists” - really cannot except accept that view. We believe that our bodies are part of who we are, and, though fallen, are sacred and good. The same is true for others, and so we engage in acts of charity to help alleviate the suffering of others as much as we can and give them a better life in this world. This is the Christian world view, which still underlies (at least at this point) our culture. This world view has given rise to science, philanthropy, medicine, and the alleviation of much suffering across the globe. And all of this is based on some very fundamental differences in how God and the world are viewed. ☩



*This article was originally published in the May 2013 edition of The Centurion.*

*Continued from page one...*

And because we have *all* been incorporated into Christ, because we have been brought *together* into Christ's human nature, we, the Church, are his Body. And when the Church assembles to celebrate that great sacrament which Christ himself has left us and has commanded us to perform as his memorial, the Eucharistic body, the Body in this sacrament, is the link between the mystical body of Christ, his Church on earth, and the glorified human nature, the glorified body of Jesus our Head in heaven.

There are not three bodies, there is one body, existing in three very different forms: firstly, the glorified body in heaven, the personal human nature which Jesus took from his Mother in which he died and rose again; secondly, the corporate mystical body of the Church militant; and thirdly, the sacramental body which, by drawing his members more closely into him, as they receive it in communion, makes this imperfect

earthly body with its sinful members, bit by bit, into the likeness of the glorified Christ.

And so, the Eucharist and the Resurrection are connected in the closest possible way. It is *because* Christ, being raised from the dead, dieth no more, it is *because* death hath no more dominion over him, that this Sacrament is not just a commemoration of something in the past, whether that be the Last Supper or the death upon the Cross, but is, as its most proper and universal name describes it, Eucharist, Thanksgiving, the Church's great act of thankful response, by which it offers itself to the Father in heaven, through and in the glorified Head of the Body, who offers himself to the Father in heaven, now and forever. ✠

*From "The Gospel of the Resurrection: A Course of Sermons Preached in the Chapel of Pusey House, Oxford" (Mowbrays, 1962) This article was originally published in the April 2014 edition of The Centurion.*

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## PARISH NEWS & UPDATES:

### **Welcome!**

We welcome to our parish family Carl and Sue Mobley! The Mobley's are longtime friends of Chuck and Harriet Meyer, and they attend the 8:00 a.m. service. Please be sure to introduce yourself to them.

### **BFF Launch Party**

Come enjoy fellowship over a hamburger cookout and bonfire with s'mores on Tuesday, August 22nd, from 6:30 pm to 8:00 pm. Father Anderson will present the BFF (Building Facilities for the Future) fundraising campaign at Grace, Grit & Thanksgiving. Donations and prayers are welcomed.

### **Thank you!**

Special thanks to Gary Moses for fixing the handle and lock on the red exterior doors that lead to the nave and for painting the inside and outside of the doors!

Thank you, Kristi Sjöholm-Sierchio, for donating the beautiful coffee table and end table for the parish hall. They will replace the old beat up ones that have been for a few years now. The rector gets lots of compliments on the beauty of the parish hall. Thanks

to everyone who has helped us fix it up by donating items over the years!

And thanks to our dear friend Fr. Bill Smith for filling in on Sunday, August 7th! He has been a great friend to us over the years... not only to the rector personally but also to his esteemed predecessors.

### **Social Media**

Check us out on social media on Facebook, Instagram, and Twitter! There are announcements and other important bits of information about us posted on these platforms on a regular basis.

### **Thank You For Your Support**

"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) ✠