

The Centurion

The Parish Magazine of St. Alban's Church

1011 Old Joppa Road, Joppa, Maryland, 21085



My dear People:

First of all, thank you so much for the generous Christmas gift! You all are an incredible blessing to me and my family, in more ways than I could possibly list. I love serving as your priest and look forward to being here with you for many more years to come.

Secondly, I wish you all a blessed and happy new year. While we've begun this year with a spike of the new omicron variant of Covid-19 we may be thankful that this strain is much less dangerous than the previous ones. So while we remain vigilant, we also must remember to remain hopeful and trust that God will get us through this new challenge just as he did the earlier ones. Psychologists have known for some time that for whatever reason people are more attracted to bad news than to good news. Media organizations know this too, which is why they put the absolute worst news about everything on the front page, on prime time TV, and everywhere else. It is all an effort to get as many consumers as possible. They could care less whether or not what they are "reporting" affects the psyche of viewers in any negative way. (Or if what they're reporting as news is even accurate... but that's another issue.) We would be wise to limit our consumption of the 24 hour news cycle with its professional spin doctors just as we limit our consumption of alcohol, carbs, sweets, and things like that. Having that stuff in moderation is fine... but too much of it make our stomach ache and will eventually destroy us.

If you want some really exciting news check this out. Our bishop, the Most Rev'd Chandler Holder Jones, SSC, will be here on Sunday, January 30th. He will be receiving new members and administering the sacrament of confirmation. Bishop Chad, as he is known, is a delightful guy who was once, many years ago, rector of this parish. I've known him for over twenty-five years. He is good man who loves the Lord and a good friend. He'll be visiting on the day we commemorate Saint Charles the Martyr. He was a king of England who was killed by revolutionaries for taking a stand for the episcopacy (i.e. church governance by bishops) and the divine right of kings. He was the only person ever "sainted" by the Church of England. We will have lovely services that day at our usual 8 am and 10 am time slots. Be sure to come out, and invite a friend to meet Bishop Chad.

I wish you all the very best this new year. We have some exciting things in the works that I will share with you down the road. In the meantime please pray that God blesses us in 2022 and beyond, and that we would be able to grow our ministry and reach more and more people with the Gospel of our Lord Jesus Christ.

Faithfully, your priest,

J. Gordon Anderson

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UPCOMING HOLY DAYS:

Jan 1st - The Circumcision

Holy Communion at 10:00 a.m.

Jan 6th - The Epiphany

Holy Communion at 10:00 a.m.

Jan 25th - Conversion of St. Paul

Holy Communion at 10:00 a.m.

Feb 2nd - Purification of St. Mary

Holy Communion at 10:00 a.m.

Feb 24th - St. Matthias' Day

Holy Communion at 10:00 a.m.

Mar 2nd - Ash Wednesday

Holy Communion at 10:00 a.m. & 6:30 p.m.

Mar 9th, 11th, & 12th - Lenten Ember Days

Holy Communion at 10:00 a.m.

Mar 25th - Annunciation of the Blessed Virgin Mary

Holy Communion at 10:00 a.m.

SPIRITUALITY: *Jesus is the Light of the World*

The spiritual life cannot be lived in darkness. It must be lived in the light, else it will not shine. Spiritual growth is stunted by the darkness of people's minds. The finiteness of the intellect of men, if set over against the infinite wisdom of God, will always cause darkness.

So often mere mortals try to live the spiritual life on the foundations of their own opinions, but darkness is the result. Sometimes they make individual speculation the basis of theology, and darkness ensues. They busy themselves in ruling out this, that, and the other Divine precept, with the only result being that their life becomes a cheerless negative instead of a joyous positive. And sooner or later they find out that their spiritual sight is dim... very dim.

Then, too, many religious people hold up every truth of God as a basis for discussion rather than as guide for living. Thus the midnight oil is burned over heated religious arguments form which little or no light proceeds, and gross darkness hangs like a heavy pall over the spiritual life.

Our souls need illumination. The illumination that we have is in Jesus. He is our light, for he alone is the Light of the World. He has revealed to us what God wants us to know about Himself and ourselves. As the Incarnate Son of God, He could reveal both the former and the latter. And this revelation of Jesus Christ is in the Gospel. This is why the greater part of Christian preaching should proceed from the Gospel. After all the Gospel is "Good News" from God to man. The Light of the life of Christ is in the Gospel. The Light of

the teaching of Christ is in the Gospel. The revelation to men of the love of God is in the Gospel.

Whenever the Gospel is overlooked and neglected, so-called Christian teaching becomes self-centered instead of God centered. Man's opinions, speculations, and prejudices come to the fore. The result is darkness.

How wonderfully blessed Paul the Apostle has set forth in his Second Epistle to the Corinthians the ideal for Christian preachers and teachers. *"Therefore seeing we have this ministry, as we have received mercy, we faint not; But have renounced the hidden things of dishonesty, not walking in craftiness, nor handling the word of God deceitfully; but by manifestation of the truth commending ourselves to every man's conscience in the sight of God. But if our gospel be hid, it is hid to them that are lost: In whom the god of this world hath blinded the minds of them which believe not, lest the light of the glorious gospel of Christ, who is the image of God, should shine unto them. For we preach not ourselves, but Christ Jesus the Lord; and ourselves your servants for Jesus' sake. For God, who commanded the light to shine out of darkness, hath shined in our hearts, to give the light of the knowledge of the glory of God in the face of Jesus Christ. But we have this treasure in earthen vessels, that the excellency of the power may be of God, and not of us."* (2 Corinthians 4:1-7)

It behooves Christian clergy to preach the Gospel, for the cry of laity is, *"Sir, we would see Jesus."* (John 12:21) It behooves Christian laity to meditate on the Gospel that the light of Christ's life and teaching may illuminate their souls. Only if Christ becomes our light may we in our spiritual pilgrimage walk as children of light. ✠

PARISH NEWS: *Upcoming Visitation by the Most Rev'd Chandler Holder Jones, SSC*

On Sunday, January 30, 2022 our bishop, Chad Jones, will be here at Saint Alban's. On Saturday he will dine with the vestry, and then on Sunday he will preach at the 8 a.m. service, and preach and celebrate the Holy Eucharist at the 10 a.m. service. At both services he will administer the Sacrament of Confirmation and receive new members of the parish. What is the difference between those two things? To be "confirmed" is to receive the sacrament of confirmation. The Anglican rite of Confirmation is found on pp. 296-299 in the Book of Common Prayer. In this sacrament the bishop lays hands on the confirmand and asks God to give that person the seven-fold gift of the Holy Ghost.

"Confirm" means "strengthen." So in this sacrament we are "strengthened" to live the Christian life. People confirmed at St. Alban's are automatically received as members. Those already confirmed by a bishop in the apostolic succession (Roman, Orthodox, and some other churches) are simply "received" as members of the parish. Like baptism, confirmation cannot be redone. In the form for reception the previously confirmed person affirms his belief that the APA and Saint Alban's is part of Christ's One, Holy, Catholic, and Apostolic Church, and promises to conform to her teaching, discipline, and worship. The bishop then officially admits them into the communion and fellowship of this branch of Christ's Church. ✠

LITURGY AND WORSHIP: *The Postures and Gestures of Worship*

To say that classical Anglican worship is demanding is an understatement. The beautiful language of the King James Bible and the Book of Common Prayer, coupled with the soaring poetry and great music of the hymns and other music that we sing, really asks a lot of today's worshipper. We use these older forms for a variety of reasons, not the least of which is because we want to offer God the very best in form and content, and that which has stood the test of time, and is faithful to the tradition of the Church.

But there is another dimension of our worship that is not found in a lot of other churches that is also demanding and that is the various postures and gestures of worship. Anglican worship is very physically active. We sit, stand, kneel, sit again, stand again, sit again, kneel again, and one and on throughout the service. The conventional wisdom is that we "sit to listen, kneel to pray, and stand to praise." While that is not always the case 100% of the time (e.g. we stand to hear the Holy Gospel) overall it is a pretty good guide. In addition to standing, sitting, and kneeling, however, are other actions and gestures that we perform, and which appear at various points of the liturgy, such as making the sign of the cross, beating the chest, genuflecting, and bowing. Many, but not all, of these are appointed in the Prayer Book. Let's quickly take a look at all of these, briefly examining their history and significance.

Standing is the most ancient posture of worship. People stood for the simple reason that there were not seats in churches. (Fixed seating in church is a fairly recent invention.) As people began bring their own seats to church, and as fixed seating developed, and more people were sitting during worship, it became customary to stand during certain parts of the liturgy, such as reading of the Gospel, because standing, such as when someone enters a room, is a sign of respect, and an acknowledgement of a person's importance.

Kneeling also reflects secular etiquette. While standing before another person shows them respect, while kneeling or bowing to them shows them the

deepest respect. Thus it is customary in the English tradition to kneel for the reception of Holy Communion as we believe the bread and wine become the sacramental Body and Blood of Christ at Holy Communion. The Book of Common Prayer has always prescribed the specific times to kneel in the service.

Genuflecting — going down on the right knee— is a type of kneeling, as is **bowing**. It is important to note that one only bows while standing. There is no need to bow when kneeling because a the person is already kneeling. In the Anglo-Catholic tradition we genuflect at the *et incarnatus* clause of the Nicene Creed ("and was made man"), and when entering or exiting the pew if the Blessed Sacrament is reserved on the altar. We bow while standing when the Holy Name

("Jesus") is mentioned in the liturgy. All of this shows respect and honor for Jesus. The idea is that if we get our bodies to attuned to the awe and majesty of God our souls will follow. Bowing at the Holy Name was so popular in the late Middle Ages in England that it was written into the Canons of the Church of England in the time of King James. It was also believed to be thoroughly biblical, as Paul says in Philippians 2:10, "*At the name of Jesus every knee should bow, of those in heaven, and of those on earth, and of those under the earth.*" To this day in the western church

bowing when the Holy Name is mentioned remains a uniquely Anglican/Episcopalian custom.

Making the **Sign of the Cross** is at once an affirmation of our belief in the Trinitarian faith (that God is three persons: Father, Son, and Holy Ghost, and that Jesus died on the cross for our sins). It is a very ancient tradition in Christianity. In the Book of Common Prayer only the priest makes the sign of the cross, and that at Holy Baptism (BCP p. 284). But just because that is only place it is historically mentioned in the Prayer Book does not mean that it was made at other times by both clergy and laity. We typically begin and end our prayers with this sign, and we also make it on ourselves when we are blessed.

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Beating the chest is another gesture of worship. It is a sign of humility and penitence that is seen all throughout the Bible (e.g. Luke 18:13, 23:48). In our services it is common to strike the breast at the following times: The Confession (“have mercy upon us”), the Agnus Dei (“have mercy upon us”), and at the Domine, non sum dignus (“Lord, I am not worthy...”). Like kneeling, beating the chest (or “smiting the breast” as the KJV Bible so beautifully puts it) is an outward sign that by practicing we hope will steer our hearts to a greater love of God, and that by practicing this outward gesture our souls will be lead along to become truly penitent and sorrowful for our sin.

The last gesture is **kissing**. This is mostly done by the clergy and servers at various points in the Mass. Objects are kissed to show our reverence towards what they signify. In the liturgy of the contemporary Church the only time the laity “kiss” is at the Veneration of the Cross on Good Friday.

So we see that the Anglican tradition of worship is very physical, and that it engages not just mind, and the soul, and the senses, but also the body itself. Sometimes it slips our minds to do these things, or we are just not used to them because we have not been taught them, or we did not grow up in the Anglican tradition. That is fine. Ultimately these postures and gestures are devotional actions and Church Tradition, not divine law. That being said, it is good to know of them and try to incorporate them into our worship as much as we are able. Some are not able. Some people, for example, because of their physical condition, find it impossible to kneel. That is okay. We will all reach that stage at some point. But what better reason, then, to try to practice these things now when we are physically able.

If you do not know what to do and when to do it, the best thing to do is just watch the priest as he celebrates the Mass, and make the Sign of the Cross, bow, genuflect, etc. whenever he does. If you do that you will be right almost all the time. ✠

THE CHRISTIAN YEAR: *The Epiphany Proclamation for 2022*

EpiphanY proclamations were announcements that told when the major feasts and fasts of the Christian Year were to take place. They go back to ancient times when the Patriarch of Alexandria issued an annual letter announcing the date of Easter for that year. This practice spread to the west and by the mid-6th century started becoming common across Western Europe. The dates of other important feasts were slowly added to the annual proclamation. Eventually it became customary for the Epiphany Proclamation to be chanted in the cathedral on the feast of Epiphany at the end of the Epiphany Mass. Alas, with the advent of the modern calendar the promulgation of the Epiphany Proclamation fell largely into disuse. Now it survives only as a pious custom observed in some churches here and there. (Adapted from *Handbook of Christian Feasts and Fasts*, by Francis Weiser) ✠

THE EPIPHANY PROCLAMATION FOR 2022

GOOD Christian People: Just as we have celebrated, through the bounteous mercy of God, the Birth of Our Lord Jesus Christ and his Manifestation to the Gentiles, so with like joy should we announce the Resurrection of this same Incarnate God and Saviour.

Therefore, we solemnly proclaim to you, that in this year of our Lord 2022, we will celebrate, with awe, reverence, and love, the Paschal Feast of EASTER on THE SEVENTEENTH DAY OF APRIL.

In this year there will be FIVE Sundays after the feast of the Epiphany. The 13th day of February will be Septuagesima Sunday. The 2nd day of March will be Ash Wednesday, the first day of Lent.

Palm Sunday, the beginning of Holy Week, will be kept on the 10th day of April. The sacred Triduum will begin on the evening before Maundy Thursday, Good Friday being the day following, in this most sacred week.

The Ascension of our Lord will be celebrated on the 26th day of May. The Feast of Whitsunday will be celebrated on the 5th day of June, and the Feast of the Most Holy and Undivided Trinity on the TWELFTH day of June. There will be Twenty-THREE Sundays after Trinity Sunday.

If the Lord tarry, yet another year of grace will commence on the twenty-seventh day of November, the First Sunday of the Advent of Our Lord Jesus Christ, to whom be all honour and glory for ever and ever. Amen.