

# The Centurion

The Parish Magazine of St. Alban's Church

1011 Old Joppa Road, Joppa, Maryland, 21085



My dear People:

This month we celebrate the founding of our country on Independence Day. On that day in 1776 the Second Continental Congress ratified the Declaration of Independence, which declared that the thirteen colonies were no longer under the authority of England and her monarch, King George III. We here at Saint Alban's always have an Independence Day service of Holy Communion. (Book of Common Prayer, pp. 263-264). This service in the American Prayer Book replaces the old Accession Day service in the English Prayer Books, which commemorated the reign of the monarch. The Collect for Independence Day reads, "O ETERNAL God, through whose mighty power our fathers won their liberties of old; Grant, we beseech thee, that we and all the people of this land may have grace to maintain these liberties in righteousness and peace; through Jesus Christ our Lord." This prayer beautifully acknowledges two things: first, that the freedom and liberty we enjoy come ultimately from God; and second, that we need his grace (his divine assistance) to maintain these liberties "in righteousness and peace." So we are reminded that liberty is something that can be lost, especially if we are not careful to acknowledge God in our lives and live according to his commandments. This is what we see play out in the Old Testament. The children of Israel were enslaved by the Egyptian pharaoh, so God delivered them from captivity through the leadership of Moses and guided them to the Promised Land where they could be free and serve God in peace. But sadly, in the course of their history, they rejected God and disobeyed the covenant they made with him on Mount Sinai. They started to worship other gods and goddesses, and engage in many other sinful behaviors that were absolutely forbidden under the Law of Moses. Despite being warned for years and years by the prophets the Israelites continued down this path until finally they were carried away into captivity. The northern kingdom of Israel fell to the Assyrians in the 700's and then the southern kingdom of Judah fell to the Babylonians in the 500's. After almost seventy years in exile in Babylon the Jews were allowed to return to Jerusalem and resettle the land, which we read about in the Bible in Ezra and Nehemiah. The old northern kingdom was lost forever and never came back. Amazing story, isn't it? We Americans ought to take note. A country does not have to have a covenant with God as the Israelites did to enjoy his blessings or, conversely, incur his wrath. Abject rebellion against God and his moral standards brings about spiritual rot, and leads to slavery, and ultimately our destruction. Living according to God's laws, and obeying his precepts, on the other hand, leads to blessing and prosperity. It all starts with personal holiness. The more individuals there are who live lives of conversion, and who love God and try to serve him, the better off our whole country will be. Let us pray for spiritual revival in our land, and that it begins with us.

Faithfully, your priest, *J. Gordon Anderson*

July 2022

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UPCOMING HOLY DAYS:

**Jul 4th - Independence Day**

Holy Communion at 10:00 a.m.

**Jul 25th - St. James**

Holy Communion at 10:00 a.m.

**Aug 6th - Transfiguration**

Holy Communion at 10:00 a.m.

**Aug 15th - Assumption of BVM**

Holy Communion at 10:00 a.m.

**Aug 24th - St. Bartholomew**

Holy Communion at 10:00 a.m.

**Sep 8th - Nativity of BVM**

Holy Communion at 10:00 a.m.

**Sep 21st - St. Matthew**

Holy Communion at 10:00 a.m.

**Sep 23rd - Ember Friday**

**Sep 29th - St. Michael**

Holy Communion at 10:00 a.m.

**Oct 18th - St. Luke**

Holy Communion at 10:00 a.m.

THEOLOGY: *The Christian Mind (Part 5) — Its Concern for the Person*

This month we continue our look at Harry Blamires' famous book "The Christian Mind" (SPCK, 1963) in which he argues that there is a specifically Christian way of thinking about and approaching life. Last month we looked at the Christian mind's conception of truth. This month we look at its concern for the person.

Blamires writes, "*Christian thinking is incarnational. The Christian mind surveys the human scene under the illumination of the fact that God became man, taking upon himself our nature, and thereby exalting that nature for all time and for eternity. Thus the Christian's conception of the human person is a high one, his sense of the sacredness of human personality being deeply grounded in revealed theological truth. The status of the personal is such, in Christian eyes, that it ought not, for instance be subordinated to the mechanical.*" (p. 147)

While Mr. Blamires is totally correct as to how the theology of the incarnation elevates human nature into the life of the divine, we must remember that there was a precursor to that. In Genesis 1:27 we read, "*So God created man in his own image, in the image of God created he him; male and female created he them.*" This is the origin of the theology that God made man male and female in his own image and likeness. This incredible event and honor automatically endows humanity with a special dignity. Like God his creator, man was endowed with rationality and freedom, and given headship over the rest of creation, and the special vocation to care for it. The human person, and indeed the whole human race, reflects God in a totally unique way.

The incarnation of God the Son —our Lord Jesus Christ— builds upon this. "*God so loved the world*" (John 3:16) that he himself became a man —a living and breathing human being— to live among us and ultimately to die on the cross and rise again from the dead, thereby taking away the sin of the world, and conquering death, so that all who put their faith in him might live forever as well.

God would not have become a man if being human and entering into the fallen world was somehow intrinsically bad. The scriptures teach that God made the world good, and that man was the pinnacle of creation, and that after man fell God himself became a man to save humanity and the whole creation with it. All of this shows what Mr. Blamires is talking about in this chapter: God has an incredible concern for the human person, and therefore Christians ought to as well. The Christian mind holds humanity and the human person in the highest regard.

The Christian concern for the human person is represented in the ministry of the Church for the poor and suffering... modern universities, schools, and hospitals were all practically invented by the Church. The concern for the human person lays behind the consistent "pro life" (anti abortion and infanticide) teaching of the Church, which goes all the way back to ancient Roman times. It also lays behind the very careful use of the death penalty, which is only to be used in the most extreme of circumstances. And it undergirds her opposition to euthanasia, and unjust war. The contribution of the Church to the development of modern medicine and science should also not go unnoticed.

All of this —everything the Church has always done and has stood for— shows her concern for the person. The human person —not matter how big or how small, no matter what sex or what race— is infinitely important to God, because he made each and every person in his image and likeness, and sent his Son to make it possible for them to have eternal life.

While secular people also can have a strong concern for the person it is often hard for them to explain why. The reason for this is that their worldview does not really allow for it. Why should we be concerned with the health and well-being of our fellow human beings? Does not 'natural selection' indicate that only the strongest survive? That would appear to be where the hard materialism of the secular mind leads. Utilitarian and ethical-egoist arguments that suggest people should be concerned with others and treat them well *because it will ultimately make life work out better for me* are, in the end, almost completely subjective, as "what makes life better for me" could range from housing and feeding a homeless person to murdering and dismembering him. Secular people who do seek to do good, and "love their neighbor" are basically borrowing the Christian worldview! And that is, no doubt, a good thing, even if it is intellectually inconsistent.

In Mark 12:29-31 our Lord Jesus Christ says, "*The first of all the commandments is, Hear, O Israel; The Lord our God is one Lord: And thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy heart, and with all thy soul, and with all thy mind, and with all thy strength: this is the first commandment. And the second is like, namely this, Thou shalt love thy neighbour as thyself. There is none other commandment greater than these.*"

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CURRENT EVENTS: *New Netflix Series Highlights the Bizarre Practice of Polygamy*

The advent of television streaming services has made it possible to see all sorts of weird programs about people, places, and things that most people have never even thought about. From Netflix, the company that introduced us to the strange world of ‘Tiger King’, ‘Bad Vegan’, and ‘Keepers’ comes a fascinating and tragic new documentary called ‘Keep Sweet: Pray and Obey.’ It is the story of the Fundamentalist Latter Day Saints (FLDS), an offshoot of the mainline Mormon Church, and the illegal practices of its ‘prophet’ Warren Jeffs. The series is about the practice of polygamy in the FLDS, and how Mr. Jeffs engaged in criminal activity by, among other things, forcing underage girls to marry older men.

Polygamy is the practice of one man having more than one wife at the same time. Historically, it was taught in Mormon doctrine because husbands would one day become gods and populate their own celestial planet. Therefore they needed as many wives as possible to assist them in this task. Because of this and other strange beliefs Joseph Smith and the early Mormons fled from New York to the western territory of Utah. Later, as a condition for the state of Utah to enter the union, the Mormon Church was made to give up the practice, and to this day it is illegal in the Mormon Church and in the state of Utah and other states. Only Mormon fringe groups like the FLDS continue to practice it. Around the world men of other religions, such as Islam, and various African tribal religions, practice it as well.

In the Judeo-Christian tradition polygamy is against the law of God. We learn of God’s will for the family primarily in the order of creation. Just as we see in that order that God created men to be with women (which makes homosexual practice against God’s will), so we see that God created *one* man to be with only *one* woman at a time. Polygamy is indeed found in the Old Testament among some of the Hebrews (e.g. Jacob, David, Solomon), but it develops *after* the fall of man, and thus represents an *aberration* of God’s plan for the family. Genesis 4:19 is the first record we have of polygamy in the Bible. Lamech, a descendent of Cain, married two women: Adah and Zillah. After the monarchy period the practice appears to have ceased all together. In the New Testament era Jesus affirms the traditional teaching in his discussion on divorce and remarriage (Mt. 19:3-12), as does the early Church, as we see in Saint Paul’s Epistles. (e.g. 1 Cor. 7:1-7)

These days people are much more sympathetic to polygamy than they were in the past. There was a popular tv show a few years ago called ‘Sister Wives’ on

TLC about a polygamist family that attempted to portray them as a normal family, intent on fighting ‘prejudices’ about their particular lifestyle choice. Indeed, with the slow erosion of the Christian morality that has undergirded our country since its founding it is only natural to see people’s resistance to ‘lifestyle choices’ such as these weakened. (The same goes for other lifestyle choice, such as divorce and remarriage, and homosexual behavior. Popular attitudes about these have changed radically in recent years, especially as the country has devolved more and more in paganism.)

One does not have to be a Christian or a Jew however to see the many problems associated with the practice of polygamy. In fact, the rejection of polygamy has always accompanied the technological and social advancement of countries and people. The reality is that polygamy has terrible effects on men, women, and children. A recent article in the journal *Quillette* highlights a lot of these negative effects:

“For men, it creates an excess of unmarried men, and unmarried men —across cultures— commit far more crimes than married men. It creates an intense competition for mates, because married men are still ‘on the market’ in polygamous societies. And it motivates men to exercise a great deal of control over their sisters, daughters, and wives, using them as ‘objects’ of trade. And —strangely enough— polygamous men engage in more extramarital affairs that monogamous men! (All of this is seen in the Netflix series, by the way.) For women, it leads to lower social status and less freedom. Women in polygamous societies have worse health, shorter lives, lower education, and a higher suicide rate than women in monogamy. Co-wives must compete with each other for love, sex, and money, and for education, inheritances, and paternal care and attention for their children. Polygamous wives suffer more violence and abuse. For children, they receive much less paternal attention and care. Polygamy reduces a man’s investment of time and resources in each of his more numerous offspring. Children in polygynous families suffer more abuse, neglect, and violence than those in monogamous families, and have more physical, emotional, and behavioral problems. And in poor countries children from polygamous households risk diminished nutritional status, poorer health outcomes, and diminished mortality.”

With outcomes like these it is no wonder the Church always comes out against the practice of polygamy. ☩

## PARISH NEWS &amp; UPDATES:

**Anglican Catholic Liturgy and Theology Blog**

The Most Rev'd Mark D. Haverland, Ph.D., who serves as archbishop of our sister jurisdiction, the Anglican Catholic Church, has an excellent blog that is a "miscellany of writings on Anglican liturgy, Church history, the Anglican Catholic Church, and related matters." <https://anglicancatholicliturgyandtheology.wordpress.com> The Centurion highly recommends his blog for those interested in these topics, and who want to grow in their understand and appreciation of the Anglican tradition. Archbishop Haverland also writes on arts and culture. His commentary on the famous movie 'The Godfather' is absolutely marvelous. <https://anglicancatholicliturgyandtheology.wordpress.com/?s=godfather>. Do check out his blog sometime!

**New Parish Hall Flooring**

Thanks to your generosity we are having new, faux wood flooring installed throughout the parish hall beginning in August. The synthetic, recycled product has a 30 year commercial warranty. It will go right over the existing flooring, which is coming up in corners in several places (and therefore becoming a safety hazard), and which looks awful. The new faux wood flooring will give our parish hall a warm, rustic look and be very welcoming.

**Building Project**

Our building project continues apace! We are in the final stages of getting the last approval to begin our parking lot expansion (going from 17 to 40 spots) and storm water management plan that goes with it. Two small additions will be added to the building over time: the first in the parish hall, and the second off of the sacristy. The kitchen and bathrooms will be moved. (The latter being expanded and brought up to current standards.) We will also finally be able to use the basement of the building, and, of course, the interior of the church will be expanded. The church has hired architect Julie Tice of East End Architects in Baltimore to do all of this... design the additions and plan the spaces out for the future. Please pray for the project, that the Lord would bless us and bring this phase to completion without any problems, and then that we would have the means to execute the project in a timely manner. Fundraising for construction will not start until we have the design and engineering completed and approved, and the project is put out to bid.

**Tract Rack**

We once again have a tract rack in the parish hall. It contains a number of good tracts on a variety of interesting theological and historical topics. The tracts are free.

**The Bishop's Epistle**

The latest issue of *The Bishop's Epistle*, a newsletter published by the diocesan office is posted in the parish hall and available to download on our parish website. It contains news on all of our bishop's work, and also diocesan and provincial news from January 2022 to June 2022.

**New Indoor Flags**

New indoor American flag and APA provincial flags have been donated to the church by Tom and Minda Flanders. The old flags, which are still usable, will be put into storage for the time being. Since they were memorial gifts they cannot be discarded. So the current plan is to use them in the new, small chapel that we will be building as part of our construction project. (NB: We also have a new flag pole and new outdoor flags that have been donated to the church and are ready to be installed. We are just waiting to complete the parking lot before installing them, as they will be very close to the construction site and do not want to have to uninstall them and then reinstall them after the parking lot is built.

**Quote of the Month**

"In the world it is called 'tolerance', but in hell it is called 'despair'... the sin that believes in nothing, cares for nothing, seeks to know nothing, interferes with nothing, enjoys nothing, hates nothing, finds purpose in nothing, lives for nothing, and remains alive because there is nothing for which it will die."

*Dorothy L. Sayers*

**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) ☩