

The Centurion

The Parish Magazine of St. Alban's Church

1011 Old Joppa Road, Joppa, Maryland, 21085



My dear People:

Whereas in the secular calendar here in America we celebrate Mother's Day in May, in the month of June we celebrate Father's Day. And whereas last month in this column we remembered and gave thanks that the Church is our spiritual mother, so likewise this month we give thanks and remember that God is our heavenly Father. All throughout the scriptures and tradition God is referred to as "father." The most famous Christian prayer is known as the "Our Father" or "The Lord's Prayer" because that is how Jesus taught his disciples to pray. (Lk. 11:1-13) While God is certainly "king of kings and lord of lords" (1 Tim. 6:15; Rev. 17:14), and while he is the all powerful creator of heaven and earth (Gen. 1), it is fascinating to consider that he wants his relationship with humanity to be that of a father and his children! Of all of the amazing and majestic titles he could have chosen for us to address him in prayer it is unfathomably wonderful to see that he chose "father." This ties in so beautifully with what Saint John says of God in his first epistle: "God is love." (1 Jn. 4:16) God is Father of all and everything in the basic sense that he created and sustains all that is. But he is father to us as Christians in a much more intimate way. Because of our faith in Jesus Christ, the Son of God, and our baptism into him, we too—in Christ—are now the children of God (Gal. 3:26-29). And that means that all of the blessing and favor of God rests upon us, and that all of his riches and glory are ours to enjoy, both now and forever. I have a college friend who was reared by a dad who was not a believer, whose heart was far from God, and who was not always there for the family. At some point his dad divorced his mom and remarried and went on living an ungodly life, and my friend was reared with no Christian faith. Well at some point as a teen he was evangelized by Christians and he gave his life to Christ. He later matriculated to the Christian college that I attended where we met and became friends. He always said that the doctrine of God as "father" was very comforting to him because he had no real "father figure" growing up. For all practical purposes he was "fatherless"... until he found God through Jesus Christ! No one loves us more than God our heavenly Father. We can go to him with all of our desires and needs, and pour our hearts out before him. He teaches us and guides through his indwelling Holy Spirit, and we learn of him and his character in the pages of sacred scripture. It is incredible to see how God guides, protects, and sustains his people in the stories of the Bible! If we look at our own lives we certainly see how he has watched over us, and provided for our every need as a good father does. So this month as we give thanks for our earthly, natural fathers, let us give thanks for our heavenly Father, God the Father Almighty, maker of heaven and earth, who made us and loves us, and draws us into his own divine life through his Son, our savior, Jesus Christ.

Faithfully, your priest, *J. Gordon Anderson*

June 2021

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UPCOMING HOLY DAYS:

June 11th - St. Barnabas

Holy Communion at 10:00 a.m.

June 24th - Nativity of St. John Baptist

Holy Communion at 10:00 a.m.

June 29th - Ss. Peter & Paul

Holy Communion at 10:00 a.m.

July 2 - Visitation of BVM

Holy Communion at 10:00 a.m.

Aug 6 - Transfiguration

Holy Communion at 10:00 a.m.

Aug 24 - St. Bartholomew

Holy Communion at 10:00 a.m.

Sep 8 - Nativity of the BVM

Holy Communion at 10:00 a.m.

Sep 15, 17, 18 - Ember Days

Holy Communion at 10:00 a.m.

Sep 21 - St. Matthew

Holy Communion at 10:00 a.m.

Sep 29 - St. Michael & All Angels

Holy Communion at 10:00 a.m.

LITURGY & WORSHIP: *What are the Offertory Sentences?*

In the 1928 Book of Common Prayer, in every service of Holy Communion, immediately after the sermon, one or more passages of scripture are always read. These are called the “Offertory Sentences.” (BCP pp. 72-73) They are read even if there is no “offering” being collected, such as at a weekday service. (p. 71, third rubric)

Usually the clergy have two or three favorite sentences that they have memorized and always read at this time. But the Prayer Book actually has *sixteen* different verses that may be read which come from the Old and New Testaments and the Apocrypha. So lately we at St. Alban’s have been making more of an effort to read some of the lesser-read/heard sentences.

The most basic purpose of the offertory sentences is to remind us of our duty to offer ourselves—all that we have and are—to God. Naturally this includes the giving of “alms”, which is money given to the Church for the succor of the poor and needy. But it also includes the giving of our “oblations” which means “offerings”, and which refers particularly to the bread and wine of the Holy Eucharist. Note that the third rubric on page 73 says: “*And the Priest shall then offer, and shall place upon the Holy Table, the Bread and the Wine.*”

So the offertory sentences are not only about the giving of God’s tithe and our alms and offerings, but more broadly about offering our whole person and entire lives (“ourselves, our souls and bodies”, p. 81) to almighty God, which is symbolized in the celebration of the Holy Eucharist. This is why they are read at every Mass even when money is not collected.

These are the offering sentences in the Book of Common Prayer that we hear most often:

“Remember the words of the Lord Jesus, how he said, It is more blessed to give than to receive.” Acts xx. 35.

“Let your light so shine before men, that they may see your good works, and glorify your Father which is in heaven.” St. Matt. v. 16.

“Lay not up for yourselves treasures upon earth, where moth and rust doth corrupt, and where thieves break through and steal: but lay up for yourselves treasures in heaven, where neither moth nor rust doth corrupt, and where thieves do not break through nor steal.” St. Matt. vi. 19, 20.

“Not every one that saith unto me, Lord, Lord, shall enter into the kingdom of heaven; but he that doeth the will of my Father which is in heaven.” St. Matt. vii. 21.

“Thine, O LORD, is the greatness, and the power, and the glory, and the victory, and the majesty: for all that is in the heaven and in the earth is thine; thine is the kingdom, O LORD, and thou art exalted as head above all.” 1 Chron. xxix. 11.

“All things come of thee, O LORD, and of thine own have we given thee.” 1 Chron. xxix. 14.

We see that those particular ones do not have much to do with collecting alms for the poor but rather giving to God in general (1), glorifying God with your life (2 and 3), obeying God’s will (4), acknowledging that all things come from God and belong to him (5 and 6).

Other sentences, however, address giving of alms for the relief of the poor more explicitly, such as the following:

“Whoso hath this world’s good, and seeth his brother have need, and shutteth up his compassion from him, how dwelleth the love of God in Him?” (1 St. John iii.17.)

“God is not unrighteous, that he will forget your works, and labour that proceedeth of love; which love ye have showed for his Name’s sake, who have ministered unto the saints, and yet do minister.” (Heb. vi. 10.)

Still other offertory sentences such as the following have to do with evangelism.

“How then shall they call on him in whom they have not believed? and how shall they believe in him of whom they have not heard? and how shall they hear without a preacher? and how shall they preach, except they be sent?” Rom. x. 14, 15

“Jesus said unto them, The harvest truly is plenteous, but the labourers are few; pray ye therefore the Lord of the harvest, that he would send forth labourers into his harvest.” St. Luke x. 2.

The offertory sentences cover a lot of theological ground. But they are united inasmuch as they are fundamentally about offering ourselves wholly to God. With that in mind, their placement in the liturgy makes perfect sense. After the first half of the liturgy (the “pro-anaphora”, or as it later came to be called the “Liturgy of the Word”) where we have heard the wondrous things that God has done for us in Christ Jesus our Lord we then, in thanksgiving, offer ourselves to God in the “Liturgy of the Eucharist.” How appropriate it is at this time to have a verse of scripture read that is about offering ourselves to God, and upon which we may meditate as the altar is prepared for Holy Communion! ☩

SACRAMENTAL THEOLOGY: *An Instruction on Confession, by the Rev'd Canon Kenneth Ross*

The purpose of sacramental (private) confession is not only to 'wipe the slate clean' but also to strengthen the Christian's faith-relationship with his Lord and to help him become more aware of his Savior's love for him. In Mark 2:5-7 Jesus shows that he has the power and authority to forgive sins. In John 20:21-23 he passes on this authority to his disciples. In Acts 2:38 this power is exercised through baptism, and then in 1 Corinthians 5:1-5, and 2 Corinthians 2:10 we see the disciples (the apostles) exercise authority in binding and loosing post-baptismal sins. This power has been passed on to the Church, by the apostles to their successors, ever since. The English Church has always allowed for the practice of private confession as seen in the Book of Common. (e.g. pp. 86-88; 313) The Anglican approach to the question of obligation —must I make a private confession of sin— is summed up 'All may, none must, some should.' The question that the individual should ask himself is, 'Have I good reason for thinking that I am not in the last category?' or 'What does Jesus my Lord and Saviour want me to do?'

The ABCs of Confession

A — ASK God to help you to see your sins. Use the Collect for Whitsunday or Trinity 19. Test yourself in the light of scripture passages such as Matthew 5:3-10 (the beatitudes); Romans 12:8-14; 1 Corinthians 13; Galatians 5:13-26. Write down your failures, including the good things you could have done and didn't do.

B — BE SORRY for your sins, above all for your ingratitude to God and for your share in crucifying Jesus. You can *be* sorry by acknowledging yours sins and trying to do better: this is more important than *feeling* sorry.

C — CONFESS. There is no need to be frightened. The priest will not think less of you (if he knows you already) nor will he be shocked. He will never speak to anyone of anything he hears in confession. It is to Jesus that you are making confession, and it is his forgiveness that you receive. Be very open, frank, and receptive.

D — DO BETTER. After advice and absolution the priest will ask you to do a penance (e.g. saying a prayer or reading a short passage from the Bible privately) as a token of your desire to respond to God's loving reconciliation of you with him. Don't be discouraged by subsequent failures or lapses. Jesus said that we are to forgive one another 'seventy times seven' (i.e. infinitely: Matthew 18:21-35). God's love for us is

inexhaustible. A good thanksgiving for absolution is Psalm 103:1-13.

Some Objections Answered

Can't I be forgiven without this?

Yes, of course, just as God can give you strength apart from Holy Communion. But if confession is in any sense of the word 'sacramental' it can be a means of grace and 'a pledge to assure us thereof' (Prayer Book, Catechism). The more conscientious you are, the more you doubt whether you are really forgivable, and therefore you may well need this pledge or assurance.

Isn't it an exclusively Roman Catholic practice?

No, for it is practiced in the Holy Orthodox Church and to some small extent among the reformed churches of the West. In the Church of England there have always been some, since the Reformation, who have practiced it. It is one of the great spiritual and moral opportunities open to all Christians willing to avail themselves of it.

Why should a priest come between me and God?

Suppose you were asked the same question with the word 'Bible' substituted for 'priest': you would say that the Bible was a help, not a barrier, and that it makes the love of God more real to you. So with the priest in confession.

Priests are sinners like everyone else.

Certainly, but in hearing confessions they are ministers of Christ. It is not their own forgiveness they pass on, but Christ's.

I see no point in confessing and then going and doing the same things again.

Agreed —if you mean confessing with the deliberate intention of doing the same things again. No —if you mean confessing and fearing that sooner or later you may do the same thing again. By owning up, and bringing our weakness to Christ ('Just as I am...') our will can become stronger and our readiness to resist temptation (really, Christ's will in us, and Christ's power in us) greater. A very great deal in this, as in all matters of morality, depends upon intention and purpose. But Christ knows, better than we know ourselves, how feeble, divided, and incomplete these can be. 'The goodness of God is the highest prayer, and it comes down to the lowest part of our need.' (Julian of Norwich, *Revelations of Divine Love*, ch. vi) ✠

PARISH NEWS & UPDATES:

What's in a name?

St. Alban's regular service now at 10:00 a.m. is now what is termed a "Solemn High Mass." That is the fancy, technical name of the celebration of the Holy Eucharist with incense, chant, and three sacred ministers (priest, deacon, and subdeacon). Fr. Anderson is the priest, Fr. Edelmann is the deacon (NB: A priest is *always* still a deacon.), and Tom Dixon is our subdeacon. These ministers are vested respectively in the chasuble, dalmatic, and tunic. They stand with the priest at the altar doing various things throughout the service and assisting in the celebration of the Mass. Often they sing parts of the liturgy. It is wonderful to Offer the Holy Eucharist in its fullness now each Sunday. When there is just a priest celebrating the service and there is music and incense it is called a "Missa Cantata" or "Sung Mass" (or "Sung Mass with Incense"). When there is no music and no assisting ministers or incense, and just the priest and his server, it is called "Low Mass."

Holy Day Services

Please note that the Holy Day services listed on the first page of *The Centurion* are only Prayer Book Holy Days and major Marian festivals. But in addition to these we have a few other liturgical offerings each month that are not listed on the front page of this magazine, such as our monthly Requiem and Healing Masses. To see a complete list of monthly service offerings (there is always at least one week day service) be sure to go to the "worship" section of our website: www.saintalbansjoppa.org

Summer Travel

If you are going away on holiday this summer and would like a recommendation as to where to find an Anglican or other church to attend please let the rector know and he will be happy to assist you.

Flower Power & Coffee Hour

You can once again dedicate flowers for Sunday morning services. The suggested donation is \$35 and the flowers will remain on the altar for two weeks. You may also sign up to provide refreshments after the 10:00 a.m. service. Sign up sheets for flowers and "coffee hour" are posted in the parish hall.

Episcopal Visitation

On Sunday, August 1st our new diocesan and presiding bishop, the Most' Rev'd Chandler Holder Jones, SSC, will be visiting the parish. He will preach at the 8:00 a.m. service, and preach and celebrate at the 10:00 a.m. service. He will also receive new members and administer the sacrament of Confirmation to those who need to be confirmed. A reception will follow the late service.

The Primacy of Prayer

Why do we try to solve all of our own problems in life and only go to God as a last resort? Often, when we feel we have tried everything that we can to fix a problem on our own it is only THEN that we decide to pray. This is totally backwards. We should pray always. The scriptures tell us to "Pray without ceasing." (1 Thessalonians 5:17) Our hearts and minds should always—in good times and bad—be attuned to the Lord. We should be living in constant communion and interior fellowship with him, and when we do, the minute we see storm clouds on the horizon, or we find ourselves in a vexing situation the *first* thing we do is say a prayer and ask for God's guidance and help. Casting all of our cares upon God in prayer (1 Peter 5:7) does *not* mean that we do not do other sensible things to resolve the problem. Far from it! What it *does* mean is that we have invited God into the picture and situation so he can take charge. And with God, the almighty Father of the universe, in charge we are always in good hands.

Standing Notices

"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)

Thank you for supporting Saint Alban's Anglican Church! We are entirely self-funded and not propped up by the diocese or a massive endowment. The biblical standard of giving for which we should aim is the "tithe" which means "10." A tithe to the church is 10% of our income. Please give as generously as you are able to our work and ministry so we may continue to grow and worship the Lord and share the Gospel of our Lord Jesus Christ. ✠