

The Centurion

The Parish Magazine of St. Alban's Church

1011 Old Joppa Road, Joppa, Maryland, 21085



My dear People:

The beginning of November is called “Hallowtide” because of the feasts of All Saints’ Day and All Souls’ Day. After an entire year of commemorating different saints the year ends with a feast dedicated to ALL the saints —known and unknown. Anyone who attends Saint Alban’s will know that we take the saints very seriously. We commemorate them on Sundays, discuss their lives at Holy Day services and the Rector’s Forum, and write about them here in *The Centurion*. We have icons of saints in the church and even venerate their relics from time to time. All of this might lead us to believe that the saints are larger than life people. But in fact they were just normal people like you and me. One of the best known hymns in the 1940 Hymnal —Hymn 243 (‘Grand Isle’)— expresses this in the last line of the last stanza: “*For the saints of God are just folk like me, And I mean to be one too.*” God calls normal men and women to be incorporated into his divine life, and do extraordinary things for him. Anyone can be a saint. In fact every Christian is already a saint on some level by virtue of his union with Christ. What the Christian life is, then, is the process of *becoming* what we already *are* by God’s grace... maturing into the men and women God wants us to be. “*For the saints of God are just folk like me, And I mean to be one too.*” The saints are all around us. There are people right under our noses who have done heroic things for the Gospel of Jesus Christ. Two of them bear mentioning here. One is Father Don Edelmann. Our assisting priest in middle age gave up a lucrative career in the insurance industry to go to seminary and be ordained. When the Church needed priests he could have ignored the call and lived a life of luxury and ease, but instead he chose to answer God’s call. As a result many people have been brought into the Kingdom of Heaven through his ministry. The other person who I want to mention is one of my mentors, Father Guy P. Hawtin (St. Stephen’s Church, Timonium MD). He was my rector when I was in seminary. Fr. Guy also gave up a lucrative career to become a priest. He was a renowned journalist with the London Financial Times. His wife was a journalist for Forbes. They lived in luxury in New York and other parts of the world, and he regularly rubbed shoulders with the rich and famous. But one day he decided to become a priest (he had read theology at Oxford as a young man), and so he was ordained in the fledgling continuing church and moved to Maryland to take a job as rector of a small church that didn’t even have its own building! Today St. Stephen’s is a thriving church with its own lovely building, and Guy is still rector. To me, these two men are real heroes and saints... true inspirations of how worthwhile it is to give your life over entirely to God no matter what the cost. Who are some saints around you that you haven’t noticed before? I’ll bet there’s a lot of them. We just need to open our eyes. “*For the saints of God are just folk like me, And I mean to be one too.*”

Faithfully, your priest, *J. Gordon Anderson*

November 2022

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UPCOMING HOLY DAYS:

Nov 1st - All Saints

Holy Communion at 6:30 p.m.

Nov 2nd - All Souls

Holy Communion at 10:00 a.m.

Nov 21st - Presentation of BVM

Holy Communion at 10:00 a.m.

Nov 24th - Thanksgiving

Holy Communion at 10:00 a.m.

Nov 29th - St. Andrew

Holy Communion at 10:00 a.m.

Dec 8th - Conception of the BVM

Holy Communion at 10:00 a.m.

Dec 14th, 16th - Ember Days

Holy Communion at 10:00 a.m.

Dec 21st - St. Thomas

Holy Communion at 10:00 a.m.

Dec 24th - Christmas Eve

Holy Communion at 5:00 p.m.

Dec 25th - Christmas Day

Holy Communion at 10:00 a.m.

STEWARDSHIP: "A Sermon on Tithing" by the Rt. Rev'd Stephen C. Scarlett

A. SIN AND THE HUMAN VOCATION

We are in the Octave of All Saints. All Saints is a sort of "catch-all" feast for unknown holy people who don't have their own day. However, since we are all called to be saints (1 Corinthians 1:2), it is, prophetically, our own feast day. The "multitude which no man could number of all nations, and kindreds, and peoples, and tongues" (Revelation 7:9) is a timeless vision of all who persevere in faith through tribulation and stand victorious before God's throne.

This is, "The Communion of the Saints;" the fellowship of all who are bound together in Christ through the Spirit. It consists of all believers, whether they are currently living in the body or in the intermediate state, awaiting the resurrection. The restoration of our relationship with God in Christ necessarily restores us to union with all who belong to him.

Sin severed our union with God; but is also alienated us (and continues to alienate us) from each other. After the original sin, the next sin was that one human being killed another — a murder that was a result of offerings made to God. Cain made an offering that was rejected by God. Abel made an offering that was accepted. For that reason, Cain killed Abel (Genesis 4:1-8). In Christ, this pattern is reversed. When we turn from sin and put our faith in Jesus, our offering is accepted; and, rather than killing each other, we are reconciled and learn to work for one another's good.

Redemption in Christ restores us to the vocation that we lost through sin. We were made to be priests and kings of the creation. We were made to take the creation that God gave us and offer it back to God in thanksgiving; and we were made to rule over the creation righteously. The paradox is that only when we give the creation back to God as an offering in thanksgiving — only when we let go of the creation — do we fully possess it and rule over it. When we hold on to the creation, it becomes an idol, and it rules over us.

B. THE STORY OF CAIN AND ABEL AND ITS IMPLICATIONS.

Let us look at the story of Cain and Abel. Genesis tells us, "In the process of time it came to pass that Cain brought an offering of the fruit of the ground to the Lord. Abel also brought of the firstborn of his flock and of their fat. And the Lord respected Abel and his offering, but He did not respect Cain and his offering." (Genesis 4:3-5).

The language of Genesis 4 suggests the problem. Abel offered the first and best of his flock. In the Bible, the first and best represents the whole. By this offering, Abel exercised his priestly duty. He took what God had given him and he offered it back to God in thanksgiving. God accepted Abel and his offering. Cain brought "an offering." Cain knew he was supposed to give, but did not want to; so he brought something he thought he could spare. This attitude is a consequence of the fall. Fallen man says of the creation, "This is mine." He clings tightly to the creation as though he were the owner and not a steward; as though it was a possession and not a gift. As Hebrews says, "By faith, Abel offered to God a more acceptable sacrifice than Cain, through which he received approval as righteous, God bearing witness by accepting his gifts" (11:2).

Throughout the Bible, the righteous follow in Abel's footsteps by giving back to God the first and best of what God gives to them. The first and best is represented by the tithe. Abraham tithed to Melchizedek (Genesis 14:18-20). Jacob made the following vow to God: "Of all that thou givest me I will surely give the tenth to thee" (Genesis 28:20-22). Various tithes were established in the Torah, the chief of which went to support the ministry of the Priests and Levites in the temple (Leviticus 27:30-32). At the end of the Old Testament, when the temple languished because Israel neglected to tithe, God accused his people of robbing him. God promised that if his people would repent and give the tithe he would pour down his blessing upon them (Malachi 3:8-12). In the New Testament Jesus criticized the hypocrisy of the scribes and Pharisees, but he commended their meticulous practice of tithing (Matthew 23:23). It is the will of God that the ministry of the church, which is the temple of the Holy Spirit and the successor to the Old Testament temple, be supported by the tithes of the people of God.

C. TITHING AND TRUSTING GOD.

We tithe when we take the income God gives to us and give the first tenth as an offering to God. The tithe should be the first check we write. This is how we imitate Abel and offer God our first and or best. This is one way we fulfill our vocation as priests of the creation.

Some will say, "I can't afford to tithe." Of course, this is literally false; the first and best are always there to give. What this really means is, "I am afraid that if I tithe I won't have enough left over for the rest of my needs." This is precisely (*continued on the next page*)

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what makes the tithe an expression of faith. We give God the first and best trusting that God will make the rest sufficient to meet our needs. As Hebrews says, "Without faith it is impossible to please [God], for he who comes to God must believe that He is, and that He is a rewarder of those who diligently seek Him" (Heb 11:6).

God's faithfulness is illustrated by the story of the prophet Elijah and widow of Zarephath. During a severe famine, God sent Elijah to the widow to ask for food. She told Elijah that she only had a little food. She was about to prepare for herself and her son as a sort of last meal before they died of hunger. Elijah told her, "Do not fear; go and do as you have said, but make me a small cake from it first, and bring it to me; and afterward make some for yourself and your son. For thus says the LORD God of Israel: 'The bin of flour shall not be used up, nor shall the jar of oil run dry, until the day the LORD sends rain on the earth.'" 1 Kings tells us, "She went away and did according to the word of Elijah; and she and her household ate for many days. The bin of flour was not used up, nor did the jar of oil run dry, according to the word of the LORD which He spoke by Elijah" (1 Kings 17:8-16). The widow gave first to God, and the rest was made sufficient to meet her needs.



D. THE CORPORATE DIMENSION OF TITHING.

The mission of our church is, "To follow Christ, to worship God every Sunday in his church, and to work and pray and give for the spread of his kingdom" (BCP p. 291) This means that it is the mission of each of us to use our gifts in service, take our part in church's life of prayer and support the church with our tithes—and with other offerings as we are able.

Our participation in the mission of the church is not just for our own benefit; it is our part of the mission and work of the church. If any of us fails to do our part, the mission of the church is less powerful than it ought to be. The church is the army of God; if any soldier in God's army does not man his post and fulfill his calling, we are less able to fight and conquer the enemy.

People sometimes ask how they can help the church; they are looking for some special thing they

can do. However, what they church really needs is not so much the periodic act of heroism; what the church really needs is for all of its members to be committed to our mission; to be faithful in the regular habits of following Christ, worshiping God and working, praying and giving for the spread of his kingdom.

Ordinary faithfulness makes people heroes in the church. What God has done through the ministry of St. Matthew's Church has been made possible by those who have been faithful, year in and year out, to take their part in our mission. This is particularly true with regard to money. We have always been able to do more than what our size would suggest because so many of our people have been faithful in their tithing. We have often had year-end deficits erased by people who experienced financial blessing from God and, as always, were faithful to give. Expansion of our ministry has been made possible by new people who join us and begin to support our ministry with their tithe.

We are committed as a church to mission. We believe that God is calling us to reach out beyond ourselves and share with others what God has given to us. A church that merely wants to survive—that merely wants to pay the bills for another year—might sustain itself with an offering of some of the left over grain. But a church with a mission, the army of God dressed for battle, requires our first and our best, our tithe.

Think of the church as a canoe and of each member as an oarsman. When all row in harmony, the mission of the church moves forward efficiently and effectively. When some choose not to row, others have to row harder to make up for those who do not row. When some are difficult, others have to row harder to make up for the oars that are dragging in the water. As we begin to plan for next year, we are asking all of our members to get on board and row with us. We believe is calling us to do great things. The more people who get on board and row with us, the more people who work and pray and give for the spread of the kingdom, the greater will be the works that God will do through us. ✠

Bishop Scarlett is rector of St. Matthew's Church in Newport Beach, CA. He is bishop ordinary of the Diocese of the Holy Trinity, Anglican Catholic Church. This sermon is reprinted by permission.

SACRAMENTS: *Brief Instructions on the Seven Sacraments by Archibald Campbell Knowles (1911)*

The Sacraments are not empty signs or mere forms, but are Holy Mysteries instituted of God to confer Grace and effect the purpose for which they are administered. There are generally accounted to be Seven Sacraments in all, two of them, Holy Baptism and Holy Communion, sometimes being called the Greater Sacraments, or Sacraments of the Gospel, because they are “generally necessary to Salvation.”

Holy Baptism is the Sacrament of regeneration, making the recipient “a member of Christ, the child of God, and an inheritor of the Kingdom of Heaven.”

At the Fall man lost his original righteousness and came under the dominion of sin, inclining to evil, meriting God’s wrath and punishment. Baptism remits original sin (or the penalty of the Fall), and in the case of an adult also absolves from all sins committed before Baptism, providing there is penitence.

Baptism is the “new birth unto righteousness,” and by it one receives Divine Grace and the “Character” of a Christian. Its supernatural gifts enable one to follow God’s commandments. Baptism is administered by prayer and the pouring on of water in the Name of the Father, Son, and Holy Ghost, and the sign of the Cross, sometimes being accompanied by other ceremonies.

It is known as “Christening” from the giving of the name, which should always be a reminder of our Christian profession, which is to follow Christ and to be made like unto Him. It is also the “Christian Covenant,” because the Sponsors or Godparents promise and vow in the name of the child: 1) to renounce the Devil and all his works, the pomps and vanities of this wicked world, and all the sinful lusts of the flesh; 2) to believe all the articles of the Christian Faith; 3) to keep God’s holy will and Commandments, and walk in the same all the days of this life.

A child should be brought to be baptized as soon as possible after Birth. Care should be taken have proper Sponsors or Godparents. In the case of an adult, the rubric orders a preparation of prayer and fasting. It is expected that persons baptized shall be confirmed as soon as possible. An unbaptized person cannot love God except in a feeble way. An adult dying unbaptized cant enter the Kingdom of Heaven or see God, as Our Lord said, “Except ye are born of water and the Spirit, ye cannot enter the Kingdom of Heaven.” If however such an one’s

life is otherwise good, he will not go to Hell but have “natural beatitude.”

Holy Communion, well called the *Blessed Sacrament*, is the Sacrament of the Body and Blood of Christ, and the Memorial of the Sacrifice of the Cross. Under the forms of Bread and Wine we receive Our Lord Really and Objectively Present but after a Spiritual, Mystical, and Supernatural manner. By this Offering we commemorate and show forth the “One, Full, Perfect, and Sufficient Sacrifice, Oblation, and Satisfaction for the sins of the whole world,” made by Our Lord on the Cross. The Sacrifice of the Altar is one with the Sacrifice on the Cross, Christ being the Priest and Victim on Calvary and in the Eucharist.

It is the only true Sacrifice one that honors God as God, one that satisfies the holiest aspirations of the soul. In it we plead Our Lord’s Death and Passion, worship and adore Him Supernaturally Present, and receive Christ unto Everlasting Life.

In the Holy Communion, or Eucharistic Sacrifice, it is Christ Who offers, consecrates, and gives His Body and Blood unto Everlasting Life, through His Priest on earth presenting the same Sacrifice which in Heaven Christ offers or pleads in Glory before the Throne of God.

The very names of the Mass bring out its wonderful privilege for us: *Holy Eucharist*, that is, the Church’s Service of praise and thanksgiving; *Holy Mysteries*, that it is above our understanding; *Sacrifice of the Altar*, that it shows our Lord’s Death till He come again; *Holy Communion*, that we receive Our Lord in His Body and Blood; *Blessed Sacrament*, that it is the holiest of all Spiritual joys.

The Holy Eucharist being a Sacrifice as well as a Sacrament is offered both for the Living and the Dead. To pray that the departed may “rest in peace,” that “light perpetual may shine upon them” and that they may soon have their perfect consummation and bliss, is a custom ancient and Scriptural. To remember them in the Sacrifice of the Altar seems the most fitting way to fulfill this duty.

These are the first two of seven instructions on the sacraments by the Rev’d Archibald Campbell Knowles, D.D., who was once rector of St. Alban’s Church in Olney, PA. They are taken from his classic book on Anglican devotion “The Practice of Religion.” written in 1911. ✠

