

The Centurion

The Parish Magazine of St. Alban's Church

1011 Old Joppa Road, Joppa, Maryland, 21085



My dear People:

There was a wonderful book called “More Than a Carpenter” written years ago by an evangelical Christian author named Josh McDowell. The book argues that Jesus of Nazareth was more than just a carpenter in first century Judea: he was also the Son of God and long-awaited Messiah. The book is an “apologetic”, which is a book where the author answers objections to the rationality and veracity of the Christian faith, the scriptures, etc. It has been a bestselling book for decades because it is lucid and brief. Anyone can read and understand this though-provoking little book, which I highly recommend. Towards the end of the book McDowell writes a little about how he went from being extremely anti-Christian/God/Religion to faith in Christ. While talking with a Christian woman one day he began to ridicule her for her “religion.” She immediately snapped back, “Mister, I didn’t say anything about religion... I said ‘Jesus.’” That was a turning point for McDowell, who eventually converted and devoted his life to Christian ministry. While we can be glad that God used this exchange to lead him to faith in Christ, we can, at the same time, not be uncritical about the woman’s erroneous supposition that “Jesus” and “religion” are somehow opposed to each other. These days there are believers of every stripe who think that it is perfectly normal to have some level of faith in Jesus—or identify as a Christian—and yet completely dispense with observing the practices of the faith, and not belong to a church. But Christians are not “free agents” who are in relationship only with God through faith in Christ... with Church, sacraments, corporate prayer, and community being just “optional extras.” As my bishop in seminary used to say, “Jesus started that most hated of all things: an organized religion.” In other words, he appointed leaders (the apostles, who later appointed bishops), he established rituals through which he would convey his grace (sacraments), he gave commands as to how we should live (e.g. the Sermon on the Mount), and he gave spiritual gifts through the Holy Ghost to empower the Church in works of ministry. Sitting at home alone, and thinking about God—feeling self-satisfied that we are “enlightened”—is not Christianity, and is not truly following Jesus, into whom we have been incorporated. Rarely or never receiving the sacraments, reading the Bible, being under pastoral care and ecclesiastical authority, or fellowshiping with fellow Christians is not true Christianity. In Acts 2:42 we read that the earliest Christians, “continued steadfastly in the apostles’ doctrine and fellowship, and in breaking of bread, and in prayers.” In other words, because they believed in Jesus, they practiced religion. A lot of people’s faith in Christ is shaky precisely because they do not practice it... they don’t come to church, read the bible, have a prayer life, etc. In other words, they have no religion! If we want Jesus in our life—to know him more and feel his presence—then we need to make the practice of our religion a priority.

Faithfully, your priest, *J. Gordon Anderson*

September 2021

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UPCOMING HOLY DAYS:

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.

Oct 18 - St. Luke

Holy Communion at 10:00 a.m.

Oct 28 - Ss. Simon & Jude

Holy Communion at 10:00 a.m.

Nov 1 - All Saints' Day

Holy Communion at 10:00 a.m.

Nov 2 - All Souls' Day

Holy Communion at 10:00 a.m.

Nov 25 - Thanksgiving Day

Holy Communion at 10:00 a.m.

PARISH LIFE: *The Unchanging Faith and Tradition of the Church*

There is an old saying that goes, “The more things change, the more they stay the same.” This bit of homespun wisdom is apropos to our life here at Saint Alban’s Anglican Church, albeit in a different way from which the expression is typically used.

Usually the phrase has negative connotations. For example, an institution is full of great intentions, and intends to somehow transform itself for the better through all sorts of radical changes. But in the end everything just stays the same old, bad and tired way. Hence the saying, “The more things change, the more they stay the same.”

But for us here at Saint Alban’s the phrase works the opposite way. The more things in THE WORLD change, the more things HERE stay the same.

The world has changed radically even in the last twenty years, and not always for the better. Traditional moral norms have been jettisoned. Racial tensions have risen. Governments even in the classically liberal west have become more authoritarian and centralized. Social media and technology have completely transformed how we communicate with each other, and touch every area of our lives, giving unprecedented power and influence in all parts of human life to Silicon Valley tech firms. The continued rise of globalism while bringing lots of good (cheap products), also brings with it great danger (global pandemics).

Well, in the midst of these radical upheavals sits little old Saint Alban’s Anglican Church in Joppa, Maryland. We have been nestled in the “Valley of the Churches” in the Wilna section of Harford County for almost forty years, although our history actually goes back even further, all the way to 1908 with the founding of the Chapel of the Prince of Peace in Fallston, whence the founding members of St. Alban’s came, and which has long since been closed.

There have been very little changes at Saint Alban’s Church over the years, indeed even since her previous incarnation as Prince of Peace Church. We still use the 1928 Book of Common Prayer, the King James Bible, and the 1940 Hymnal. We still proclaim the ancient, Catholic and Apostolic faith. We still follow the Church Kalendar, and let it guide our spiritual journey throughout the year. We wear the same style vestments that have been worn in the Church since ancient days. Almost all of the music and hymns that we use go back to ancient and medieval times. We read the old classic authors and let their insights into scripture and tradition guide our life: the Church Fathers, Medieval

Doctors, English Divines, and more. You get the idea. The more things change (in the world) the more things (in the Church) stay the same.

In the midst of radical social and political change the Church and her traditions provide comfort and stability to her people and the world. History has shown that one of the most destabilizing things that can happen to a society is the Church changing her liturgy and jettisoning her traditions... witness the aftermath of the Second Vatican Council in the Roman Catholic Church and the aftermath of the introduction of the 1979 Book of Common Prayer in the mainline Episcopal Church. Many wonder if the cultural convulsions of the 1960’s would have been so severe had the Roman Catholic Church (the largest denomination in the world) not thrown out almost 2,000 years of unbroken teaching and tradition at that time, because it would have provided stability during during those times.

In the face of radical change, and the tearing down of structures and traditions, the most important thing we at Saint Alban’s (and indeed the larger Church) can do is “keep on keeping on” by continuing to maintain our faith and traditions, and pass them on to a new generation. The best way to counteract lies is by staunchly defending and proclaiming the truth of the Gospel of our Lord Jesus Christ as revealed in scripture and received and lived out in the tradition of Christ’s One, Holy, Catholic, and Apostolic Church.

A lot of churches do the opposite. They mindlessly hop on the bandwagon of every new moral, social, and political fad that comes down the pike, freely jettisoning parts of the Bible and Church teaching that they find disagreeable, all in a desperate attempt to be “relevant” to people today. Sadly, the reverse ends up happening. By seeking a rapprochement with these ever changing secular norms they make themselves more and more irrelevant to people... they become so much like the world that people eventually wonder what the point of church and religion even is.

The Bible says that Jesus Christ is, “*the same yesterday, and to day, and for ever.*” (Heb. 13:8) The Church, which is his Mystical Body, while situated in space and time, is called to transcend the temporal, and, through the celebration of her Holy Mysteries, bring the eternal and unchanging God into the present. We do this by faithfully maintaining the Catholic and Apostolic faith and its traditions. So the more things in the WORLD change, the more things HERE will continue to stay the same. ☩

LITURGY: *Catholic Worship, Gospel Preaching, & Liturgical Music*

As a heading for this article, the slogan which appears —“Catholic Worship, Gospel Preaching, and Liturgical Music” describes us to a tee.

When we say that St. Alban’s stands for **Catholic Worship** we lie not. St. Alban’s is herself a shrine of Anglican Catholicism. As representing the historic Anglican Communion, one of the three Catholic Communions/traditions (Roman, Orthodox, and Anglican), St. Alban’s rejoices in all the marks of Catholicism, preeminently in Catholic worship.

Now worship is giving to God what He is worth. Who would say that God is not worth the very best? The Catholic Church of the ages has held to that best. She has offered to God the Father as the highest act of her worship the Holy Sacrifice of the Mass wherein she presents to that Father “*a full, perfect, and sufficient sacrifice, oblation, and satisfaction for the sins of the whole world*”, as Jesus offers Himself both Priest and Victim. No offering could compare with that. Yes, at St. Alban’s there is normally at least one Mass celebrated during the week and two Masses celebrated every Sunday. And because Mass cannot be offered every minute in the day, the Blessed Sacrament is reserved on the Altar in the Tabernacle, so that the faithful worshippers may themselves present to the Father Him who is the Divine Guest of the Tabernacle, presenting themselves in union with His Perfection and pleading for the merits flowing from that perfection.

Essentially then, Catholic Worship is the Mass, or “Holy Communion/Eucharist.” How fitting that in connection with the Mass we should give the Father the best that we can give in every way. So we give the best manners in the form of the well-tried ritual of the ages, and the best art in the form of beautiful vestments, chalices, and monstrances, and in the best music and, most important of all, our best selves and souls and bodies... best because as clean and wholesome as we can by God’s grace possibly make them.

One reason why we do not confine ourselves to the Book of Common Prayer in our Catholic Worship is that, although we recognize this Book to be a good Catholic norm, yet we believe that because it represents certain compromises the slavish following of the Prayer Book precludes the offering of the best. We would readily acknowledge that for an individual priest to offer his best is sheer individualism. We have therefore joined with the whole Church Catholic in offering that which the ages have proved to be the best.

We make no apology for this best, including a greatly enriched Kalendar.

St. Alban’s stands also for **Gospel Preaching**. From her pulpit the Good News as brought to mankind through the Incarnate Son of God is preached. One of the few commands given by our blessed Lord to his Apostles was “*Go ye into all the world and teach*”. Teach what? The same Lord went on to say, “*All things whatsoever I have commanded you.*” (Mt. 28:18-20) Now the thing the race of men needs in its present confusion is to be shown the way of salvation and the light of truth and the purpose of life, and Jesus is the “*Way, the Truth and the Life.*” (Jn. 14:6) We can see no excuse for preaching other than setting forth the “*light of the knowledge of the glory of God in the face of Jesus Christ.*” (2 Cor. 4:6) And that glory we would set forth day by day in preaching the Gospel, preaching Good News, preaching Jesus. This is why we do not invite into our pulpit any bishop or priest who would hide or minimize the light of the Gospel of Christ. For as St. Paul reminds us “*we preach not ourselves but Christ Jesus the Lord.*” (2 Cor. 4:5) Therefore you must not expect to hear from St. Alban’s pulpit discourses on the topics of the times. If you do not hear the Gospel preached, then put a placard on the pulpit desk on which is boldly inscribed “*Sir, we would see Jesus!*” (Jn. 12:21) But first make certain that you are willing to see Him as He is and not moulded to your own wishful thinking.

Again, St. Alban’s stands for **Liturgical Music**. By this we mean the music of the Church which is a proper setting for her liturgy. The composers of such music did not write within the confines of any one century. Some of them are ancient, some of them are modern, yet all wrote what they deemed to be a fitting background for the Church’s worship. The compositions that have survived for use in the Church’s worship are those well nigh universally accepted as fitting.

The music of the Church —her liturgical music— is not sentimental twaddle. It is not merely popular, for that which is popular too frequently represents the lowest common denominator. Rather the music of the Church helps the worshipper to rise from the ordinary level and soar heavenward with an accompaniment conducive to greater adoration and more humble wonder and more devout praise. Where liturgical music is used, worshippers do not expect to return homeward after a service whistling their favorite melodies.

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Indeed, their preference is not a criterion, because liturgical music is offered to God and not to man. Now in the development of liturgical music we have modern composers vying with each other to write suitable settings for Catholic worship. *“By their fruits ye shall know them.”* (Mt. 7:16-20) Some send a congregation heavenward while others send the same congregation toward hell... for they cause the worshippers to lose religion by the minute. Yet if a modern congregation

were not practiced upon, liturgical music could not develop beyond a stationary past. At St. Alban's we ask our worshippers to be patient, growing up to liturgical music that has proved itself worthy over the centuries and giving fair consideration to liturgical music of the present era while it is proving or disproving its worth. We do not expect any member of the congregation, priest or layman, to demand “my favorite Mass” or “my favorite motet” or “my favorite hymn”, for the setting of worship as well as worship itself must be God-centered and not man-centered, else it ceases to be that of God's Church. ✠

PARISH NEWS & UPDATES:

Monthly Men's Group — Kick Off Meeting

Our monthly men's group will have its inaugural meeting on Saturday, September 25, 2021 at 10:00 a.m. We will meet at Libb's Grill in White Marsh. The back up meeting place will be the restaurant at Ikea around the corner. There is no need to make reservations, but do let the rector know if he should expect you so you can be made aware of any changes of plans.

Grace, Grit, and Thanksgiving

Please join us —rain or shine— on Tuesday, September 28, 2021, at 6:30 pm, for a discussion about prayer and praying. Invite a friend; bring a lawn chair and a favorite prayer to share around the bonfire. Refreshments will be provided by Kathy Heeter. Contact Father Anderson or Kristi Sjöholm-Sierchio, Grace Grit & Thanksgiving, for more information.

Tell a Friend About Saint Alban's

The best way to continue to grow and expand our ministry is through word of mouth. Please tell someone about our church and invite them out to an event or service.

Expanded Social Media Presence

We have opened an Instagram account where pictures of services and parish life will be placed. Check it out! You can find the link on our website. www.saintalbansjoppa.org Also, our Twitter feed is now updated each day with information about our church and other news, so if you are on Twitter be sure to look for us. Finally, special thanks to Senior Warden C. Carter Glass for faithfully maintaining our Facebook group! He does an outstanding job and always posts interesting articles and links, as well as other great information relative to our parish. And, as always, we

continue to maintain our popular YouTube channel. Always go there to see archived videos of services and teachings.

Weekly Online Teaching Series

Our weekly online catechesis has resumed! Look for it on our Facebook, or, if you are not Facebook, on our YouTube channel. We are currently going through the seven sacraments. Previous episodes have included the Bible, Book of Common Prayer, Hymnal, Church Calendar, and more. Each episode is about 10 minutes long. Check it out and tell a friend!

Daughters of the King Discernment Class

Meet here at church on September 19th at 3 pm. Class is followed by dinner at 4:30 p.m. to which all Daughters are invited.

Parish Ministries Updates

For September and October food items (unopened, non-perishable) *and* personal hygiene items may be donated for Community Action Food Pantry. Place donations in the yellow box in the parish hall. See Karen Novakoski with any questions. And a big THANK YOU for your generosity to “Tools for School”! We raised \$706 for this charitable program that helps teachers and disadvantaged public school students.

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) ✠