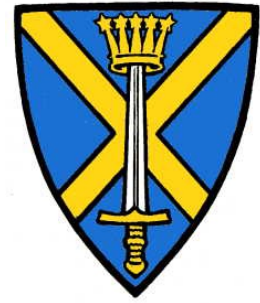


The Centurion

The Parish Magazine of St. Alban's Church

1011 Old Joppa Road, Joppa, Maryland, 21085



My dear People:

One of the important Prayer Book Holy Days in the month of September is that of Saint Matthew the Apostle and Evangelist, which always falls on the twenty-first (BCP pp. 250-251). According to the Gospel appointed for the day (Matthew 9:9 ff.) Matthew was a tax collector (i.e. a publican). He was part of that group of people who were universally hated by their fellow Jews because they were viewed as collaborators with the despised Romans who occupied Judea at the time. Jesus shocked everyone when he went up to Matthew and called him to stop what he was doing and come and follow him. Why would Jesus call such an evil person to be his disciple? Jesus himself gave the answer: "*I am not come to call the righteous, but sinners to repentance.*" Matthew, of course, obeyed Jesus immediately. And from thenceforth was an apostle —part of the twelve men who comprised Jesus' inner circle— and also an evangelist —the author of the first Gospel. And eventually he was martyred for his faith in Jesus Christ. When we put our faith and trust in Christ, and follow him as Lord and Savior, we should forget about our sins and failings of the past. God is not worried about that stuff anymore, and does not want us to ruminate about things that we did that we can no longer change. What he wants us to do is live in the present and entrust the future to him. Put another, he wants us to walk in his ways so we can "*serve him and please him in newness of life*" (BCP p. 75) Matthew did not second guess Jesus's decision to call him. Rather, he simply OBEYED him! And look at all that God accomplished through him! When we were baptized we promised (or our sponsors promised for us) that we would "*obediently keep God's holy will and commandments, and walk in the same all the days of [our lives]*" (BCP p. 278) Saint Paul says that we are "*new creations*" through our faith in Jesus Christ (2 Corinthians 5:17). Our lives —every aspect of them— should reflect our status as the children of God, and as the disciples of Jesus Christ. Sadly, they do not always do that. And sometimes, in fact, the way we live our lives conveys quite the opposite! When we come to that realization we need to repent and turn to the Lord, asking him for forgiveness and help to get back on task loving and serving him. We call this *conversion*. It is analogous to repentance. In the Anglican/Catholic tradition conversion is *any time* that we turn back to God and refocus our lives on our Lord Christ Jesus. Conversion means a change of direction. And so, we turn our backs on all that has lead us away from Christ, and go forward towards Jesus and with Jesus. This is what Matthew did! He turned his back on his sins and his shady profession to follow the Son of Man, and he did not allow his past to haunt him and he made no excuses. What are our excuses? What reasons do we have for failing to offer our all to God and following him with an undivided heart? Let Saint Matthew and his life and work always be an inspiration to us in our walk with God.

Faithfully, your priest, *J. Gordon Anderson*

September 2023

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UPCOMING PRAYER BOOK
HOLY DAYS:

Sep 20th & 22nd - Ember Days

Holy Communion at 10:00 a.m.

Sep 21st - St. Matthew

Holy Communion at 10:00 a.m.

Sep 29th - St. Michael

Holy Communion at 10:00 a.m.

Oct 19th - St. Luke

Holy Communion at 10:00 a.m.

Oct 27th - Ss. Simon & Jude (vigil)

Holy Communion at 10:00 a.m.

Nov 1st - All Saints'

Holy Communion at 10:00 a.m.

Nov 23rd - Thanksgiving

Holy Communion at 10:00 a.m.

Nov 30th - St. Andrew

Holy Communion at 10:00 a.m.

Please see the parish website for the complete list of Sunday and Holy Day services offered each month.

www.saintalbansjoppa.org

THEOLOGY: *Article XX. Of the Authority of the Church.*

This month we continue our look at the Articles of Religion. The one we are considering in particular is ‘Article XX. Of the Authority of the Church’. (BCP p. 607) It reads as follows: *“The Church hath power to decree Rites or Ceremonies, and authority in Controversies of Faith: and yet it is not lawful for the Church to ordain any thing that is contrary to God’s Word written, neither may it so expound one place of Scripture, that it be repugnant to another. Wherefore, although the Church be a witness and a keeper of Holy Writ, yet, as it ought not to decree any thing against the same, so besides the same ought it not to enforce any thing to be believed for necessity of Salvation.”* Let us break this down into sections and examine each part one by one.

“The Church hath power to decree Rites or Ceremonies, and authority in Controversies of Faith.” Firstly, what is meant by “rites and ceremonies?” The former — rites — are the words and formulas used by the Church in her worship and liturgy. Hence, there is the “rite” of Baptism, the “rite” of the Holy Eucharist, etc. These are further narrowed down by denomination/tradition. Thus there is an “Anglican Rite” (i.e. ‘version’) for the celebration of the Eucharist, a “Roman Rite”, a “Greek Rite”, a “Russian Rite”, etc. The latter — ceremonies — are the physical movements, actions, and objects that surround the rite, such as the laying on of hands, the elevations at Holy Communion, bowing, etc. Whereas each instantiation of Christ’s One, Holy, Catholic, and Apostolic Church has its own rite for the sacraments, they also have their own ceremonies that support those rites. It goes without saying, of course, that there are many similarities between the rites and ceremonies of the different branches of the Church.

Secondly, this part of Article XX says that the Church *“hath power to decree”* these things. That means that the Church has the apostolic authority to draw up her own rites and ceremonies for her use and alter them as deemed necessary, as, for example, the great English Reformers did to a certain extent to the old medieval

rites. (The English Reformation was a very conservative reformation compared to that of the continent.) She has this authority because she is the mystical Body of Christ, in which dwells the Holy Spirit of God. That the Church “hath power to decree” these things is why there are numerous rites and ceremonies for the same simple sacraments throughout the universal church.

Thirdly, this part of Article XX says that she has *“authority in controversies of faith.”* This means that, as the Body of Christ, the Church has the power and responsibility to define herself — who she is and what

she believes about controversial matters — whenever the need arises. This was seen most clearly in history in the seven ecumenical councils (325-787 A.D.) where the ancient Church defined the person of Christ and other important issues. The Church had to take the record of scripture and tradition, and the reason of man, and clarify for new generations just who exactly Jesus was and is. The result is the Nicene Creed... *“God of God, Light of Light, and etc.”*

All of this might seem to give the Church unlimited power and authority, but it does not. The Article continues: *“and yet it is not lawful for the Church to ordain any thing that is contrary to God’s Word written, neither may it so expound one place of Scripture, that it be repugnant to another.”* This means that despite the Church having such power and authority she is not free to do whatever she

wants and invent doctrines and practices that have no biblical precedent or warrant. Furthermore, she cannot push one particular true doctrine to such an extent that it becomes false or leads people into error. An example of this today is talking about God as “love.” (1 John 4:8) Some people push this doctrine so far that they end up neglecting the fact that God is also judge (Revelation 20:12-13)! The Church has to find the balance between all of the teachings found in Holy Scripture.



Please turn to page four.

LITURGY & WORSHIP: *The Wonder that is the Book of Common Prayer*

We as Anglicans are really blessed to have the Book of Common Prayer. When used and appreciated, it shapes and gives order to our spiritual lives, and forms us as Christians and disciples of our Lord Jesus Christ.

Someone recently said to me that they found Saint Alban's to be a very confusing church, and that they could not recommend a non-believer to attend to this place, and learn about God and come into a living relationship with our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ here. I could not disagree with that more. Besides the fact that here at Saint Alban's you can actually get to know the pastor and meet with him in person on a regular basis and be disciplined by him (try doing *that* at a megachurch), we have the Book of Common Prayer which contains all the doctrine and teachings of the Church.

Just about every aspect of our faith and tradition is covered in the Book of Common Prayer. All the basic stuff that we need to know to live the Christian life is in there. Does a person want to know what the Church teaches about those things? Just look in the Prayer Book. The liturgy contains our beliefs and explains on a very basic level what Church teaching is on those important matters. Do you want to understand the Anglican position on the ordained ministry or marriage? Just read the Ordinal or the Solemnization of Holy Matrimony. We follow the old tradition of "*lex orandi, lex credendi*" which means "the law of prayer is the law of belief," or put more simply: what we pray, we believe.

The Prayer Book explains how we are justified and born again in Jesus Christ, and made living members of his Body, the Church. The Prayer Book Catechism and Offices of Instruction clearly and concisely (NB: Not all catechisms are concise!) explain how people come to faith in Christ and how that faith is nurtured and sustained. The Catechism tells us what we are to believe (the Creeds), how we are to pray (the Lord's Prayer, and how we are to live (the Ten Commandments), expounding on these topics very succinctly. One does not have to invest in a theological library full of volumes arcane dogmatic theology, or moral theology, to know how to become a Christian and how to live the Christian life if he is an Anglican. It is all in the Prayer Book! All one really needs to thrive and prosper in his walk with God is the Holy Bible and the Book of Common Prayer.

This makes us a very different tradition from other Christian traditions. If a person grows up Roman

Catholic, or Presbyterian, or Lutheran, or in some other tradition where on earth does he go to find out what his church believes about baptism, confirmation, Holy Communion, ordination, marriage, death, moral norms, etc.? Yes, he can find the information if he tries (it is certainly out there)... but he has to go through volumes of other books, or search online, or have access to a theological library in order to find the information he wants. And then he has to know exactly *which* books to read... which are authoritative, correct, and authentic Church/Biblical; teaching, versus those which are speculative, incorrect and not official Church/Biblical teaching. None of that is the case with Anglicanism because we use the Book of Common Prayer and take it seriously.

Sadly, a lot of people—even longtime Anglicans—do not know this because they do not use the Prayer Book very much outside of the Holy Communion service. And so they are unfamiliar with much of its contents, and so they do not understand how it all works together as a unified system: what, for example, the relationship between faith and baptism is, and how that relates to confirmation; they do not understand what the three-fold ministry of bishops, priests, and deacons is for, and etc. There is no excuse for being theologically and spiritually clueless when you frame your life around the Book of Common Prayer and use it regularly.

It goes without saying that the official Prayer Books of the historic Anglican Communion are the only prayer books that I am talking about here. The other day I saw a book published by Zondervan for sale on Amazon called "The Book of Common Prayer." But it was not the official BCP... in fact it was nothing like it at all. It was a bizarre collection of prayers and devotions haphazardly thrown together by so-called "liturgical experts" and has no unity whatsoever that I could see, and was not the work of the Church but rather of a committee. That book, and others like it, are *not* the Book of Common Prayer that I am writing about or that we use! Rather, our Prayer Book—the 1928 American Book of Common Prayer of the Episcopal Church—is a product of the Church and reflects her life and beliefs and those of her people who, under the guidance of the Holy Spirit, compiled her. It is the guide to our worship and devotion and provides a framework for the same. It is also our basic compendium of doctrine and theology. If you want to know what Anglicans believe about something check in the Prayer Book first. ☩

Continued from page 2...

Article XX concludes, summing everything up thusly: *“Wherefore, although the Church be a witness and a keeper of Holy Writ, yet, as it ought not to decree any thing against the same, so besides the same ought it not to enforce any thing to be believed for necessity of Salvation.”*

So WHEREAS the Church is the “witness and keeper of Holy Writ” —which means that she has compiled these books (i.e. she is their “witness”), and has plenary authority to interpret them (i.e. she is their “keeper”)— and WHEREAS she cannot set herself at odds with them, she likewise cannot require her people to believe non scriptural things in order to be saved. For example, the Church cannot declare the number of times per year a person must receive Holy Communion. (e.g. “You must make your communion at Easter or else you will be in mortal sin and go to hell when you die!”) Neither can she can’t force people to go to private confession, or require her people to believe a specific academic doctrine of the Real Presence of Christ in the Eucharist (e.g. Transubstantiation).

The vows made by a man at his ordination affirm this when they commit to not teach anything necessary for salvation except that which may be proven by holy scripture. This is... found on pages 542 and 554 in the Ordering of Priests and the Consecration of Bishops respectively. (Interestingly in the Ordering of Deacons on page 530 and following no such vow is made, probably because the deacon does not have the same teaching office as the priesthood and the episcopate.)

In Article XX we see a dual affirmation of the authority of the Church and the authority of scripture. One cannot undermine another. The tradition of the Church interprets the scriptures, and the holy scriptures guide and interpret sacred tradition. The Church has no authority to override scripture, but since the Bible does not interpret itself that task is left to the Holy Catholic Church in which dwells God the Holy Ghost, whom Jesus promised would always guide her to the truth. (John 16:5 ff. — the Gospel appointed for the 4th Sunday after Easter) ☩

PARISH NEWS & UPDATES:

Welcome!

We welcome to our parish family the Gundersen family! Chris and his wife Padma and their children Kiran and Veera recently moved to the area from northern Virginia. They attend the 10:00 a.m. service. Please be sure to welcome them and introduce yourself.

Grace, Grit, and Thanksgiving

Join us on Tuesday, September 23rd at 6:30 p.m. for our prayer and fellowship group. The topic lead by Kristi Sjöholm-Sierchio is “HOPE-FULL.” Light refreshments and beverages are served.

New Mass Setting

For the rest of Trinitytide (September — November) at the 10:00 a.m. service the music for the Mass will be the 8th Communion Service Martin Shaw, popularly (and albeit it rather strangely) known as the “Folk Mass.” Please leave your guitar, tambourines, and bellbottom pants at home, though, as there is nothing ‘folky’ about this familiar and beautiful setting!

Social Media

Check us out on social media on Facebook, Instagram, and Twitter! There are announcements and other important bits of information about us posted on these platforms on a regular basis.

Building Project

Don’t forget to give in support of our building project! Every little bit helps. As with all gifts to St. Alban’s any amount of money you donate at any time is 100% tax deductible.

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) ☩

