

The Centurion

The Parish Magazine of St. Alban's Church

1011 Old Joppa Road, Joppa, Maryland, 21085



My dear People:

We have been back to church here at Saint Alban's in Harford County, MD since the Sunday after the Ascension in 2020 (May 24, 2020) and yet here we are in August 2021 and we only have about thirty people attending services at church (about 1/3 of our attendance before the dreaded "pandemic."). Other churches in the diocese have many more people back in regular attendance. I don't know what the problem is here at Saint Alban's. Don't we miss church? Don't we miss receiving the strengthening grace of the Body and Blood of Christ in the Mass, and the fellowship of his people? I would love to see more people here in person. We miss you! Please return. Sometimes I wonder if the problem is me. Perhaps I have completely failed in teaching you all, the flock that Christ has entrusted to me. If I have, I apologize; and I promise you that I will do my very best to try to convey to you—in print, in person, online, in sermons, etc.—the many reasons as to why we have to make weekly church attendance a priority in our lives if we follow Christ as Lord and Savior.

I will be on vacation twice this month, so I will miss two Sundays at the Lord's altar with all of you. Long before he was president I saw an interview with Donald Trump (back when the mainstream media was in love with him) where he said that the worst thing for him would be to be on safari in Africa. Why? Because he'd be away from all that he loves to do... his business empire, etc. His point, in this interview about being successful, was that one has to do what he loves in order to be successful, and that he himself loved his business, so he would never want to "take a vacation from it." I love being a priest. God has been gracious to me, and I have been blessed to have a life doing what I love to do. So the very notion of a "vacation" is completely strange to me... but then again a vacation is always nice, and an excellent way to be refreshed!

Does anyone read anymore? My son is constantly commenting on how his video games need updates (which cost money), and how he needs the latest games and consoles, etc. to play. So once, when he was talking about needing yet more game stuff, I stopped him and showed him a book I was reading that was over 100 years old. "See this book? It's super old, and yet it still works just as well as it did when it was first printed." He got the message, at least for a little while. We need to stop wasting time polluting our minds with network and cable news garbage, and with YouTube and the internet and actually sit down and read long books of great cultural importance. Good journals and periodicals are also worth checking out. I like the *New Criterion* and the *Claremont Review of Books* among others. What are you reading to feed your heart, mind, and soul? If you'd like a recommendation please ask me. I'd love to help! God bless you all!

Faithfully, your priest,

J. Gordon Anderson

August 2021

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UPCOMING HOLY DAYS:

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.

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.

THEOLOGY: *The Three Orders of Ministers in the Church*

Last month our beloved friend and spiritual father, the Most Rev'd Walter H. Grundorf, D.D. retired as diocesan and presiding bishop, and into his shoes stepped the co-adjutor, the Most Rev'd Chandler Holder Jones, SSC. This transition presents us with an excellent opportunity to briefly examine the orders of ministry in the Church.

Anglican church "polity" (i.e. "governance") is known as "episcopal" because the Church is essentially run by bishops. The Greek word translated as "bishop" in the New Testament is "episcopos" whence we derive the English word "Episcopal." The polity of the Roman Catholic and Orthodox churches is also "episcopal."

In Anglican polity (and catholic polity in general) there are three orders of ministers: bishops, priests, and deacons. The Book of Common Prayer lays this out on page 294, wherein is found the following series of questions and answers: *Question.* What orders of Ministers are there in the Church? *Answer.* Bishops, Priests, and Deacons; which orders have been in the Church from the earliest times. *Question.* What is the office of a Bishop? *Answer.* The office of a Bishop is, to be a chief pastor in the Church; to confer Holy Orders; and to administer Confirmation. *Question.* What is the office of a Priest *Answer.* The office of a Priest is, to minister to the people committed to his care; to preach the Word of God; to baptize; to celebrate the Holy Communion; and to pronounce Absolution and Blessing in God's Name. *Question.* What is the office of a Deacon? *Answer.* The office of a Deacon is, to assist the Priest in Divine Service, and in his other ministrations, under the direction of the Bishop.

These offices have "subcategories" under them. For example, there are several types of bishops: assistant/auxiliary or "suffragan" bishops, bishop ordinary (the bishop who canonically rules the diocese), co-adjutor bishops (bishops with the right to succeed the ordinary when he steps down), archbishops (a bishop who is a titular or honorific head over other bishops, usually the head of a province, or "group" of dioceses), etc. The Roman Catholic pope is actually just another bishop... the Bishop of Rome. No matter how many different types of bishops there are they all do the same thing sacramentally and spiritually: they pastor a flock and they confirm and ordain. Bishop Jones, like his predecessor, Bishop Grundorf, is the Bishop Ordinary of our diocese, and also at the same time the Archbishop of the Province (the collection of dioceses that make up the Anglican Province of America). But either way, from a sacramental perspective, he is

fundamentally just any other bishop. Likewise there are numerous types of priests — canons, deans, prebendaries, archdeacons, etc.— but, like bishops, they all do the same thing as each other: minister to the flock committed to his care, preach, baptize, celebrate Mass, and absolve people from sin. In terms of deacons the main two subcategories that we hear about these days are "permanent" deacons and "transitional" deacons. As the names imply the former are men who will remain deacons for their whole ordained ministry, while the latter are men who will eventually advance to ordination to the priesthood. But no matter their eventual state, each deacon does the same thing: he assists the priest in divine service mainly by reading the Gospel and administering the chalice.

The fullness of the apostolic ministry is in the office of bishop. He is a deacon, a priest, and a bishop. The priesthood and diaconate are derived from his ministry as we see in the New Testament. (e.g. 1 Tim. 4:14, 2 Tim. 1:6, Acts 6) Put another way, a bishop is still a priest and a deacon. And a priest is always still a deacon. One a man is ordained to a higher office in the Church he retains the charism and grace of the lower offices. The Prayer Book says in the rubrics of its various rites what each office is supposed to do and when. So for example in Morning and Evening Prayer at the absolution it says that priest alone is to pronounce the absolution (p.24). In Holy Communion is says that a priest or a bishop should do it. (p. 75) In the Order of Confirmation the bishop's parts are clearly spelled out in the rite and the rubrics. In Holy Communion the deacon is listed as a person to collect the alms from the people. (p. 73) And at a diaconate ordination a deacon is directed in the rubrics to read the Holy Gospel. (p. 534)

In some places in our Prayer Book (p. 569), and also in other BCPs of the historic Anglican Communion (such as the Scottish BCP) one will see the term "presbyter." This is simply the ancient term for "priest" and the word found in the New Testament. It is a Greek word that means "old man." The word "priest" is the traditional English form of the word. As for the so-called "minor orders" of porter, exorcist, lector, and subdeacon not much is heard about them officially in our tradition. We may think of the first three as analogous to our modern day ushers, acolytes, and lay readers. And the subdeacon is a liturgical role at a Solemn High Mass. These are not as important as the major orders of bishop, priest, and deacon, not being found in the scriptures or earliest tradition of the Church. ☩

 THE CHRISTIAN YEAR: *The Glorious Assumption of the Blessed Virgin Mary*

In the expression, Glorious Assumption, the adjective and the noun go together, traditionally and inevitably. An assumption could not be anything other than glorious, for it means a taking up from the drabness of earthly life into the unimaginable glory of the divine presence; on the other hand, there could be no greater glory manifested in any human person than that he or she should be so taken up.

According to the Old Testament, Enoch and Elijah were both taken up to heaven at the end of their earthly lives as a mark of signal divine favour; a late Jewish tradition spoke of an assumption of Moses, whose end is indeed veiled in some mystery in the Old Testament and who, before all the Old Testament heroes and prophets, might have been considered the most likely candidate for assumption. In the Christian Church, it is of course Mary whose Assumption we celebrate, but it is worth remembering that the idea of an assumption was already there in the Jewish tradition, including the canonical scriptures. The idea in itself was certainly no innovation.

We should note the distinction between assumption and ascension. 'Assumption' (analepsis) means 'taking up', that is to say, it is an act of God in the performance of which the person assumed remains passive. 'Ascension' (anabasis), on the other hand, means 'going up', which gives an active role to the person who so ascends. The only Person who ascended to God, that is to say, went to the Father as of right, was the Divine Son. As Saint John's Gospel tells us, "No one has ascended into heaven but he who descended from heaven, the Son of Man." As we shall see, the Assumption of the Blessed Virgin is dependent upon the Ascension of Jesus Christ, and indeed, a corollary of it because of the clearing and glorification of our human nature through Him.

Mary was taken into heavenly glory. The expression 'heavenly glory' indicates that we are talking about a condition, a relation to God, rather than a place. Why the Assumption? It seems impossible that she who conceived Christ, bore Him, fed Him with her milk, held Him in her arms and pressed Him to her bosom, should after this earthly life be separated from Him in either body or soul. The closeness of Jesus and Mary could not be broken by the end of their earthly sojourn, and we see how her Assumption follows on His Ascension. It is the answer to the promise that *'where I am, there you may be also.'*

In the 20th century, the Western Church hailed Mary as a pre-eminent and altogether singular member of the Church, and as the Church's model and excellent exemplar in faith and charity. Taught by the Holy Spirit, the Church honours her with filial affection and piety as a most beloved Mother.

This firm linkage between the Church and Mary as its Mother, type, model, and pre-eminent member may be used to go back and interpret the meaning of the Assumption. A reason given for the Assumption was the impossibility of supposing that Mary could be separated from Christ by the termination of earthly life. Mary's solidarity with her Son is such that His Ascension implies her Assumption, that where He is she will be also.

But now we see that on the other side, Mary is inseparable from the Church. So the Church too must be inseparable from Christ. His Ascension must imply the assumption of the Church as well as of its Mother and preeminent member, Mary. The whole Church is the recipient of the promise that *'where I am, there you may be also.'* In saying this, we see that the significance of the Assumption is immeasurably broadened. It is not just a personal doctrine about Mary (though it remains that) but a belief about the whole body of the faithful of whom Mary is the type.

Mary's Glorious Assumption is the first moment in the glorious assumption of the Church. We recall some further words from Saint John's Gospel: "*The glory which thou has given me, I have given to them... Father, I desire that they also, whom thou hast given me, may be with me where I am, to behold my glory which thou hast given me in thy love for me before the foundation of the world.*"

The Feast of the Assumption must be reckoned one of the most humanistic festivals in the Church's calendar. It is not just a celebration of Mary (though it certainly is that) but a celebration of redeemed humanity. Christian theologians have often denigrated the human race, dwelling on our sin and depravity, as if they could only glorify God by putting down man and pointing to the infinite distance between them.

But that is not God's way and is contrary to his intention. He created human beings in His own image that they might enjoy communion with Him. He sent His eternal Son, the One who descended, that He might also ascend again and bring with Him the men and women whom He had gained in the world to share His glory with Him. *(Continued on the next page)*

(Continued from the previous page) We are now coming in sight of the full meaning of the Glorious Assumption, and we can and we can see it as one of the most hopeful and encouraging items in the Church's belief, and one that gathers up the implications of many other doctrines, Christological, soteriological, anthropological, and so on.

Not least among the gleams of glory in the Church are the saints that the Church has known in all ages, and chief among whom is the Blessed Virgin. A sober hope and confidence in the Church is an essential part of our response to the calling of God. We have to understand the Church eschatologically. Its unity, holiness, catholicity, and apostolicity will reach their fulness only in the end when the purposes of God are complete. Yet they are not just dreams for the future. Already in innumerable ways, in deeds of love, in moments of communion, in experiences of grace, there are flashes of the final glory to encourage the Church on its way.

The Assumption is not a once-for-all event, but a continuing process. The Assumption is a theological event, and a theological event is not tied to a moment of time. It can take effect at all times. The Assumption began with the Dormition of the Blessed Virgin Mary, but it continues throughout the history of the Church and it will be complete only when the Church is fully

united with Christ, the Body with the Head, and His glory is manifest in all.

Certainly, we can affirm that at some time in the first century of our era, in some place, the Blessed Virgin fell asleep and went to be with her Son and to receive the glory He had promised to bestow on His own. That is the classic moment of the Glorious Assumption and is worthy in itself of celebration. But it is the beginning of a vaster, indeed, cosmic assumption. That assumption is going on at this very moment.

Wherever in the Church militant here on earth there is a gleam of glory, a faithful act of discipleship, a prayer offered in faith, assumption is going on. We believe too that in the Church expectant, souls are being perfected toward the day of Jesus Christ. Finally, in the Church triumphant, the work will be complete, and with the Blessed Virgin Mary and all the saints, the faithful people of God will take their place in His eternal kingdom of glory and light.

The Assumption is the expression in appropriate theological symbols of some of the most hopeful affirmations of the Christian faith. ✠

Ed. note: This article was written by the famous theologian John Macquarrie and came to The Centurion via Bishop Jones and the St. Barnabas Journal. The feast of the Assumption is celebrated every year on August 15th.

PARISH NEWS & UPDATES:

Summer Religion

“The summer months are here again. Sometimes we hear Christians talking about their summer religion. What is this summer religion? For the Anglican it is the same religion as winter religion. The Anglican happily refuses to take any vacation from that which binds him to his God. His rule of life is binding upon him every day of the Christian year. During the summer, therefore, he will make his confessions and communions regularly, he will attend Mass faithfully, he will gladly pray and meditate and engage in some worthwhile spiritual reading, he will keep to the Church's discipline regarding fasting and abstinence, he will support the Church's work to the best of his ability, and he will ever regard himself as a missionary in bringing others into Holy Church both by his own example of happy Christian living, and by his constructive exposition of the Faith whenever the

opportunity arises.” *The Rev'd Grieg Taber, rector of the Church of St. Mary the Virgin, NYC, 1942.*

Monthly Men's Group

In September Fr. Anderson would like to start a monthly men's fellowship group at the church. At this point all that has been decided is that the group will meet once a month. If you are interested please let him know and we can decide on a day and time to meet.

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) ✠