

The Centurion

The Parish Magazine of St. Alban's Church

1011 Old Joppa Road, Joppa, Maryland, 21085



My dear People:

2021 is now upon us! Thank God that 2020 is over. What a crazy year it was. It is common for people to make a “New Year’s Resolution” at the beginning of a new year. What should ours be? If we haven’t chosen one yet a good one in my opinion to consider is to spend as little time as possible watching news media and hovering about on “social media” such as Facebook, Twitter, and Instagram. My number one advice for people —especially young people— is to get off of the phones and technology and instead spend time connecting with what really matters: real people; God; nature; family; and the like. Instead of laying on a couch and mindlessly surfing through different news feeds and social media accounts (being spoon fed by an algorithm designed to control what we think) we should spend time learning new hobbies, or practicing and perfecting the ones we already have. We should do things that engage the whole person, such as read the great classics of western thought (or some other thought... whatever... just READ something important and preferably not on a glowing screen). Watch classic film. (I recently bought a one year subscription to the Criterion Channel. Highly recommended for film buffs.) Listen to the foundational pieces of music that have helped shape our society. No, not the Beatles, or Snoop Dogg, or Barbara Streisand, although they have made some great music in some people’s minds... but rather people like Bach, Beethoven, and Brahms. Get into opera. There’s no better time for it. Learn a new language! There is a great free app called Duolingo that can help you learn to speak many different languages. What about a new instrument? I am learning how to play the pedal steel guitar. What instrument are you learning? It goes without saying that we should be studying the scriptures, praying, and reading theology in order to grow into mature believers. In short, there are so many great and refreshing, soul inspiring things to do in the course of a day! So why would we be content to devote what little time we have in this life to scrolling through online content that is at best banal and idiotic, and at worse beastly and socially divisive? I always try to remind people —particularly the young— that we have very little time on this earth in this life, and that our lives can be snatched away from us at any given moment. So we need to make the most of the little flame of life God has given to us, and use it to prepare our hearts and souls to one day meet him, and transition to eternal life. Make the best of this life! Enriching our lives now with all that is true, beautiful, and good will help prepare us for heaven, so much so that when we get there it will hardly feel a different place from whence we came! Becoming totally absorbed with the nastiness of “social media” (Ed. note: it should be called “anti-social” media) will only draw us away from God and our fellow man. It will lead us not to heaven, but to hell... in this life and the next.

Faithfully, your priest,

J. Gordon Anderson

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UPCOMING HOLY DAYS:

Jan 1st - Circumcision

Holy Communion at 10:00 a.m.

Jan 6th - Epiphany

Holy Communion at 10:00 a.m.

Jan 25th - Conversion of St. Paul

Holy Communion at 10:00 a.m.

Jan 30th - King Charles the Martyr

Holy Communion at 10:00 a.m.

Feb 2nd - Purification of St. Mary the Virgin

Holy Communion at 10:00 a.m.

Feb 17th - Ash Wednesday

Holy Communion at 10:00 a.m.

Feb 24th - St. Matthias

Holy Communion at 10:00 a.m.

Feb 26th - Ember Friday in Lent

Holy Communion at 10:00 a.m.

Feb 27th - Ember Saturday in Lent

Holy Communion at 10:00 a.m.

CHRISTIANITY & CULTURE: *Violence Is Not The Answer*

On January 6th—the feast of the Epiphany, no less—insane violence broke out in our nation’s capital, when crazed protestors who could not accept the outcome of the 2020 presidential election caused all sorts of havoc and terror in the U.S. Capitol and elsewhere. In some ways it was “deja vu all over again” as back in January 2017, when President Trump was inaugurated, violent rioting and protesting at the hands of people who believed the election had had been “stolen” erupted in the nation’s capitol.

2020 was a violent year. We have endured as a nation a summer of brutal (not “mostly peaceful” as legacy media falsely termed them) protests and mob rule across the country at the hands of Black Lives Matters, Antifa, and other radical fringe groups, in cities like Seattle, Portland, Minnesota, and other places. And now there is this. The capitol rioters obviously took notes out of the books of the rioters of the past summer and before. Their attitude seems to have been: “If they can do it with impunity, then why can’t we?” And so what happens is that violence becomes normalized. We become desensitized to both seeing it and doing. After the summer and fall of 2020 all bets are off. If something does not go the way a person likes he thinks the response should be violence... that the way to convert people to his (ostensibly right) point of view is violent coercion, physical harm, and destruction of property. But is violence ever really a solution to anything at all? The biblical and rational answer is a resounding no.

The first person in the Bible to use violence to solve a problem was Cain in Genesis chapter 4. He and his brother, Abel, each prepared a sacrifice for God. Cain offered the fruit of the earth. The Bible says he worked the soil. But his brother Abel kept animals and offered a portion of them. Cain’s offering was rejected by God, while Abel’s was accepted. Why? Because God had previously cursed the earth (Gen. 3:17), and therefore nothing “cursed” could be offered to God. Cain was given a chance to make a good offering (4:6-7) but he refused, and in his anger and jealousy he murdered his brother, Abel. (4:8) God, of course, knew what he did, and so he cursed Cain to essentially wander the earth as a drifter (4:12). He is terrified at this prospect because he understands it to mean there is a target on his back (which there probably is) and so God has to place him under a type of special protection (4:15-16), which, while not removing from him the consequences of his actions, at least take the target off of his back. So, as we sarcastically say, “a lot

of good” Cain’s resort to violence did him! All it did was make matters worse, and make violence return to him and his descendants many fold. And what we see in the book of Genesis after this murder is the increase of violence until it gets so bad, and people are so wicked, that God destroys the world with the flood. So the ancient answer to the question posed above is a resounding NO! Violence is never an answer. It never solves problems. It always makes things worse.

In his very interesting book *Diomysius Rising: The Birth of Cultural Revolution Out of the Spirit of Music*, author E. Michael Jones makes the argument that revolutionaries figured out long ago that violent revolutions with guns and bayonets were usually not successful in the long term in bringing about new and radical change in society. What was successful, as Frederick Nietzsche discovered, was changing culture, and that could be done very easily and subtly through (among other things) the power of music. Elvis Presley and the Beatles, and well before them, Arnold Schoenberg, did more to upend culture than any political party or violent revolution could ever dream of. True revolutionaries seek to change culture, not kill people. The former approach is much more successful than the latter.

All of that is to say that resorting to violence is pointless on at least two levels. One, it just brings about more violence and hate and trouble. And two, it is not really an effective way to bring about lasting change. So no rational person should ever resort to violence to solve a problem.

A Christian however does not have to resort to these pragmatic —albeit rational— notions with which anyone could agree in order to renounce violence. For him it is good enough to just remember the Sixth Commandment: “*Thou shalt do no murder.*” This commandment covers all acts of violence. As Jesus said in Matthew 5:21-22, “*Ye have heard that it was said of them of old time, Thou shalt not kill; and whosoever shall kill shall be in danger of the judgment: But I say unto you, That whosoever is angry with his brother without a cause shall be in danger of the judgment.*” So even if no one is murdered in a situation like January 6th (though sadly, some people lost their lives) the very violence itself and political animosity on both sides of the aisle is an act of murder according to Jesus! Violence is never a solution to man’s problems. It’s failed since literally day one. And God never wants us to resort to violence to solve our disputes. Rational discussion and the rule of law is a much better way to go to solving disagreements. ✠

PARISH LIFE: *A Tribute to Frannie Flatau (1935-2020)*

On Friday, December 11, 2020, longtime parishioner Frannie Flatau went home to be with the Lord. She lived a good long life dedicated to loving God and her neighbor as herself. She was a faithful member of Saint Alban's for many years until her health took a turn for the worse. (She was a survivor of pancreatic cancer, which, as she used to always remind people, has a single digit survival rate!) Her late mother, Harriet Shriver Howard, whose picture hangs in the parish hall, helped get St. Alban's started in the early 1980's and donated the land for the church from the family farm, Olney (for which Olney, Maryland, is named).

As her Baltimore Sun obituary stated, Frannie lived on Olney her whole life. She grew up in the huge historic house and loved to tell the story of how her ancestors had the massive marble columns transferred from Baltimore City to the farm for what she called "the marble porch." (They were brought up on a train, I believe, and then dragged by horses to the farm, which sadly led to the untimely demise of some of the horses!) She used to compare herself to a tree, and say that her feet had roots in them which firmly rooted in her beloved Olney.

Frannie faithfully attended church and most Holy Day services until her health prevented her from doing so. She was involved in all of the activities at church, serving many terms on the vestry and participating in every event. She gave generously to God of her time, talent, and treasure. In recent years she donated gorgeous vestments to the church in memory of her mother that are still in regular use today. For Christmastide events she made an absolutely wicked eggnog that was probably half top-shelf bourbon! (Though Frannie herself was not a drinker.) She also made delectable dinners for our Lenten studies over the years. Her most important Holy Day was the Transfiguration (August 6th) because that was day her mother died. Her favorite hymn was "There is a Green Hill Far Away" (tune: Horsely) which we sing every year on Passion Sunday. For years she would host a parish lunch at any number of local restaurants—Bob Evans in recent years— every Thursday. Not content to serve just the local parish, Frannie was also a regular delegate to synod, and served on the diocesan standing committee several times. Every time I go to synod—to this day— people ask, "How is Frannie doing?"

In addition to her devotional life, Frannie loved all kind of sports. She was a regular participant in the senior olympics and would often travel cross country

with friends to participate in their events. She was also an incredible tennis player and played regularly at the Harford County Tennis Center. She always strove to stay in the best physical health possible, even after her cancer diagnoses. It was not uncommon for Frannie to walk to church on a cold winter morning all the way from her flat off of Stockton Road! Even with her cancer, Frannie was probably healthier than many folk who were half her age!

Frannie had a smile and laugh that would absolutely light up a room. She was generous and positive to a fault. She never sought to draw attention to herself by talking about her physical suffering and pain, explaining that her late mother taught her to always keep a stiff upper lip and not complain. She was very warm and affectionate and spent lots of time with her family and friends, never sitting still for a moment.

At St. Alban's she was best known for her annual pony show, which she put on every July in memory of her mother. (Frannie absolutely loved the hot, sweltering months of July and August, and used to say that it was those two months that got her through the frigid Maryland winters. When I asked why she did not move to Florida given her love of intense heat she would make the Olney/tree roots comment mentioned above.) Frannie did the pony show almost entirely by herself the last few years. She purchased all of the condiments, drinks, and food; made arrangements to have the field mowed; secured the participants; obtained sponsors; and all the rest. For a while it was the rector of St. Alban's job to announce the various categories. I always messed up... accidentally calling the ponies "horses" by mistake. One year I was very rudely corrected by a sneering little girl: "They're PONIES, not horses." After that I was done announcing. Frannie let me step down and someone from the organization took over, while I found myself demoted to "Grade II Lackey" or some such position, which was actually much better suited for my skillset. Frannie took it all in stride and with a big smile as she was wont to do. Just as she never complained about her health, so she would never complain if Pony Show didn't quite turn out the perfectly. Through her efforts, the church raised a lot of money from the show over the years.

Frannie will be terribly missed but her memory will live on in the hearts and lives of those who knew and loved her. She was a good friend to me and to all the clergy of the church and loved the Lord with all her heart, mind, soul, and strength. We pray for the happy repose of her soul and for her family who survive her. ☩

PARISH NEWS & UPDATES:

Prayer Books and Other Aids Available for Purchase Online

Don't forget to check out the "shop" on the Anglican Province of America website from time to time! You can buy Prayer Books and a couple of other devotional there for your own personal use. <https://anglicanprovince.org/shop/> There is also Anglican Parishes Association <https://anglican-parishes-association.myshopify.com> which sells other devotional books and Prayer Books.

The Sacramentalists Podcast

There is a wonderful Anglican podcast called The Sacramentalists that is headed up by a couple of young priests from our diocese. <https://podcasts.apple.com/us/podcast/the-sacramentalists/id1457082281> They discuss all sorts of fascinating theological topics and conduct interviews with various theologians and clergy. Check it out wherever you get your podcasts!

Earth and Altar Website and Blog

Earth and Altar is a great website that is full of fascinating, thought-provoking articles about the Anglican way of being Christian. <https://www.earthaltar.org> It is operated out of our parish in Charlottesville, Virginia, All Saints' Anglican Church.

Prayer Book Society USA

One of the best resources for traditional Anglicanism is the Prayer Book Society. <https://pbsusa.org> We (N.B. the rector is on the board of directors.) promote the use of the traditional Book of Common Prayer and classical Anglican theology and scholarship. International in scope, we host conferences and publish many books and other resources to help people grow in their faith and in the knowledge and love of the Lord.

Want to read a good book?

Since we are on the topic of resources to help us grow in our faith don't forget that the rector has a massive library and he is always willing to lend books to people who are interested in a particular theological subject! All of the books in the office are his personal books, so please do not borrow them without asking. (Some are quite rare and expensive.) But he would be most happy to lend books to those looking to deepen their

knowledge on a particular subject. All you have to do is ask!

Memorial Host Box

A beautiful antique sterling silver "Host Box" (a small container used to hold the communion bread before it is presented to the priest for consecration) was recently donated to the church. It was fashioned in 1946 by the Gorham Manufacturing Company out of Providence, RI for an Episcopal Church somewhere in Florida and is inscribed: "In Memory of Ensign Arthur F. Weber from his Airborne Comrade at Pensacola Florida 1946." It has now found its way back to regular use in the services of the Church. And we have added Ensign Weber to our parish chantry list and will pray for the happy repose of his soul at every Requiem Mass.

Community Action Food Pantry

Community Action Food Pantry of Harford County is in dire need of food! Please bring in items that we can deliver to this important ministry. There are over 10,000 people with food needs here in Harford County. For the time being all food donations will go here to help this immediate need. (Not Welcome-One or Char-Hope). They need pasta, pasta sauce, tuna, canned fruit and vegetables, mac & cheese, cereal, juices, soup, and instant mashed potatoes. We would want the normal portion sizes. Bering the donations by church and we will get them to the place post haste. Thanks for your support!

Thank you!

The parish clergy sincerely thank you all for your generous Christmas gifts! May the Lord bless you for your kindness and love. We enjoy serving you and consider you all to be not only parishioners but also dear friends. We love you!

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) ✠