

The Centurion

The Parish Magazine of St. Alban's Church

1011 Old Joppa Road, Joppa, Maryland, 21085



My dear People:

I hope that one of the books we've all become more familiar with the last few months during lockdown is the Prayer Book! The 1928 Book of Common Prayer has been a part of my daily devotional life for almost the last twenty-five years, and yet I still find new things in to appreciate and use. It contains prayers for just about every occasion in life. When I am praying, and struggling to find the right words to say, I remind myself to just go to the Book of Common Prayer and look up a prayer for the need. Sure enough, I find a beautiful and succinct prayer that articulates everything I am feeling and in a much better way than I could ever say. The national prayers, peppered throughout it, are especially beautiful and timeless. These days, when Americans are so divided politically, it is nice to have "non-partisan" prayers that we can offer for the three branches of government, local government, and the country in general (pp. 35-36). There are also all sorts of prayers for the environment: rain, seasonable weather; in times of dearth and famine; and more. Growing up I can never recall praying to God for those sorts of things... probably because, as a minor, I was not responsible for anyone or anything! But even as a young adult, when I first started hearing these prayers and similar petitions such as those found in the Litany, they struck as being "quaint." Now that I am older and seen what damage can be wrought by the environment and also how fragile it is I know better!! As an ordained minister I often go back and read through the ordination services to the diaconate and priesthood (pp. 529-548) so as to remind myself of the solemn vows that I made on those days, and what God requires of the clergy in their ministry. We can do the same thing with our baptism and confirmation (which some people call the "ordination of the laity"). At confirmation we promised to follow Jesus as our Lord and Savior (p. 297). Are we doing that on a day-to-day basis? We also affirmed the promises made in our name at baptism. Do we therefore renounce the devil and all his works, the vain pomp and glory of the world, and the sinful desires of the flesh? (p. 276) Do we use the prayers for the sick when we or someone we know or love is ill? We should! That's why they are there. On the anniversary of the death of a loved one we can pray the Burial Office (pp. 324-332) and take comfort in the fact that they are with the Lord and that we will see them again in the resurrection. The daily offices of Morning and Evening Prayer, of course, should be prayed by all the faithful daily. It is not a "requirement" of the Church... just a strong recommendation. I would love to see everyone in our parish family doing this because it would mean that each day that wherever we are we are uniting our voices in praise and thanksgiving as one body to God the Father through Jesus Christ our Lord for our needs and the needs of the whole world. So, use the Prayer Book! It's impossible to use too much. Seek to become more familiar with it, and mine its treasures!

Faithfully, your priest, *J. Gordon Anderson*

July 2020

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UPCOMING HOLY DAYS:

Jul 2nd - Visitation BVM

Holy Communion at 10:00 a.m.

Jul 4th - Independence Day

Holy Communion at 10:00 a.m.

Jul 25th - St. James

Holy Communion at 10:00 a.m.

Aug 6th - Transfiguration

Holy Communion at 10:00 a.m.

Aug 15th - Assumption

Holy Communion at 10:00 a.m.

Aug 24th - St. Bartholomew

Holy Communion at 10:00 a.m.

Sep 8th - Nativity BVM

Holy Communion at 10:00 a.m.

**Sep 16th, 18th, & 19th -
Autumnal 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.

THE CHRISTIAN YEAR: *July 4th (Independence Day)* — *The Birth of a Great (but imperfect) Nation*

In the month of July we celebrate the founding of our nation on July 4, 1776. On this day that we call “Independence Day” we give thanks that America became independent from Great Britain and became her own sovereign nation.

Independence Day is a Holy Day in the American Prayer Book tradition. It takes the place of “Accession Day”, which celebrates the reign of the British monarch, found in other Prayer Books of the “British Commonwealth” portion of the official Anglican Communion. Although the propers for the service (BCP, pp. 263-264) were drawn up around 1785 they ceased being used in 1789 because the observance was considered “divisive” in the Church, as many Churchmen did not support the revolution! It was only in our 1928 Prayer Book that the service returned. We celebrate the Holy Communion here at Saint Alban’s on this day every year in order to thank God for our great country.

These days it is fashionable in a lot of circles to despise America. This unfortunate sentiment dates back conceptually to the book “A People’s History of the United States” written in 1980 by Howard Zinn, and which is required reading in many high schools and colleges. This book makes the United States out to be a horrible country that is evil and exploitative to its core. His thesis has been rehashed lately by the New York Times in its “1619 Project.” Like all ideas, those promoted in these texts have consequences, alas, mainly negative ones. Is the violence and destruction we see taking place across the land today at the hands of angry mobs in the least bit surprising given the relentless attacks on our country over the years by these ideologically driven authors and their ilk?

We all know America is not perfect, and inasmuch as it is, like every nation, composed of sinful human beings, it could never have *been* perfect and can never *hope* to be perfect. As once scholar has put it, the story of America is the story of a nation striving, and often failing, to live up to its ideals. (“Land of Hope: An Invitation to the Great American Story” by Wilfred M. McClay.) But to speak of it as fundamentally oppressive and racist society that despises the poor is completely absurd and a major overstatement. While it has taken America a while to live up to her founding principles, and while we can always do better at following them, those principles are at least *there* to begin with.

Many people, especially the young and the restless, do not realize just how good life in America really is.

As Harvard psychologist Steven Pinker has pointed out, every American, by virtue of being an American, is in comparison to the rest of the world part of the so-called “one percent.” And if we look at the history of the world Americans today are part of the “one tenth of one percent” in terms of our material prosperity! The freedom that we enjoy is unprecedented. Unorthodox activities such as kneeling during the National Anthem and flag burning, allowed here by law, are not tolerated in other nations, even highly developed ones! Case in point, until 2002 in India it was not even legal for citizens to *fly their own country’s flag* without government permission!

Still, there is much work to do to make America great, and for her to live up to the ideals of the Founding Fathers. Many people feel marginalized and stuck in a cycle of despair. What can be done to help them? While politicians have their various and conflicting answers, some of which are good, and others not so good, the Church (at least those committed to historic faith and the scriptures) has her own, which applies to all people of all ages, races, and situations... REPENT! Turn to the living God and be saved! No social program or economic incentive from any party to any people will help them unless people’s sins are forgiven and their hearts turn to God. The number one problem in our day and age is that we as individual people from all classes and walks of life have forgotten God! For far too long now he has been relegated to the outer margins of life, even by those who claim to know and love him. And now, as a society, are seeing the devastating results. Apathy to the things of God is undoubtedly deadly, both personally and societally. So we, as the Church, have an important, prophetic job inasmuch as we call people to repent of sin, turn to God to be saved through Jesus Christ, and live godly, righteous, and sober lives.

Our nation is truly a great nation, and undoubtedly the best and most just nation that has ever existed... a melting pot of all people united under a banner of freedom and liberty. But that can only exist, thrive, and reach its potential, insofar as we as a people are committed to God. And we can only strive to live up to, and complete, the ideals of the founders, and maintain our liberties, if we are committed to God as individuals. We have not yet reached our potential. There is still much work to do, which means we as Americans have to do more to commit our lives to God, who is the author of liberty, and whose service is perfect freedom. ✠

 CHURCH HISTORY: *A Brief History of Iconoclasm with Special Emphasis to the English Church Tradition*

Recently we have seen on television and in the news multiple statues defaced and toppled both here in America and abroad. This lawless movement started out a few years ago when some people began vandalizing public monuments to the confederacy in different cities. (The vandals, victims no doubt of America's very poor public education system, apparently did not realize that there are legal, and less violent, means of bringing about change. But I digress.) While a good case can be made against having monuments to the confederacy in public places, what this lawlessness has devolved into is the incredibly bizarre phenomenon of statues of *any* historical figure, again both here abroad, being defaced or toppled! What is astounding is the variety of the "victim" statues: Christopher Columbus, Frederick Douglas, and even —brace yourself— Robert the Bruce... a 13th century King of Scotland! (Spray painted no less with "BLM" because, well, you know, there were all of those slaves of African descent in 13th-14th century Scotland.) It is definitely a bad time to be a statue, and one would be advised to not stand still for too long in a public place, lest an enraged, "parent's-basement-dwelling millennial" spray paint you and try to push you over! Of course most of this has nothing to do with the figures and is rather just a thinly veiled war on western culture... the crimes (which is what they are) being committed by people who Lenin in his day would have referred to as "useful idiots."

This type of behavior is called "iconoclasm" and it is not new by any stretch of the imagination. The word means "destruction of images." It is a cross cultural phenomenon that can be political, religious, or both. Iconoclasm occurred: in the ancient church in the so-called "Iconoclast Controversy" of the 8th-9th century, which saw images used in worship ("icons") destroyed, and which necessitated the calling of the 7th Ecumenical Council; in the Cultural Revolution in China (1966-1976), which saw ancient symbols of China brutally destroyed; and in the destruction of the Bamiyan Buddhas by the terrorist Islamic Taliban regime of Afghanistan (2001). Some or all of these may be familiar to us already. And we may even be able to think of the many more examples of iconoclasm in history. But did you know that our historic "mother church" —the Church of England— went through a period of iconoclasm? Actually she went through at least two. The first was during the reign of Henry VIII and was mainly confined to monasteries. Henry's incessant warring lead to a budget deficit that he

sought to fix by sacking the wealthy monasteries. He ordered them all closed and seized all of their property for the crown. Many beautiful and sublime works of art and architecture were viciously seized or destroyed by the maniacal king all in an effort to assert his authority and raise money. So today, all that is left of many medieval English monasteries, are sad, lonely ruins.

The second period was during the so-called "Puritan Commonwealth" of 1649-1660. What differentiated this wave of iconoclasm from Henry's was that this one was strongly tinged with religion, whereas Henry's was almost entirely political. The puritans took power under Oliver Cromwell after the English Civil War and immediately sought to impose their vision of what the church and state should be in its most extreme form. Churched were despoiled of their rich ecclesiastical art. Stained glass windows (that could be easily reached) were smashed. Organs were destroyed and the great choirs were disbanded. At one point there was talk of tearing down the great cathedrals, as had been done to some (but thankfully, not all) of the wondrous Scottish cathedrals further north. They did all of this because they thought that they had to purge England of any thought or memory of her past (sound familiar?), the interpretation of which they disagreed. Essentially, the puritans believed that images and fine artistic work lended themselves to idolatry, so they thought that it should all be ruined.

By the grace of God the Puritan Commonwealth was short-lived. After the death of Oliver Cromwell his successor/son was driven from power and the Stuart monarchy, along with the Church of England, was restored. Ever so slowly the English Church began recovering her reformed Catholic heritage. For, sadly, the damage done to the Church during the tyrannical eleven year rule of the puritans took decades to repair. In the end, however, iconoclasm lost. The full return of the "outward"/visual dimension of the English Church (and those bodies in communion with her, such as our immediate predecessor, the Episcopal Church) began in the late 19th century with the so-called "Ritualist Movement." Realizing that she was a constituent member of Christ's one, holy, catholic, and apostolic Church, and not merely a sect, the English Church went into overdrive in restoring many of the ancient and medieval art and traditions which were her lawful heritage, and which had been suppressed or forgotten going back to the days of the Puritan Commonwealth. Thankfully, extremist movements, whether political or religious, rarely last long, as people see them for they are and are repulsed by them. ☩

PARISH NEWS AND UPDATES:

Building Project

Phase one of our project—a modest and much-needed increase in parking with associated stormwater management—is still in the planning phase. We are hoping to move forward with it soon. We are currently waiting for the engineer to create a magnified drawing of a section of the parking/stormwater management plan for legal purposes. Please continue to keep the project in your prayers and donate towards it as you are able and lead by the Holy Spirit. Please direct any questions you may have on it to Fr. Anderson or Sr. Warden Jim Rutledge.

Groundskeeping

The vestry engaged Superior Touch Lawn Care, who have been cutting our grass and shoveling our snow for the last couple years, to handle the landscaping needs of the church. They will come out twice a year to prune, weed, fertilize, and everything else necessary to make sure the grounds are in tip-top shape.

Air Conditioning in the Church

Recently the vestry received quotes for a new air conditioner for the church. The current unit was thought to be on its last legs because last year it cost us a fortune to run. It is likely original to the building when it was made into a church thirty years ago. But we found out that the unit does not have to be replaced just yet, because the problem is with the duct work, not the unit itself! To operate it efficiently for the time being we have to keep the interior door to the porch (entryway/coatroom off the church) open and also keep the door to the air handler room open at all times. So please don't be surprised to see those doors opened during church hours. Thanks be to God that we will not have to worry about replacing the unit until we complete our interior expansion!

Multiple Ways to Give to Saint Alban's

In addition to putting cash or checks into the offering plate (or mailing a check to the church) don't forget that we have a donation kiosk at the church where you can give with a card or device *and* online giving through our website. Just go to the website and click the "Give" tab to make a secure donation. You can also now donate securities (stock and other assets) to the church. For details on how to do that please see Fr. Anderson or Sr. Warden, Jim Rutledge.

Rev'd Mason Waldhauser Ordination

Deacon Mason will be ordained to the priesthood on Monday, September 21, 2020. We are taking donations for his ordination fund. If you would like to donate some money to help him buy the things he needs for his ministry please indicate on your check or other donation that it is for his ordination fund. Currently he is on a silent retreat in Colorado. Please keep him in your prayers as he prepares for full time ordained ministry. He will be serving as curate at the historic St. Mary's Anglican Church in Denver, Colorado.

Pastoral Care

If you are in need of pastoral care from Fr. Anderson please do not hesitate to call him on his mobile phone, or text or e-mail him! He is always available to parishioners in need. The rector does not read minds. Please contact him if you need something. He is paid to be "inconvenienced" so please do not ever feel like you are inconveniencing him by getting in touch with him about something!!

Tips for Staying Sane in the Pandemic Era

- 1) Listen to an opera, symphony, oratorio, etc. Sit down and intentionally listen to the whole thing.
- 2) Read a classic book.
- 3) Study a language.
- 4) Brush up on that musical instrument you used to play.
- 5) Write a letter to someone.
- 6) Exercise your body.
- 7) Bake.
- 8) Get a pet... just remember to keep taking care of it once all of this passes, which will probably be in November.
- 9) Variety... don't just do the same thing all the time (binge watch TV, bake, exercise, etc.). Mix it up! Come up with a daily schedule and stick to it.

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) ☩