

# The Centurion

The Parish Magazine of St. Alban's Church

1011 Old Joppa Road, Joppa, Maryland, 21085



My dear People:

By the grace of God, and thanks to your prayers and faithful giving, we are slowly making headway on our building project. No, we are not going to build a large physical plant in an effort to become the next Mountain Christian Church! What we are doing is a modest expansion of our parking along with the requisite storm water management that goes with it. Currently we have 17 parking spaces, two of which are handicapped. That has never been enough for us. When the church is barely half full people have to park in the grass and unsafely traipse through mud and grass to get inside. The current setup of the parking is confusing as well. Newcomers do not know where to enter the church, because what looks like the main entrance is far away from all of the parking. Our extremely modest increase of parking will see spaces in the front and rear of the church, as well as a new up-to-code handicap ramp that will replace the concrete one and tie into the gorgeous "trex" ramp that we had built a few years ago. We will also have proper sidewalks and excellent landscaping with new trees and other plantings. An elaborate underground drainage system and two overflow ponds, both designed by engineering experts will see to it that the same amount of water currently coming off of our property will come off after the expansion. (i.e. More parking will not mean more water or flooding.) This system will also help relieve flooding on and around our next door neighbors' properties. Finally, there will be a small, one story addition added to the building that will give us more space for church events, classes, etc. After this we will reorder the inside of the church and finish the basement so we can actually use that space for our parish life. But for us to do all of that we first need to add parking. The bottom line is that if we hope to continue growing we have to make accommodations for more people. The population around us is booming. Developments are going up everywhere. Just 5-10 minutes away are brand new housing complexes full of people who will need a church to attend. We want them to join Saint Alban's. But we need to make room for them in order for them to consider this. So please continue to pray for our building project, that God would open doors for us, and guide the vestry and engineers and everyone else involved in it so the project will come to fruition. Thanks to everyone who has given to our building fund! Please keep the gifts coming as we continue to have surveyors, engineers, and other people to pay for all of this preliminary work. Once we have a price for the actual construction we will let you all know so we can do some fundraising for that phase of the project. In the meantime, may we be sure that God is doing wonderful things among us! And let us give him thanks and be optimistic for the future that he has for us.

Faithfully, your priest,

*J. Gordon Anderson*

March 2022

IN THIS ISSUE:

**Theology, pp. 2-3**

*The Christian Mind*

**Parish News, p. 4**

*Updates from St. Alban's*

UPCOMING HOLY DAYS:

**Mar 9th, 11th, & 12th -  
Ember Days**

Holy Communion at 10:00 a.m.,  
6:30 p.m., and 10:00 a.m.

**Mar 25th - Annunciation of  
the BVM**

Holy Communion at 6:30 p.m.

**Mar 30th - Apr 3rd**

Holy Week (See Schedule online)

**Apr 5th-6th Easter Monday  
& Easter Tuesday**

Holy Communion at 10:00 a.m.

**Apr 25th - St. Mark**

Holy Communion at 10:00 a.m.

**May 23rd-25th - Rogation  
Days**

Holy Communion at 10:00 a.m.

**May 26th - Ascension Day**

Holy Communion at 10:00 a.m.

**Jun 6th-7th - Monday &  
Tuesday in Whitsun Week**

Holy Communion at 10:00 a.m.

THEOLOGY: *The Supernatural Orientation of the Christian Mind*

Many years ago there was an Anglican scholar called Harry Blamires who wrote a wonderful little book titled “The Christian Mind.” Although the book is over sixty years old, it is still as timely as ever. In it Blamires, who was an associate of C.S. Lewis, argues that there is such a thing as a Christian mind. By this he means there is a specifically Christian way of thinking about and approaching life.

In the second half of this remarkably easy-to-read book Blamires lays out some of the marks of the Christian mind. According to him the Christian mind has six key qualities: a supernatural orientation; an awareness of evil; a conception of truth; an acceptance of authority; a concern for the person; and a sacramental cast. Over the next few issues of *The Centurion* we will consider what Blamires has to say about each of these in his excellent book.

However before we begin it is necessary to point out that the opposite of the Christian Mind is the “secular” mind. The word “secular” comes from a Latin word that means “age” and is often translated as “world.” Thus, the word “secular” can denote things having to do with the world, and not with God, which is why one of its several meanings is “non-religious.” The secular mind, therefore, is the opposite of the Christian mind in many respects... certainly in the areas indicated by Blamires. It is a non-religious view of human existence and reality.

Sadly, what we often see is that many very good Christian people who sincerely love God and strive to live according to his will, have unknowingly adopted secular ways of thinking about these and other very important, conceptually foundational, matters.

So we begin by looking at what Blamires identifies as the supernatural orientation of the Christian mind. This is how he opens the chapter on page sixty-three: *“A prime mark of the Christian mind is that it cultivates the eternal perspective. That is to say, it looks beyond this life to another one. It is supernaturally oriented and brings to bear upon earthly considerations the fact of Heaven and the fact of Hell.”* (p. 63)

As Christians we believe that there is a life and a world beyond what we can see with our eyes, or discern with our other senses. The scriptures teach that there is a God and that he is a spirit, and that there are angelic beings that were created by God who are also spirits. We believe that God created us just as he created angels and everything else. (*How* he created

everything is not that important.) We also believe that there is a heaven and a hell, that is to say, there is an end and purpose to our existence. We believe that God became an actual living, breathing human being named Jesus and that this man was put to death on a cross, but then was raised from the dead three days later in a bodily resurrection, and then forty days after that physically ascended into heaven. We believe that Jesus instituted sacraments that communicate his very life and being to us... his grace. We believe that God did and can still do miracles. Indeed, we could go on and on about how we as Christians have a supernatural view of human existence and the universe. That is how a Christian mind thinks.

In contrast to this, the secular mind is one that is materialistic in the philosophical sense of the word. The secular-minded person believes and lives as though this life with all of its physical stuff is all that there is. Miracles can't happen. Jesus, while he probably did exist, certainly was not divine. And God (if he exists) is basically unknowable and indifferent, like “the force” in Star Wars. There is no such thing as sin, and therefore no need of redemption or salvation. The Bible is not the divinely inspired word of God, but just a collection of mythical documents and fairy tales cobbled together by creative people over the centuries.

This secular way of thinking has slowly crept into the Church and into the hearts and minds of good Christian people over the years. How did it happen? It began in the modern era, and picked up steam in the 19th century, bolstered mainly by the wholesale adoption of the the views of the German Higher Critics, and also the rise of Darwin's theory of evolution. The higher critics were scholars who, broadly speaking, challenged the notion that the scriptures were of divine origin, and the evolutionary theories of Charles Darwin presented an alternate explanation of human origins from the one presented in the Old Testament.

When these ideas are combined in a slapdash, uncritical way it is very easy to see how Christians could begin to abandon any thoughts of the supernatural... God, angels, demons, miracles, sin, heaven, hell, etc. because the Bible is written off as a bunch of old legends, and human beings are just highly advanced primates with no meaning or purpose to their existence. The question that remains, then, is what on earth is the Church supposed to do anymore?

*Please turn to the next page.*

*Continued from the previous page...*

What happens to churches that desacralize their religion is that they end up devolving into social aid organizations with a religious veneer. The “Social Gospel” movement of the early 20th century was an example of all of this, and in many ways it is still with us today. For a lot of churches and denominations the practice of religion is now almost entirely about promoting so-called “social justice” or practicing various types of political “activism.” Since they do not believe in the supernatural one hears nary a word from their pulpits about conversion, prayer, sin, repentance, redemption, or the like, except perhaps as they can be related to the latest “(insert any word) justice” movement. A few years ago a prominent American bishop said on the radio that when there is total and complete justice on earth that is when “heaven” would happen... we would finally be in “heaven” at that moment.

While the Church should certainly minister to the temporal needs of the poor and marginalized, that is not the sum total of her mission. Her goal is to make disciples of all nations so that they may be saved and, through faith in Christ, be raised from the dead and

live forever. The well-meaning advocates of secular social justice Christianity should bear in mind the words of Moses and Jesus: “*The poor will always be in the land; the poor you will always have with you.*” (Deuteronomy 15:11, and Mark 14:7) In other words, despite our best efforts and intentions mankind will not be able to establish total justice or a utopia this side of heaven. This is because of the spiritual challenges that face man, mainly his fallen, sinful nature, which is something only God can fix, person by person, through the divine grace of our Lord Jesus Christ. In fact, it is in retaining and celebrating the supernatural element of our faith that we find grace and strength to minister to the temporal needs of our fellow human beings. We love others—our neighbor as ourself—because of God’s great love for us in our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ!

Christianity is a supernatural religion. God became a man in Jesus Christ so that we, through faith in him, might be saved from sin and death and live forever in happiness, holiness, and peace. We lose sight of the transcendent element of our faith at our peril. May we think with a “Christian Mind” about the nature of reality and the faith and life to which God has called us. ✠

---

DIOCESAN NEWS: *2022 Lenten Appeal from the Most Rev'd Chandler Holder Jones, SSC*

**H**aving dedicated our Lenten Appeal efforts on our domestic missions during these past several years we are once again shifting our focus to our foreign missions and their needs. Our effort this year will be to collect funds for the construction of churches in both the Philippines and Haiti. Both countries have an overarching Roman Catholic ethos and the presence of a permanent building is viewed as a sign of the seriousness of the Church’s efforts in those parts. While we have managed in the past holding services under a large mango tree in the Philippines or in the courtyard of the school or converted classrooms in Haiti, the churches in both of these places now have land, both donated and purchased, on which proper churches can be built. There are currently two churches that have been completed and a third one under construction in the Philippines and the potential for still three more, and there are two properties that we currently own in Haiti. The goal for this year’s Lenten Appeal is to raise sufficient funds to complete the construction of five new churches (three in the Philippines and two in Haiti). Our Goal as in previous years is \$100,000, which will be divided proportionally between the two places. Our churches, unlike the Roman Catholic placement of churches, will be in the local communities where the people live and will not require them to travel great distances on Sundays in order to participate in weekly worship services. The presence of these churches will change the lives of many in these communities and provide tremendous opportunities for evangelism and the growth of God’s kingdom. At least one of the churches in the Philippines will be constructed in a community of one of the unreached indigenous groups on the island of Mindoro. I am asking each individual within our churches to make a Lenten offering of \$1.50 per day for the 40 days of Lent (a total of \$60 per person), or more as our Lord leads you. We will need one hundred percent participation in order to achieve this goal. Please make this a family project for Lent. Your generous gifts will enable God’s kingdom to grow and expand in both these countries and help to provide eternal hope to people who are in extreme poverty and hardship. Please pray every day during Lent that God will use our offering to show His great mercy on the people of the Philippines and Haiti. ✠ *Bishop Chad Jones*

## PARISH NEWS &amp; UPDATES:

**New A/C and Heating in the Church**

We received feedback from our online viewers that when the air handler starts blowing during services it sounds like a vacuum cleaner is running, and they have trouble following along because it is hard to hear the service over the unit. This was not surprising given how loud and disruptive the old unit is for people actually sitting in the nave for services! So we are receiving a quote to have quiet, energy efficient ductless units placed in the church. (NB: the duct work of the existing system was examined a few years ago and discovered to be completely inadequate for our space!) Installing the new units will also help us proceed with using the porch area off of the church in a more efficient way. If anyone would like more details or would like to contribute funds to help pay for this new system please let the rector or someone of the vestry know.

**Hospitality Ministry**

Don't forget that we need people to sign up for refreshments after the 10:00 a.m. service! The sign up sheet is on the bulletin board in the parish hall.

**2022 Lenten Schedule**

Go to our website at [www.saintalbansjoppa.org](http://www.saintalbansjoppa.org) and click on "worship schedule" for a link to our 2022 Lenten services and activities. A printout is also available at church. Please join us for some or all of these services. *Remember to not let Saint Alban's be like a "gym membership" for which you sign up, but then rarely go. We offer a lot of activities that more of us should take advantage of!*

**2022 Lenten Study**

Our 2022 Lenten Study is off to a great start. Be sure to come out and give it a try this lenten season. We would love to see you! (Note that the study will be broadcast on Facebook Live on our Facebook group, and will also be posted to our YouTube channel, so if you cannot make it out to the church you can still follow the study online.)

**Friday Night Communion Service**

During Lent we will be offering a service of Evening Prayer and Holy Communion every Friday night at 6:30 p.m. for those who cannot make it to morning

lenten services or the Tuesday evening service. Please spread the word and join us if it would work for your schedule.

**A Message From Rev'd Canon Erich Zwingert of DEUS Publishing**

Our personal sized prayer books have sold extremely well since last summer and our inventory is running low with only one month's inventory available. Due to supply chain issues, we will not receive a new order until June 1. If you anticipate needing any of these BCPs for confirmands and other reasons between now and June 1, please order now at [deusbooks.org](http://deusbooks.org) or on the [APA website](#).

**Lenten Devotional**

Some of the clergy of the Appalachian Deanery have produced a lenten devotional that may be accessed free of charge on the provincial website. Check it out here! <https://anglicanprovince.org/2022/02/a-lenten-devotional/>

**Quote of the Month**

"Our kingdom go" is the necessary and unavoidable corollary of "Thy kingdom come." For the more there is of self, the less there is of God. The divine eternal fullness of life can be gained only by those who have deliberately lost the partial, separative life of craving and self-interest, or egocentric thinking, feeling, wishing, and acting."

*Aldous Huxley*

**Vestry Notes**

Agendas, minutes, and financial reports from all monthly vestry meetings are posted for public view in the parish hall. Check out the bulletin board marked "vestry" for up-to-date reports and numbers.

**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) ❧