

The Centurion

The Parish Magazine of St. Alban's Church

1011 Old Joppa Road, Joppa, Maryland, 21085



My dear People:

Grace and peace to you! I miss seeing you all in person very much, and I pray for you daily. While it has been good to stay in touch with each other via phone, e-mail, and text messaging, nothing beats getting together in person. We look forward to the day—hopefully soon—when Governor Hogan's "stay at home" order is lifted and we can all slowly begin to resume some sort of normality. Until that time we will continue with our Facebook Live/YouTube services. (Needless to say, the Holy Day services advertised to your right will only be held when the "stay at home" order is lifted.) The video services have been very well-received, and have allowed people who might otherwise not have had the chance to see who we are and how we worship. I hope to continue videoing some or all services when life returns to normal. Honestly, I believe that we will come out of this madness even stronger as a parish! The loving-kindness that I have seen each of you display towards one another has been such a heartwarming blessing. God bless each of you for your faithfulness in serving our Lord Jesus Christ even in the midst of such trying times. Thank you for your continued financial support of the church as well. We still have bills to pay, and of course we have our building project, which, I have a feeling, may very well begin sooner than we thought! At this writing we are almost ready to set up a "donate online" feature on our parish website. So if a person cannot mail in a check, and since the onsite payment kiosk is not an option at this time, there will still be an opportunity to give to church. Have you been making good spiritual use of this time? Have you been maintaining a regular prayer life, and life of devotion to our Lord? I trust the answer is yes. A number of resources have been shared with you to assist in this area. If you need help with them please don't hesitate to ask me! Perhaps some of us have been able to take care of projects around the house or try new things during this time of quarantine. Use this time to take care of things that need taken care of in your life. You might find that God speaks to us and shows us things in times like this that we would otherwise miss. A cashier at the local grocery store who is always telling me about how her husband left her for a younger woman was telling me the other day that in this time alone, away from church, where she has been just reading her bible and meditating and praying a lot, that God pointed out to her things about her life that needed work, and how she finally came to the realization that she too had a role to play in the demise of her marriage. It was the social distancing and isolation that comes with, along with deep time in prayer and reflection, that helped her see that God was working in her life and wasn't through with her yet. So as I mentioned already in another context... use this time wisely! use it for your spiritual growth and God will bless you!

Faithfully, your priest,

J. Gordon Anderson

May 2020

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UPCOMING HOLY DAYS:

May 1st - Ss. Philip & James

Holy Communion at 10:00 a.m.

May 18th-20th - Rogation Days

Holy Communion at 10:00 a.m.

Jun 1st-2nd - Monday & Tuesday in Whitsun Week

Holy Communion at 10:00 a.m.

Jun 11th - St. Barnabas

Holy Communion at 10:00 a.m.

Jun 24th - St. John Baptist

Holy Communion at 10:00 a.m.

Jun 29th - St. Peter

Holy Communion at 10:00 a.m.

Jun 11th - St. Barnabas

Holy Communion at 10:00 a.m.

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.

HISTORICAL THEOLOGY: *The Importance of Saint Vincent of Lerins*

This on May 24th (The Sunday after the Ascension) we commemorate St. Vincent of Lerins. He was born in the early 5th century in Toulouse to a family of nobility, but eventually became a monk at “Lerins Abbey” which was on an island in what is now called the French Riviera. He saw some “action” during the Council of Ephesus where he supported the orthodox side of the Church against the heresies of Nestorius, who refused to call Mary the “God-Bearer” (Mother of God). He died in 450 and his relics are kept at Lerins.

His most famous writing is his *Commonitory* which contains a rule—the famous “Rule of Saint Vincent”, also known as the “Vincentian Canon”—that could be of help in determining what is authentic catholic teaching. In chapter four of this work he writes, “*Now in the Catholic Church itself we take the greatest care to hold that which has been believed everywhere, always and by all.* (emphasis added) *That is truly and properly 'Catholic,' as is shown by the very force and meaning of the word, which comprehends everything almost universally. We shall hold to this rule if we follow universality [i.e. oecumenicity], antiquity, and consent. We shall follow universality if we acknowledge that one Faith to be true which the whole Church throughout the world confesses; antiquity if we in no wise depart from those interpretations which it is clear that our ancestors and fathers proclaimed; consent, if in antiquity itself we keep following the definitions and opinions of all, or certainly nearly all, bishops and doctors alike.*”

It is important for us to remember that the “Catholic Church” of which he writes is not the Roman Catholic Communion of today. Vincent was writing in the fifth century, long before the Church divided into thousands of little groups. In his day there was just *one* Church. If you were in that Church you were “catholic” which means “universal.” As the Book of Common Prayer puts it in the Offices of Instruction, the Church is Catholic “*because it is universal, holding earnestly the Faith for all time, in all countries, and for all people; and is sent to preach the Gospel to the whole world.*” In the ancient world, in the time of the Seven Ecumenical Councils, the opposite of “Catholic” was not “Protestant” but rather “heretic.”

The “Catholic Church”—the Church founded Jesus Christ—teaches the “Catholic Religion.” Put another way, the “Catholic Religion” is taught by the “Catholic Church.” Any different is “heretical.” A teaching contrary to that of the Catholic Church is a

“heresy.” Again, none of this has anything to do with Rome or Protestantism at this point in history.

So Vincent says that the Catholic Faith is that which has been taught *everywhere, always, and by all*. This means that the opposite of the Catholic Faith—that which is a heresy—is teaching that is provincial and exclusive to a certain area of the world; novel—it is new teaching, unheard of in the past; and held by few people. This maxim is certainly not infallible, and perhaps even a bit subjective. But overall it serves as good a guide for the Church today, and is just as relevant to the Church today it was so for her many centuries ago.

Think for a moment how the Canon of St. Vincent would apply to religions that have spawned from orthodox Christianity, such as Islam and Mormonism. In each case a single individual (Muhammed, Joseph Smith), in an isolated corner of the world (7th century Arabia, 19th century New York State) claimed to receive a direct revelation from God that contained new teachings never heard of by anyone else anywhere before. Claiming that earlier revelation recorded in the Scriptures had been “corrupted” over the ages, these two men made new religious texts based upon the new revelations to help convey their new teaching. According to the rule of St. Vincent, these religions are heretical. Each one claims to be a fulfillment of Christianity, or continuation of it, but the facts about their origins, in light of St. Vincent’s Rule, belie such claims, as their tenets do not pass the test of antiquity (always), catholicity (everywhere), and universality (by all).

The rule also applies to disputes among Christians about matters of dogma. As Anglicans, we believe that the Roman Catholic and Eastern Orthodox Churches have added some unnecessary things to the deposit of faith thus violating the principles set down by St. Vincent. The same goes for many of the Protestant sects, only they typically err in the opposite direction by discounting core Christian teachings and traditions.

St. Vincent’s Canon is still a valuable treasure for the Church today. It gives us some basic parameters by which to discern the “catholicity”—i.e. the authentic biblical and traditional basis—of any given teaching that arises on the scene. We thank God for St. Vincent and for giving him the insight to discover this basic, common sense tool of reason for the Church to use in determining what is true catholic teaching. ✠

SPIRITUALITY: *Why Offer Mass When the Congregation is not Present?*

Most churches today here in “Coronatide” are offering “services” online. Being stuck in the doldrums under the tyranny of so-called “stay-at-home orders” gives people the opportunity to look at church services from all sort of different denominations and backgrounds. What one finds in terms of sheer diversity is truly staggering.

Someone recently said that the online services offered by Saint Alban’s were absolutely amazing, and an incredible blessing to them. When the rector heard this, he was surprised... until he looked online at what the person’s home church was offering for “Sunday Services.” (Despite having a magnificent building in which to video the pastor of the church chose to sit in his messy office with outdated furniture, read a bible passage, and then comment on it. And this was for Easter Sunday!)

It is definitely harder to produce a full service—even in a greatly simplified form—than to sit down in front of a camera in the office and offer musings on the Bible and other subjects while sipping on a triple mocha latte. So why bother with it at all? Why should the priest vest and join with his server to read the Common Prayer, and offer the Holy Communion, the Body and Blood of Christ, when no one else, except the server, is around in person? *Because offering the Body and Blood of Christ is what the Church does, and the moment she ceases to do that she ceases being the Church, the Mystical Body of Christ!*

The very thing that makes the Church “the Church” is that she is the Mystical Body of Jesus (Ephesians 1). This is one of the major aspects of Pauline theology (i.e. the theology of St. Paul as seen in his New Testament writings). If the Church is in a spiritual sense “Jesus” then what she does is what Jesus does. And what Jesus, our only mediator and advocate, is doing right now in heaven in his glorified incarnate nature is interceding for us before the throne of God.

We see in Hebrews and Revelation that he does this by “presenting” himself (offering himself)—his completed, finished work on Calvary—to God the Father.

What Jesus does, his whole body does. The Church, the people of God, continually offers herself in adoration, praise, and worship, to God the Father, in union with Jesus, her great high priest. How does she do this? *In the sacrament of the Holy Eucharist!* The Holy Eucharist is our “sacramental participation” in Christ’s eternal offering of himself to God the Father.

In light of this it would be absolutely outrageous for the Church to “cease” offering the Holy Eucharist. The moment she were to do that she would cease being the Church, because she would sever herself from her God and Savior Jesus Christ, and his divine intercession for us! Thus, to substitute a Bible study for the offering

of the Mass would be at the very least highly inappropriate, and at the most an outright rejection of her very constitution and purpose. In these times of Coronavirus induced

lockdowns it is incumbent upon every priest to offer the Holy Sacrifice on behalf of the his flock, which is a portion of the Mystical Body of Christ, and to do so in such a way as to make it as easy as possible for the faithful to participate. That is why services have been recorded on video and posted online. So that not only does the Body and Blood of Christ get offered by the people (in the person and ministry of the priest, who in this case represents the people) but also that the people can participate in it—make their offering to God in union with Christ through the ministry of the Church—at least “virtually.”

We hope and pray to be back together again soon so we can offer the Mass together in person. But in the meantime, the obligation of the Church as the Body of Christ to offer the Holy Eucharist is being faithfully fulfilled. ✠



SEMINARIAN UPDATE: *Monthly Update from the Rev'd Mason Waldhauser*

Dear Friends,

Not a lot has changed here at Nashotah. We're still doing online classes, although they're beginning to come to a close. I just finished my last two projects for my ascetical theology class, for instance. The first one was a retreat lecture which was supposed to explain the teaching of one of the Anglican divines. So I wrote on Jeremy Taylor's advice for using time well. In some ways, it seemed perfect for our situation, with all the extra time we're finding on our hands. Here are three of the quotations I found most helpful (mainly having to do with the question of whether life is too short or not):

"God hath given to man a short time here upon earth, and yet upon this short time eternity depends: but so, that for every hour of our life... we must give account to the great Judge of men and angels."

"[F]or the obtaining virtue, for the purchase of sobriety and modesty, for the actions of religion, God gave us time sufficient."

"[St. Ambrose] divided every day into three tertias of employment: eight hours he spent in charity and doing assistance to others, dispatching their business, reconciling their enmities, reproofing their vices, correcting their errors, instructing their ignorances, transacting the affairs of his diocese; and the other eight

hours he spent in study and prayer. If we were thus minute and curious in the spending of our time, it is impossible but our life would seem very long."

The other project for ascetical theology was doing a confession role play in our online class. Our professor wrote up some scripts for sample confessions and we had to come up with our own counsel and penance. That was really fun, because the confessor has a special opportunity to meet the penitent with the Gospel at a turning point of repentance. It's actually much more refreshing than depressing, believe it or not.

And I just finished my rough draft for this twenty-five page paper on the ethics of preaching. I've never written anything this long, so I'm really glad most of it's done at this point. I'm arguing that the three criteria for moral preaching are: truth as the objective, love as the intent, and edification as the outcome.

So the work that I have left is finalizing this long paper and writing a twelve pager comparing and contrasting Augustine and Aquinas's views on grace. Please pray for me that I would finish strong! I hope you're all hanging in there during this strange time!

Best, *Deacon Mason*

 PARISH NEWS & UPDATES:

Special thanks to...

Larry Harback for refinishing and restoring the credence table and attaching the former tabernacle door crucifix to it! Larry also fixed one of the sanctuary chairs that had a split in the wood seat. Daughters of the King for reaching out to all of the parishioners during the stay-at-home order... calling them, praying for them, and supporting them in their walk with God! Anonymous donor of two green dalmatics to complete our green Solemn High Mass set for use during Trinitytide.

Giving

Please remember to stay current with your giving so we can continue to pay our expenses. We run a very trim operation and have cut down on certain expenses at this time, such as music and cleaning, but we still have other bills to pay, so please remember to support your church! You can now give to Saint Alban's online! Just

go to our parish website to the "Worship Schedule" page and follow the link to make a secure donation.

Brokerage Account

St. Alban's now has a brokerage account with Franklin Financial Group. The account can also hold stocks, bonds, mutual funds, ETF's and UITs. If parishioners wish to donate appreciated assets to the Church, they can now do so. Those assets can then be sold on a tax free basis in the Church account. That way the donor get's the full deduction and the Church keeps 100% of the value. For more information please see the treasurer or senior warden.

New Book

Fr. Sean McDermott of All Saints Church in Charlottesville, VA has a new book for sale. It's called "*Guide to the Mass from the 1928 Book of Common Prayer: For Anglican Youth and Newcomers.*" It's about 75 pages and is available in paperback for \$12.95 from Amazon. Get your copy today! ☩