

The Centurion

The Parish Magazine of St. Alban's Church

1011 Old Joppa Road, Joppa, Maryland, 21085



My dear People:

Twice a week I drive my daughter to her “learning pod” which is a small group of ten kids whose online learning is facilitated and augmented by a retired BCPS teacher. They have a full day of learning as well as socialization and other “normal” school activities that they’d otherwise not have during these bizarre times. The pod is hosted by the church where I grew up, Valley Presbyterian in Lutherville. Their new pastor, a delightful guy, gave me permission to pray in the church whenever I want when I come to drop my daughter off, so I have taken advantage of that numerous times. It is a wonderfully transcendent experience. There I sit, alone in the cavernous space that is the nave, communing with the Lord in prayer and reflection. I look back and see myself as a little boy my own son’s age, singing the hymns, occasionally getting in trouble for goofing off during the (exceedingly long) sermons, and being greeted by the incredibly nice people that have always attended that church. I realized at one point that this was where the earliest seeds of my priestly vocation were sown. Here was where I was first conscious of meeting God... where it really hit home to me that he was *there* and that I was his beloved child. Here was where I learned the great stories of our faith. And here was where God implanted the idea that I should serve him in full time ministry. Later on that calling was echoed by teachers at the small Christian school that I attended. And then still later it was echoed by a new young curate at my parish, Fr. Chad Jones. It’s fun to look back at where we’ve come from and reminisce about how God lead and guided us to where we are today. Visiting old haunts —almost like they are shrines— is a good way to jog memories of how God worked in our lives, and renew our sense of spiritual mission and purpose. Whenever we feel spiritually adrift we might consider going back in our hearts and minds —or better yet in person, if we can— to where it all began... to where God really started to speak to us and become real to us. Once there we should pray for his Holy Spirit to enkindle in us a new flame, like the one he did so many years earlier. I often read through the ordination services for deacon and priest from the Book of Common Prayer to help me remember the gravity and importance of my vocation. What about you? What do you do to reacquaint yourself with God’s calling for you and your life? Thanks be to God, we can always return to our spiritual roots to regain our sense of belonging to God, recover our original purpose, and refocus on the unique mission and calling he has for us. All we have to do is turn to God and get some alone time with him.

Faithfully, your priest,

J. Gordon Anderson

October 2020

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UPCOMING HOLY DAYS:

Oct 28th - Ss. Simon & Jude, Apostles

Holy Communion at 10:00 a.m.

Nov 2nd - All Souls Day

Holy Communion at 10:00 a.m.

Nov 21st - The Presentation of Our Lady

Holy Communion at 10:00 a.m.

Nov 26th - Thanksgiving Day

Holy Communion at 10:00 a.m.

Dec 8th - Conception of Our Lady

Holy Communion at 10:00 a.m.

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Holy Communion at 10:00 a.m.

Dec. 16th, 18th, 19th - Ember Days

Holy Communion at 10:00 a.m.

Dec 21st - St. Thomas

Holy Communion at 10:00 a.m.

THE CHRISTIAN YEAR: *Saint Luke the Evangelist (October 18th)*

This month the Prayer Book Holy Day for Saint Luke the Evangelist (BCP pp. 253-254) falls on a Sunday, so according to the Tables of Precedence of the Book of Common Prayer (pp. l-li) this day is celebrated rather than the the normal 19th Sunday after Trinity, which instead is merely commemorated.

St. Luke is the most prolific author in the New Testament. This is because he wrote the third Gospel (The Gospel according to Saint Luke) but also as a companion volume the Acts of the Apostles (Acts). Though St. Paul has more individual books (known as “Epistles”) in the New Testament than St. Luke, if you combine Paul’s writings they do not equal Luke’s in terms of sheer numbers of words.

According to Christian tradition St. Luke was a doctor. In Colossians 4:14 St. Paul refers to Luke as “the beloved physician.” The Collect for St. Luke Day in the Prayer book echos this tradition: “ALMIGHTY God, who didst inspire thy servant Saint Luke the Physician, to set forth in the Gospel the love and healing power of thy Son; Manifest in thy Church the like power and love, to the healing of our bodies and our souls; through the same thy Son Jesus Christ our Lord.”

As with doctors today, St. Luke was highly educated. The Greek of his Gospel and Acts is highly complex and some of the hardest in the New Testament to read. Close readers of his Gospel and Acts notice that Luke highlights all sorts of little details relative to miraculous healing that perhaps only a doctor would care to point out. (e.g. Luke 8:42-48; 13:10-17; Acts 3:1-10; 5:12-16; etc.)

St. Luke is traditionally considered to be a gentile convert to Christianity, though some scholars would argue that he was perhaps a hellenized Jew. (Colossians 4:10-11, 14 is generally thought of as suggesting he was a gentile.) In any case, his Gospel is based largely on Saint Mark’s Gospel, with some of his own material added to Mark’s stories, and then another book (called “Q” by scholars) that he and St. Matthew (but *not* St. Mark) used. It was written —along with Acts— by Luke for a man named Theophilus (Luke 1:1-4; Acts 1:1-5)

But whereas Luke relied primarily on the accounts of others to write his Gospel, the Acts of the Apostles

seems to have been written entirely by him. One of the reasons scholars think this is because of the famous “we” passages towards the end of the book where, during Paul’s missionary journeys, the author repeatedly speaks in the first person plural about the journeys. (e.g. Acts 21:1, 21:17, etc.)

Most scholars believe that it was written by him for a community of gentile converts to Christianity. Textual evidence suggests this. Luke is constantly throughout his Gospel explaining Jewish customs and traditions to his readers as though they are unfamiliar with them. The Parable of the Rich Man and Lazarus, found only in Luke’s Gospel, is a good example of this, with its interesting exposition of Jewish eschatology, such as it was in those days.



Luke is a masterful writer. Like the other Evangelists, there are certain stories that only he tells in his Gospel. Many of these are the most beloved stories of scripture. There is the famous “Lucan” infancy narrative with all of the classic and touching “Christmas” stories that read that time of year. There is the tender story of the boy Jesus being lost in the temple. Then there are the parables of the Rich Man and Lazarus, the Prodigal Son, the Persistent Widow, and the Pharisee and Tax Collector Praying in the Temple, to name just a few memorable parables that are unique to Luke’s Gospel. Finally there is the moving resurrection account of Jesus on the Road to Emmaus, which we read as the Gospel for Easter Monday (BCP, p. 167 ff.). No other Gospel

contains these amazing works of literature!

His writing is also very interesting structurally. For example, the Gospel begins and ends in the Temple. The Acts of the Apostles begins in Jerusalem and ends in Rome. St. Luke is showing by this that the Gospel promise that Jesus would be “a light to lighten the Gentiles” (Luke 2:29-32) had been fulfilled. In the ecclesiastical year, in Morning and Evening Prayer, Luke’s writings carry us through the first part of summer. We read his Gospel at Morning Prayer at the beginning of Trinitytide, and we read the Acts of the Apostles at Evening Prayer beginning at Ascensiontide. And then of course his works are peppered throughout the rest of the year in various places. Enjoy reading his wonderful writings, and may God speak to your soul through his elegant prose. ✠

CURRENT EVENTS: *Dangers of the Demonic and New Age*

We are now in October when all of the Halloween stuff comes out in full force. Stores like Home Depot and Lowes display gruesome decorations that emit creepy noises and proclaim weird slogans; all sorts of spooky movies become available on Amazon Prime, Netflix, and other streaming services; and “Boo Berry” and “Franken Berry” cereal once again appears on grocery store shelves for a few weeks. (If you want to see something really scary check out the ingredients list on the side of the box!) Then, a few days after Halloween, all of the decorations get put away until next year, and we begin thinking about Thanksgiving and Christmas.

But in a lot of ways the New Age and demonic themes of the Madison Avenue version of Halloween (versus the actual Christian holy day of “All Hallows Eve”) never really go away. Just look at the many ghost hunting and paranormal experience television series that are available to watch anytime during the year on streaming television, as well as popular movies and books like the Harry Potter series. Why is this sort of programming always available? Because our postmodern culture is obsessed with it... and it is, to be sure, a potentially dangerous obsession.

New Age activities and paranormal-themed entertainment are dangerous because they serve as gateways to the demonic world. Christians therefore should simply avoid them as much as possible. New Age practices that people typically think of as harmless include astrology, fortune telling (or “palm reading”), Tarot Cards, casting spells, attempting to communicate with the spirit world, and the like. Paranormal-themed entertainment includes the myriads of ghost hunting shows, haunted house documentaries, and fantasy novels such as the Harry Potter.

JK Rowling is, of course, strongly reputed to be a witch. And good authority has it that some of the spells contained in the Harry Potter books are real incantations that people have tried and accidentally committed serious harm with. If one is interested in reading good fantasy novels (or watching the movies) that are written by Christians and are also bona fide classics he or she should read C.S. Lewis’ *Chronicles of Narnia* and/or J.R.R. Tolkien’s *Lord of the Rings* to name a few. These books have explicitly Christian subplots running through them, as Lewis and Tolkien were both devout Christians (Anglican and Roman Catholic respectively).

Ghost hunting, which is romanticized on TV, is in reality quite dangerous because it serves as a way to invite demonic oppression into one’s life. Demons will masquerade as angels, or the souls of departed humans, so as to trick people into letting them enter their life. Flirting with the demonic realm can lead to physical and mental harm in addition to spiritual harm. Often people who engage in such practices (ghost hunting, ouija boards, etc.)—even if for just a brief portion of life—suffer negative consequences from it for years and years to come.

The scriptures speak of the reality of the unseen, spiritual realm. We read of angels and demons throughout the Old and New Testaments. But many Christians who believe in angels and God (who is a spirit) for some reason refuse to believe in the demons or the devil, even though they are written about in the Bible! The word of God and the sacred tradition of the Church is clear: demons and the devil are undoubtedly real.

The best defense against the devil and demonic influences is living what the Prayer Book calls a “godly, righteous, and sober life.” If we avoid evil and strive, with God’s help to do good and obey his commandments—immerse our lives in his—the devil will quite frankly want little to do with us, just as want nothing to do with him. Being faithful to God, and putting him first in our lives means that we spend regular time with him in prayer and the study of scripture. It also means that we make use of the sacraments, especially the Holy Communion, confession, and anointing (unction) when we are ill. So-called “sacramentals” such as holy water, blessed objects and images (such as crosses, medals of saints, chalk, palms, etc.) are all fine and well, and we should make use of them as we feel the need. But they are not as effectual as the sacraments, the sacred rites instituted by Jesus himself and his Holy Catholic Church to communicate his grace and very life to us. The sacraments unite us with Christ, and the more Christ-like we become, the more we are defended against the assaults of the evil one.

If the devil tempted and tested Jesus, and tried to trick him and assault him, as he did on the Mount of Temptation (Mt. 4:1-13) he will surely come after us as well. We do not need to do him any favors by opening doors for him. St. James in his Epistle puts it best: “Submit yourselves therefore to God. Resist the devil, and he will flee from you.” (4:7) ✠

REPORT ON GLOBAL PARTNERSHIPS: *India & the Philippines, by the Rt. Rev'd David Haines*

The most recent visit to **India** took place in February 2017. During this time the team got to visit fifteen churches in five districts in Andhra Pradesh, as well as the Good Shepherd School in Kollur in the Mahbubnagar District of Telengana.

The issues of the Covid-19 pandemic have resulted in severe restrictions in the churches in India. A total lockdown was enacted by the government in late February and this has been in place for the past four months. The lockdown has severely restricted church activities and has made communication very difficult. Restrictions began to be lifted in May, but are still severely limiting.

The Good Shepherd schools were also restricted and are operating within the parameters and guidelines set by both the state and national governments. Schools and teachers are using class-wide WhatsApp groups for students so they can study at home. Teachers are also distributing worksheets and other materials to the student's homes. School properties are serving as health and relief centers in some communities where needed.

From Bishop Jaya Rao's most recent report there are currently twenty-eight churches in six districts of Andhra Pradesh that are being served by twenty-eight clergy (twenty-seven priests and one bishop).

The next visit to India was planned for the second half of 2020, but may only be possible during the first half of 2021 due to the Covid-19 restrictions. During the visit a Suffragan Bishop will be consecrated and a new school property will be blessed.

Ministry partners include Operation Mobilization -USA, and Good Shepherd Ministries – India.

Current Financial Needs: Monthly Operating Expenses \$1,700; Mobile Clinic \$50,000; Sponsorships for children \$30/month or \$360/year;

Motorcycles for Priests - \$1,500 each (6 currently)
Estimated Travel Costs (2021) - \$9,000

The most recent visit to the APA Missionary District of the **Philippines** took place in March, 2020. During the visit Bishop Haines blessed the land for a church (St. Andrew, the Apostle Church) in Tubili, Occidental Mindoro, consecrated one of the churches (St. Joseph the Worker, Masoc, Nueva Viscaya), and confirmed forty-three and baptized two at St. James, the Apostle Anglican Church in Bauang, La Union. The full report is available on the APA webpage.

During the visit five priest were granted Temporary Licenses to serve in the Cebu City area and two postulants were received.

Following the visit, the churches were forced to close due to government-imposed restrictions because of the Covid-19 pandemic and all travel was restricted. In late May certain restrictions were lifted but public transportation remains suspended. Private transportation for certain purposes is now being permitted which has enabled the churches to resume in-person worship once again.

There are currently two priests and a deacon as well as the five temporarily licensed priests serving in the Philippines. It is expected that the five priests will be conditionally re-ordained during the next Episcopal visit to the Missionary District.

Current Financial Needs: Monthly Operating Expenses \$400; Church Construction (St. James and on Mindoro Occidental); \$12,000 Estimated Travel Costs (2022) - \$9,000 ₱

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) ✠