

# The Centurion

The Parish Magazine of St. Alban's Church

1011 Old Joppa Road, Joppa, Maryland, 21085



My dear People:

It's October again, and that means that it is Halloween season. "Halloween" is short for "All Hallow's Eve" —the eve of All Saints' Day. Therefore it is traditionally a Christian holiday (a "holy day")... though one would never know it nowadays, what with all of the macabre Halloween decorations and other such gory clutter that people put in their front yards. What is amazing of course is how expensive these 'decorations' —15 foot skeletons, werewolves, etc.— actually are. (I saw one at Home Depot that cost \$300.) Imagine, then, how much a whole yard full of these things cost, as some people buy everything, and then litter the yard with them. *That* (the cost) is the really scary thing. But wait: there is something more scary than even the cost of these animatronic beasts, and the frightening designs. That is what our interest in them reveals about the human soul in 21st century, postmodern America. Among other things they show man's strange obsession with the demonic. The proliferation of 'ghost hunting', Wicca, new age spirituality, and the occult—in what is supposedly an enlightened, scientific age—is at once fascinating and tragic to behold. It is especially sad to see Christians get mixed up in, and become obsessed with, the occult. Indeed, a lot of Christians seem to be more interested in demons, spirits, and ghosts more than in our blessed Lord Jesus Christ. But we must be careful. Being interested in occult things actually darkens our lives and makes us attractive to demonic forces who "roam throughout the world, seeking the ruin of souls." (Prayer to Saint Michael the Archangel) If you really want to keep Halloween then come to church on All Saints' Day (Nov. 1st) and All Souls' Day (Nov. 2nd). The focus of these days—and all Holy Days—is our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ. On November 1st we celebrate all the saints of the Church—known and unknown. And on All Souls' Day we remember all the faithful departed in Christ—known and unknown. On All Saints' we pray for God's grace to follow the good examples of all the saints, and on All Soul's we pray for the happy repose of their souls in Christ. All of that which we do at church during "Hallowtide" is so much more meaningful and purposeful than setting up displays of Stephen King movies on the front lawn. It's also a lot more affordable. Please, my friends, try to avoid an unhealthy interest in the dead and the spirit world. I have seen a lot of good people—lay and ordained—get really messed up by becoming too interested in that stuff. In Philippians 4:8 Saint Paul says, "*Whatsoever things are true, whatsoever things are honest, whatsoever things are just, whatsoever things are pure, whatsoever things are lovely, whatsoever things are of good report; if there be any virtue, and if there be any praise, think on these things.*" We should follow his admonition and always think upon God, and what he's done for us in Christ... not about which ghosts are haunting a house, or how we can (supposedly) communicate with the dead, etc. We are, after all, Christians... not pagans.

Faithfully, your priest, *J. Gordon Anderson*

## October

### IN THIS ISSUE:

**Christian Living, p. 2-3**

*Keeping the Spiritual Fire Alive*

**Parish News, p. 4**

*Updates from St. Alban's*

### UPCOMING HOLY DAYS:

**Oct 18th - St. Luke**

Holy Communion at 10:00 a.m

**Oct 28th - Ss. Simon & Jude**

Holy Communion at 10:00 a.m

**Nov 1st - All Saints**

Holy Communion at 6:30 p.m

**Nov 2nd - All Souls**

Holy Communion at 10:00 a.m

**Nov 21st - Presentation of BVM**

Holy Communion at 10:00 a.m

**Nov 24th - Thanksgiving**

Holy Communion at 10:00 a.m

**Nov 29th - St. Andrew**

Holy Communion at 10:00 a.m

**Dec 8th - Conception of the BVM**

Holy Communion at 10:00 a.m

**Dec 14th, 16th - Ember Days**

Holy Communion at 10:00 a.m

**Dec 21st - St. Thomas**

Holy Communion at 10:00 a.m

CHRISTIAN LIVING: *The Christian Life is Like Marriage*

This month Valerie and I celebrated our seventeenth anniversary. It is great to look back and see how we have both grown as individuals and as a couple over the years. I remember that they used to say a husband and wife were ‘newlyweds’ for the first two years of marriage. Then, after that, I guess you just become another ‘old married couple’ or something like that. All relationships that last a long time go through change. Successfully navigating those changes and the challenges that come with them is one of the keys to a happy and long-lasting marriage.

We should think of the spiritual life in the same way. The initial excitement that comes with a religious conversion, or some new infusion of God’s grace and Holy Spirit in your life usually fades after a while, especially as we face new circumstances in life. So we need to keep feeding our spirit, deepening our relationship with God, and growing into spiritual maturity in order to make it through the trials and temptations of life to become the people God is calling us to be, and ultimately to find eternal salvation.

One of the places where a spiritual boredom tends to set in with our relationship with God is in the sacred liturgy. The initial wonder people have with the beautiful Prayer Book service often wanes after a couple of years... after the ‘honeymoon’ phase is over. It starts feeling cold, sterile, and perfunctory. Eventually it begins to affect our attendance. We come less and less, until we stop coming altogether. Should such a person snap out of his spiritual malaise and start attending services again (perhaps somewhere else) he inevitably blames the ‘formalistic, rigid’ liturgy for what befell him. But is that really fair?

In my almost twenty years of ordained ministry I have noticed that people who do little to maintain their relationship with God during the week, who do not practice a Rule of Life, and who remain on the outskirts of parish life, inevitably fall away from the Church and God. They started strong! The first two years or so they were in the honeymoon phase. But as the relationship continued it grew dull and lifeless, in part because they never did anything to continue to nurture the relationship. So what can we do to keep the spiritual fire burning in our hearts?

**Make sure you have all the tools you need.**

First of all, you should have a Prayer Book and a Bible (with Apocrypha) at home. Make sure they are nice copies that invite you to read them, not tattered rags with print that is too small and pages missing. You

would be surprised how many Christian people have the nicest homes, cars, electronics, etc. but then have the cheapest garbage books with which to practice their faith! Every Anglican should have a quality Bible and Prayer Book (and also, preferably, a 1940 Hymnal) in his home for his devotional use and that are nice enough that you actually want to read it and handle it.

**Worship God daily.** Central to the life of the Anglican is the daily worship of God in the Divine Office, otherwise known as Morning and Evening Prayer. Every Christian, in addition to regular attendance at Sunday services, should carve out time each day to study the word of God, pray, and sing God’s praises. Every Anglican should aspire to read Morning and Evening Prayer from the Book of Common Prayer each day. Doing so will take him through almost the entire Bible in concert with the ecclesiastical year, and combined with canticles of praise, and beautiful and venerable prayers.

**Buy supplemental devotional books.** Purchase one of these classic Anglican devotional texts: *Saint Augustine’s Prayer Book (Traditional)* or *The Practice of Religion* to help deepen your prayer life. These are built around the 1928 Book of Common Prayer tradition and contain many helpful instructions, additional prayers and litanies, and other helpful aids. *Our Daily Bread* is also great to read and available for free at church.

**Practice spiritual reading.** Every Anglican should have a book that he is reading that will help him in his spiritual growth. When you finish it, start another one. It is best to stick with the classics, but some contemporary authors, such as N.T. Wright, are worth looking at from time to time. None of them — new or old — are perfect. A good place for the Anglican to start is anything by or about C.S. Lewis. One simply cannot be an Anglican and not read him. Thomas Merton is also an author worth checking out, as is Peter Kreeft (both Roman Catholics). *Confessions* by Saint Augustine is a must-read, as well as *Imitation of Christ* (Thomas a’Kempis). These, and many other books like them, have been recommended over the years on these pages. Have we ever taken the time to check any of them out?

**Take advantage of parish offerings.** Saint Alban’s offers — and has offered — lots of different activities and opportunities for spiritual growth over the years that far too few take advantage of. On Sunday mornings the rector hosts a forum between services where all sorts of edifying topics are discussed in an open forum format. *Continued on the next page...*

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Holy Days services are offered during the week; there is always at least one service of Holy Communion offered during the week. Grace, Grit, and Thanksgiving—our parish prayer and fellowship group—meets monthly in the evening for prayer, discussion, snacks, and fellowship. Special services and activities are offered during Lent. There is a Daughters of the King chapter for women who want to deepen their ministry to the church and community in fellowship with each other. We have a fledgeling men's group that is trying to meet monthly. Over the years at various we have offered Bible studies and book studies. We have fellowship brunches and dinners on a regular basis. We band together to serve our community through supporting Cancer LifeNet, Harford House, Tools for Schools, and more. And we also serve diocesan charities during Lent and at other times during the year. Do not sit on the sidelines. Get involved. And if there is no place to get involved, then start something.

**Make use of the sacraments.** In addition to regular attendance at Sunday Mass, you can make a private confession of sin in the sacrament of penance whenever you want. Many people do so during Advent and Lent, others more regularly. When you are sick or (especially) hospitalized or shut-in please ask me to come and visit you to pray with you and bring you Holy Communion. (Always, by the way, make sure you take your Prayer Book with you if you have to go to the hospital!) At the very least let me know that you are ill, or going in for an operation so I can at least pray for you, and ask the Daughters of the King to pray for you! Never feel like you are bugging me if you are sick and need prayers or a visit!

**Make friends with your fellow parishioners.** The Holy Catholic Church is the Mystical Body of Christ. Each Christian is part of Christ's Body, and therefore part of each other. Our parish is a microcosm—a local expression—of the universal Church. And so we are all members of each other. We need each other for our support and mutual growth and edification. If a person always shows up to church a minute before it begins (or late), and then rushes out right after the service without ever greeting fellow churchmen, and if he never comes to any activities outside of Sunday services, then he misses out on a crucial way to mature in his faith. When we take time to get to know each other and spend more time together we share our lives, and then we know how to pray for and support one another in this crazy thing called life, and as we journey together to heaven. We also learn that we are not alone in our struggles, and that other people have dealt with

what we are dealing with and made it through by the grace of God. So try to forge genuine relationships with your fellow parishioners. You will be glad you did.

**Use the internet to your advantage.** If you are on social media you should join our Facebook group, and follow our Instagram and Twitter feeds. You can also get a lot of good out of following other traditional Anglican groups. There is so much to learn out there, and a lot of resources—theological, devotional, historical—that are literally just a few clicks away. If you are not on social media fear not! You can find most of those resources online on the world wide web. Project Canterbury has loads of Anglican historical and theological material available for free, and is a good place to go to learn about our unique Christian tradition and grow in it. God gave us all of this media, so let's use it to deepen our relationship with him through Jesus Christ our Lord.

**The Bottom Line:** The Anglican tradition, centered as it is on the Book of Common Prayer, is a way of life. It is not just a pretty Holy Communion service on Sundays and special holidays. If our Christian life consists of just occasional attendance at Sunday services then our spiritual life is doomed to failure... no matter how beautiful and traditional the Sunday morning service is. We have to do more than just 'show up occasionally' if we hope to grow as Christians. If we have become bored in our walk with God and cold in our relationship with him, and if the liturgy and life of the Church no longer seems to have that magic it once did, then we should try to spice things up a bit, as it were, and take advantage of all that is out there to help us grow as Christians. ☩



## PARISH NEWS &amp; UPDATES:

**What Is The Vestry?**

The vestry is the body of elected lay people who manage the temporal affairs of an Anglican parish. The name comes from Medieval times from the room where they would meet... the 'vestry', where the clergy would 'vest' (dress) for services. The size of the vestry depends on the size of the parish. Here at Saint Alban's we have six vestrymen plus the rector, who is a member *ex officio*. The vestry always has the following members: a Senior Warden (or 'Rector's Warden'), a Junior Warden (or 'People's Warden'), a secretary, and a treasurer. Other members are simply 'members at large.' The Senior Warden is appointed by the rector from the members of the vestry and is the canonical authority of the parish in the absence of the rector.

The Junior Warden oversees the property and deals with contractor's, etc. The roles of secretary and treasurer are self-explanatory. Here at Saint Alban's the term for a vestryman is three years, except the Senior Warden, who may stay on (if he or she is willing) as long as the rector wishes. Minutes from the vestry meetings and parish financial reports are always on display in the parish hall.

**Annual Meeting — Sunday, November 20th**

Come out for our annual meeting which will take place at approximately 10:00 a.m. On that Sunday we will have *one 9:00 a.m. service followed by a brunch*. We will look back at 2022 and see how God has blessed us, and look forward to 2023, and at all the good things God has in store for us. We will elect new vestrymen and vote on our proposed 2023 budget. It is very important that everyone plan to attend this meeting.

**Return of Quarterly Fellowship Dinners**

Before the pandemic and lockdowns we were in the habit of having a fellowship dinner each quarter. That will resume next month on All Saints' Day. Join us for Holy Communion at 6:30 p.m. followed by a parish dinner. Sign up in the parish hall. That will be our 'fall' dinner. The next dinners will be as follows: Epiphany

('winter' dinner, January 6th), Ascension Day ('spring' dinner, May 18th), and then finally our 'summer' dinners —these will be the Grace, Grit, and Thanksgiving cookouts that we about once a month during the summer. We hope to see everyone there for these fun times of food and fellowship!

**Prayer Book Society USA Revamps "Anglican Way" Magazine**

The venerable Prayer Book Society recently hired NYC design firm Beck & Stone to completely streamline and overhaul her sprawling online presence and print media. Beck & Stone is responsible for such important publications as *First Things*, *The New*

*Criterion*, the *Claremont Review of Books*, and more. The newly redesigned magazine *Anglican Way* —her flagship quarterly publication — is now available. It has excellent articles on every theological, pastoral, historical, and biblical topic imaginable, all written by world class Anglican scholars. A sample of the latest magazine is available in the parish hall, and order forms are placed next to it. You may also order it online at <https://anglicanway.org/subscription-signup/> Since the 1970's the Society for the Preservation of the Book of Common Prayer

has sought to maintain the Anglican tradition of liturgical common prayer and promote the use and understanding of traditional versions of the Book of Common Prayer such as the American edition of 1928.

**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) ✠

