

# The Centurion

The Parish Magazine of St. Alban's Church

1011 Old Joppa Road, Joppa, Maryland, 21085



My dear People:

Years ago a recent college graduate in philosophy who started attending my parish in Virginia after many years of not going to church remarked to me how absurd he thought it was for Christians—or anyone for that matter—to speak of being in “a personal relationship with God.” He thought that the notion that a finite creature such as man could enjoy some sort of individual, intimate relationship with this awesome divine Being who created and sustains everything—who is the “*first and the last, the beginning and the end*” (Rev. 22:13)—was just entirely too much to fathom. At the time I explained to him that we could be in such a relationship because of the incarnation of our Lord Jesus Christ; for as Saint John reminds us, “*The Word was made flesh and dwelt among us.*” (John 1:14) God, in the person of Jesus, very clearly maintained personal relationship with people. While that was and remains true, it is also possible to go back much further in the scriptures and see many other examples of God’s people being in a personal relationship with him, even before God became incarnate. The best example of this is the Psalms of David, that beautiful book of poems that we find in the middle of the Bible and also in the Book of Common Prayer. The Psalms are heartfelt prayers to God written by the historical King David, as well as others. In reading them we see quite vividly that the ancient Hebrew people believed their relationship with God was not only a corporate, covenantal one, but also a personal one. “*Deliver me, O Lord, from the evil man; and preserve me from the wicked man.*” (Ps. 140) “*Unto thee, O God, do we give thanks; yea, unto thee do we give thanks.*” (Ps. 75) “*The Lord is my shepherd; therefore can I lack nothing.*” (Ps. 23) “*My God, my God, look upon me; why hast thou forsaken me? And art so far from my health, and from the words of my complaint?*” (Ps. 22) “*Have mercy upon me, O God, after thy great goodness; according to the multitude of thy mercies do away mine offenses.*” (Ps. 51) And that is just a portion of what we see only in the Psalms. So many of the other stories of the Old Testament show how the relationship between God and his people is a personal one. That is our story too! Our relationship with God is a personal one, as well as a corporate one. In Christ our savior God is now our Father, just as Jesus taught his disciples to pray. Just think for a moment about how a child relates to his father. He can laugh with him, cry, scream and freak out, be restful and at peace, etc. Think about the way your children related to you when they were at home, and the whole gamut of emotions and feelings that went with it. That’s how we can relate to God our heavenly father... in a *personal* way. We can bring him all of our joy, happiness, and praise, as well as our fears, longings, and sorrows. We see this entire range of emotions displayed in the Psalms, by the way. God loves us and cares about us, and wants us to share everything we have and are with him. We should always be comfortable pouring out our hearts to him who is our loving heavenly father.

Faithfully, your priest, *J. Gordon Anderson*

September 2022

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UPCOMING HOLY DAYS:

**Sep 8th - Nativity of the BVM**

Holy Communion at 10:00 a.m.

**Sep 21st - St. Matthew**

Holy Communion at 10:00 a.m.

**Sep 23rd - Ember Friday**

**Sep 29th - St. Michael**

Holy Communion at 10:00 a.m.

**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 10:00 a.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.

THEOLOGY: *The Evolution of Humanism*

The evolution of humanism in western culture is a fascinating study. The word ‘humanism’ originally referred to people in the 14th-16th centuries—the Renaissance—who studied the ‘humanities’: grammar, rhetoric, history, poetry, philosophy, etc. These people were called ‘humanists.’ One of their goals was to go back to the sources (“ad fontes”) of western culture and recover things that had been lost or obscured during the Dark and Middle Ages. Their effort was helped in part by the fall of the Byzantine Empire and the city of Constantinople to the Ottoman Turks in 1453, which caused great scholars of ancient learning to flee west, bringing their knowledge with them, mainly to Italy, which was the center of the Renaissance.

The spirit of Renaissance Humanism is best captured in the amazing art produced during the period. The paintings of Botticelli; the sculptures and frescoes of Michelangelo and Donatello; the paintings and drawings of DaVinci; the architecture of Palladio, Brunelleschi, and Bernini; among many other talented artists and scholars, shows an incredibly optimistic view of humanity and the human person, fueled by this reacquaintance with the past. Michelangelo’s *David* shows a well-built man with a large head, and strong hands, which signifies that men can do anything. Ancient, pagan historical myths are rediscovered and studied, as seen in paintings like *The Birth of Venus* and *Primavera* (Botticelli). And in the world of architecture men like Palladio abandon the gothic in favor of classical forms that stress balance, simplicity, and symmetry, all of which is found in the creation... in a world that is seen as orderly, rational, and good... a world that is full of potential and just waiting for man—who is rational and good—to explore her, and seize her potential for the glory of God and advancement of the human race.

Renaissance Humanism was for all practical purposes the same thing as Christian Humanism. The slow rediscovery of Aristotle, which accelerated in the late Middle Ages, led to a renewed interest in the things of this world, because Aristotle, and the Christian philosophers who followed him, taught that all knowledge begins with the senses. Thus we see during this time the beginning of modern science, as the humanists believed that in knowing the creation and ourselves we also come to know something of God and his eternal truths. And it was the Church that was the great patron of the arts during this time. Popes, monarchs, and others commissioned amazing works of art that glorified God and beautified the world that we

all still enjoy today. So Renaissance Humanism was fundamentally Christian.

But alas, as time went on, the specter of secularism began to rise. The word ‘secular’ comes from the Latin word ‘saecula’ which means ‘world.’ It refers to things only of this physical/material world, and therefore excludes any notion of the divine, or belief in a higher being, such as God. Secular humanism is the belief that man can attain the truth, accomplish all good things, and make the world a better place *without any reference to God, or any need of him*. It is the belief that humanity can pull itself up by its own bootstraps and define and create its own utopia. As wars of religion started, and city-states surpassed the Church in authority and influence, God was slowly pushed to the margins of society, and into his place was enthroned man himself.

Secular humanistic endeavors are almost always messianic in character. They are built upon the idea that if enough people of the right temperament and talents get together under the right circumstances they can devise systems that will of themselves lead humanity into a brighter more prosperous and fair future apart from God, or any other sort of tradition for that matter. Communism—and its progenitor, Socialism—is the perfect example of this. Unfortunately the notion of secular humanism, along with the movements it spawns, inevitably fail to deliver on their promises. Why? Because man without God cannot accomplish anything. And because human beings are sinners in need of salvation, and God’s divine help. The vast bloodshed of the 20th century certainly dispelled the notion that man could do whatever he wanted to, and that humanity without God was on an ever upward trajectory.

Fast forwarding to today we see that secular humanism has now given way to an ‘anti-humanism.’ With God and tradition having been rejected from our public lives, and the failure of secular humanism in trying to advance the human race and the world without reference to God, man himself has now been deemed public enemy number one. Humanism is dead. Anti-humanism—the concept that human beings *in and of themselves* are what is wrong with the world—has floated to the surface like a dead body in a swamp. We see this most explicitly in the extreme environmentalist movement, which has groups that openly promote depopulation, lowering human birthrates, and advocate returning to a primitive state of living.

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SPIRITUALITY: *The Theology of Pain (A Brief Meditation by the Rev'd Jack Cooper)*

Pain is a universal experience that we hate. Broken bones, and kidney stones, and all kinds of problems cause us pain. There is a good side to pain because it is telling us that something is wrong. As we go through life with this pain or that agony, I think we find that our capacity for pain is greater than our capacity for pleasure. In the intense throes of suffering one feels that it would be impossible to endure more. But yet another agony is added, and we struggle with it, and somehow we absorb and endure it.

Strangely, while no pain becomes pleasure, pleasure can be converted into pain. Tickling may be funny at first, but if it continues it can become a downright displeasure. Some people find pleasure in drinking. But too much of it gives a dreadful hangover. The same is true of drugs, which may exhilarate at first, but destroy when continued. Why are we made that there seems to be no limit to our ability to endure pain, but the boundaries of pleasure are rather quickly touched?

I believe that it is because while pain is meant to be exhausted in this life joys are not, because they

belong to another existence. True happiness is reserved for another world. In this world we but touch its fringes and tassels. This world is not final. Pain was meant to have its last throb in time. But not so with true happiness. That will come when we cross over.

This, I think, is one of the things God tried to teach us when he came upon this earth as Jesus through his birth, life, death, and resurrection. I think Saint Paul understood something of this when he wrote: "I reckon that the sufferings of this present time are not worthy to be compared with the glory which shall be revealed in us." (Romans 8:18) ☩

*The Rev'd Jack Cooper was the first rector of Saint Alban's Anglican Church. He was a graduate of Boys Latin, Johns Hopkins University, and the Virginia Theological Seminary. He served parishes throughout Baltimore City and Harford County. This article is taken from his book "Memories of Fifty-Six Years of Ministry."*

CURRENT EVENTS: *The Death of Queen Elizabeth II*

This month the world mourned the passing of HRH Queen Elizabeth II. She was the longest reigning monarch in England's history, and second longest reigning European monarch of all time. (She is beat by the Sun King, Louis XIV, by two years.) While Elizabeth kept her political thoughts to herself one thing she did not keep to herself was her deep Christian faith. She regularly spoke in public addresses about her relationship with God and her faith in Jesus Christ. As Queen she was the supreme head of the Church of England. This dates back to the time of Henry VIII when, at the Reformation, he declared himself and his successors—not the Pope—to be the head of the Church in England. These days the monarch does little to nothing to actually govern the Church, instead delegating that responsibility to the Archbishop of Canterbury, the Prime Minister, and others. A lot of people wondered why Elizabeth stayed in office for so long. The reason is because she took her coronation vows very seriously. She truly believed she was called and anointed by God for this role, and therefore that she had to see it through to the end. Dedication, integrity, and values like that are few and far between these days! There is a fascinating book called "*The Coronation Service*" by Frances C. Elles (Mowbrays, 1952) that explains the history and deep theological meaning of the British coronation service.

The whole event takes place within a service of Holy Communion. During it the monarch is anointed with oil and crowned by the Archbishop of Canterbury, signifying that all of his authority comes from God, to whom he is bound to honor and serve. There are many other aspects to the service that are quite fascinating from an historical and theological standpoint. One can actually watch the coronations of George VI and Elizabeth II on YouTube where there is very interesting commentary explaining everything as it happens. When Charles III is eventually coronated the world will see all of these great traditions once again. As members of the Anglican Province of America the British Monarch is not the head of our Church, but since we come out of the Episcopal Church (which is also not under the monarch), which came out of the Church of England, most of us have always had a romantic historical interest in the monarchy and the traditions of the Royal family. Much of the reason for this is because one cannot understand the history of the Church of England, or the beginnings of what became the Episcopal Church, without learning about the political history of England, and the Crown. To study one is to study the other. And so, we pray for the happy repose of her soul, for peace and comfort for her family and the people of England, and that her successor, King Charles III, would be blessed. ☩

## 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.

**New APA Website and App**

Go to [www.anglicanprovince.org](http://www.anglicanprovince.org) to see our new updated website. Also, be sure to download the APA app from wherever you get your apps. The app has the same content as the website but enables you to access it in a mobile friendly way without having to use a web browser.

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The Church rejects anti-humanism as stridently as she rejects secular humanism. But while both are fundamentally godless and irrational, one is definitely worse than the other. Anti-humanism goes completely against the anthropology of scripture and tradition. In Genesis 1-2 the bible says that God created all things, and that they were created good. The pinnacle of the creation is man—male and female—whom God created in his own image and likeness, and whom he told to be "*be fruitful and multiply*" and to rule as a wise steward over all of God's creation (Gen. 1:28). Indeed, one cannot help but see something demonic in contemporary extremist movements that seek to make humanity go extinct in order to supposedly save the

**2022 Annual Meeting**

Our annual meeting is Sunday, November 20th at 10:30 a.m. As is our custom, we will have ONE 9:00 a.m. service that day. Please make a note of it and plan to join us for the meeting!

**Diocesan Parochial Schools**

Did you know that our diocese (Diocese of Eastern United States) has three parochial schools with two more in formation? There is Lindisfarne Hall, in Fernandina Beach, FL (Holy Trinity Parish); St. Paul's Classical School, in Melbourne, FL (St. Paul's Parish); and The Ecclesial School, in Oviedo, FL (St. Alban's Pro-Cathedral). In formation is All Saints' School, in Mills River, NC (All Saints' Parish); and finally St. Dunstan's Academy, which is going to be a grades 9-12 boarding school for boys in the mountains of central Virginia.

**2022 Diocesan Synod**

News, updates, schedules, financials, and more from our 2022 diocesan synod are on display in the parish hall on the 'Diocese' bulletin board.

**Special Thanks**

Thank you Chuck and Xander Meyer for fixing our broken tract rack in the parish hall! It is not going to fall off of the wall anymore. You guys did a great job! ✠

plant. The assault on the human person is an assault on God in whose image man is made.

One of the things that the Church needs to be doing today is to continue to proclaim the Christian view of man, which involves recovering the spirit of Renaissance Humanism, and which had an optimistic vision of man, the world, and the future... precisely because it was a *Christian* Humanism. When we are aligned with God and seeking to do good in the world great things happen, as evidenced hundreds of years ago in the Renaissance. The problem is not man, but the disease of sin within him, which causes him to abuse his power and authority, and worship himself rather than his creator. God has given us the cure for sin in the person of Jesus, whom we meet in his One, Holy, Catholic, and Apostolic Church. ✠