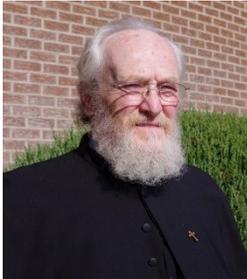


Fr. Robert's RemarksFR. ROBERT MANSFIELD, SSC
VICAR GENERAL

Greetings; the Lord be with you!

In this coming week we shall observe the Advent Ember Days.

The Ember Days are described on page *xiii* as “Days of Solemn Prayer” and have traditionally been seen as days of fasting and abstinence. Based on the witness of the Scriptures, the notion of fasting along with prayer has been seen as important. Think for example of the narrative of Jesus’ return with SS Peter, James, and John from Mount Tabor after the Transfiguration. As described in the seventeenth chapter of St. Matthew’s Gospel, they were met with a crisis which Jesus dealt with. Afterwards, “Then came the disciples to Jesus apart, and said, Why could not we cast him out?” Jesus responded by speaking of their unbelief and of faith, and He concluded by saying, “Howbeit this kind goeth not out by prayer and fasting.” Another Scriptural example of prayer and fasting linked together would be found in Acts 13.3 describing the setting apart of Barnabas and Saul “for the work whereunto I have called them.”—“And when they had fasted and prayed and laid their hands on them, they sent them away.”

It used to be that ordinations were fixed the Ember Days. Two of the reasons mentioned by Evan Daniel in his book *The Prayer-Book: Its History, Language and Contents* (pp217-218) were that “(1.) That

(Continued on page 15)

Fr. David Marriott, SSC: A Sermon At Christmas Time

FR. DAVID MARRIOTT, SSC

The collect for the Fourth Sunday in Advent calls on God to come among us: ‘RAISE up, we beseech thee, O Lord, thy power, and come among us, and with great might succour us;’ it is a prayer which might have been said before God sent His Only Son to come among us, but is equally a prayer that we might utter as we look forward to that terrible day of judgement which is coming to the world as we know it, because, as the collect continues, ‘that whereas, through our sins and wickedness, we are sore let and hindered in running the race that is set before us, thy bountiful grace and mercy may speedily help and deliver us.’

So it was in the time of Jesus, where the Jewish nation was ‘sore let and hindered’ not only by their own ‘sins and wickedness’, but also by the occupying power, the Roman empire, which, combined with the local government in the hand of the Pharisees and Sadducees, the priests of the temple and the local government hierarchy and bureaucracy: so it was that Isaiah had been inspired by the Holy Spirit to write, even some 700 years before the Nativity which we celebrate at this time, writing ‘Behold a virgin shall conceive and bear a son, and shall call his name Immanuel’, and ‘Unto us a child is born, unto us a son is given’. Perhaps, as we consider the various doomsday predictions that we hear, concerning the coming end of the world, we might consider this fact, that the nation of Israel started to look for the Messiah with the prophecies made so many

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Fr. David Marriott, SSC: A Sermon At Christmas Time

years ahead, and that despite the arrival of the Messiah, they have still continued their search, and sad to say, have still fallen into many of the same traps and pitfalls that beset their ancestors.

But what we have to hear in all of this is that we know that our Redeemer lives, that He has been amongst us, and that this part of our story started in a stable behind an inn in Bethlehem, where Joseph had come with his wife, Mary, to register with the local authority so that they might pay the taxes demanded by the Roman authority which was then under Cyrenius, the local governor.

The prophecy of Isaiah comes to pass, so that, as St. John writes in his first epistle, ‘In this was manifested the love of God toward us, because that God sent his only begotten Son into the world, that we might live through him.’ (1 John 4.9)

‘IN THIS WAS
MANIFESTED THE
LOVE OF GOD
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JOHN 4.9)

The dawn of love is encompassed in the Christmas message brought to us at this time: it is a dramatic change from the impression that earlier faith has had of the relationship between God and man: where despite simple and clear commandments, man has interfered and corrupted through his own weakness and temptations, rendering what was a peaceful and tranquil faith into the ‘law’: where human interpretation and judgment became a central part of the rules governing life: as St Paul states, ‘I am verily a man which am a Jew, born in Tarsus, a city in Cilicia, yet brought up in this city at the feet of Gamaliel, and taught according to the perfect manner of the law of the fathers, and was zealous toward God, as ye all are this day. And I persecuted this way unto the death, binding and delivering into prisons both men and women.’ (Acts 22.3-4) And yet Paul was rescued by the love of God and of Jesus Christ, as the Holy Spirit surrounded him on the road to Damascus, making him that apostle ‘out of his time’, as he said.

God’s love is truly infinite, Jesus brings to us the very Word of God, in His teaching, in His life here in earth, in His gift of the Blessed Sacrament of His Body and His Blood, and in the witness that we have of His Resurrection and Ascension: so that we might better comprehend the goal that we have been asked to fulfill in this life: even when the details and the understanding that we might have are indistinct. But we have inherited one clear trait from our ancestors: that we are also a ‘stiff-necked people’: we flatter ourselves that we are in control when we have very little control: just as the nation of Israel felt that they were compassed about with all sorts of enemies: in the Romans, the temple, the regulations, the taxes, and the threat of revolt and war, so it is that we in our day are also beset by similar frustrations: from federal to provincial to local governments, from threats to the environment which in turn threaten our security of life and limb, all those petty distractions from what we are really about!

So it is that the collect for the fourth Sunday in Advent puts us in the same state of affairs as the nation addressed by Isaiah: only it is that now, having seen the glory of Our Lord, having been encouraged and inspired by His Nativity, by His Word, by His Life, and by His Resurrection, as we in our turn join with the hymns of praise, looking forward to the wonder of the Second coming of Jesus Christ, surrounded by His angels singing praises: ‘Blessed be God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who hath blessed us with spiritual blessings in heavenly places in Christ.’ (Eph. 1.3)



Bonnie's Reflections: *Cocooned in Christmas*



MRS. BONNIE IVEY

Our world sits uneasy as Christmas approaches. We meet with bad news on so many levels. Nations are splintering into rival groups. Families wrangle in divorce courts. Individuals are lost to addiction. Can we believe leaders who promise a better future? Whom do we trust?

Is there hope to be found in church? Beneath some houses of worship the ground seems to tremble. There are shrinking numbers in the pews. Teachings differ from one church body to the next, and older people are aghast at changes made to doctrines they learned in their youth. Outside the churches, there is increasing hostility toward the faith.

We may be pining for the Christmases we remember from former times. For the strong walls enclosing the big congregation. Candlelight and carol services. We long for sanctuary far from the world's barrage of bad news. Secular society also desires a happy holiday, though one without faith. Even the hard-nosed news media bring forth many little "feel good" stories at this season. As we look around, it seems even unbelievers, as well as those who keep their faith, want to crawl into a cozy Christmas blanket, a cocoon, a safe space, to celebrate – what? Feeling good? We need something stronger than nostalgia.

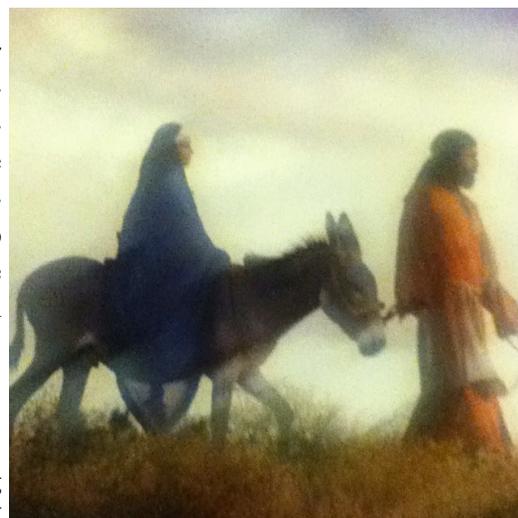
Nostalgia: a sentimental longing or wistful affection for the past, typically for a period or place with happy personal associations.

There are many examples of nostalgic, sentimental images depicting "Christmas". There is the familiar manger scene, with a clean contented baby surrounded by clean adoring farm animals. Humble shepherds kneel while angels in rich drapery hover around holding musical instruments. The reality must have been much harder.

At the time of Jesus' birth, Palestine was in the grip of a foreign power. Roman soldiers in full gear paraded through the streets. Business transactions had to proceed according to Roman rules, with relevant paperwork. When a census was commanded, Jewish men had to go to their birthplace to be registered. Now they would not only have to pay local taxes, but send money to Rome as well. This is why Joseph and his pregnant bride Mary had to set out on an eighty-mile trip to be registered.

It might seem to be coincidence that the birth of Jesus happened at Bethlehem, but it was the fulfilment of a prophecy and part of God's plan. (Micah 5:2) Bethlehem means "house of bread" and it was a fitting birthplace for the Living Bread that came down from heaven. (John 6:51) The fields around that city were devoted to the raising of thousands of very special sheep. The firstborn male lambs, inspected and approved as without blemish, were destined to be sacrificed in the Temple at Jerusalem as offerings for forgiveness of sins. This foreshadows the role of Jesus, the Lamb of God. "But you know that he appeared to take away our sins," says St. John in his first epistle. "The reason the Son of God appeared was to destroy the devil's work." (1 John 3: 5,8)

What are the works of the devil? Lies, pride, self-righteousness, rebellion, unbelief, lust, anger...in short, sin. Iniquity, lawlessness, means *doing what's wrong when you know what's right*. The devil's intention is to separate us, through sin, from God forever. His



Bonnie's Reflections: Cocooned in Christmas

crowning achievement is death.

Jesus faced temptation, and rejected temptation. He experienced slander, mockery, hatred, violence, torture, and death. But death could not overcome the Source of life.

He knows what is in our hearts. He came to give us new life, his Eternal life, so we can be freed from the trap of sin. His method of destroying the works of the devil is to change one human heart at a time. We are not alone in our struggle against sin. This is good news. Feel-good news. We can wrap ourselves, cocoon ourselves, in the hard real fact of Christmas. We have a Savior, who is Christ, the Lord.

Through him all things were made; without him nothing was made that has been made. In him was life, and that life was the light of all mankind. The light shines in the darkness, and the darkness has not overcome it. (John 1:

HE CAME TO GIVE
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SIN.



The Rev. Vernon Staley: The Christian Way — Serialized



THE REV. VERNON STALEY

The Notable Duties.

ALMSDEEDS—PRAYER—FASTING

ALMSGIVING.

Jesus said—"Therefore when thou doest thine alms, do not sound a trumpet before thee, as the hypocrites do in the synagogues and in the streets, that they may have glory of men. Verily I say unto you, They have their reward. But when thou doest alms, let not thy left hand know what thy right hand doeth : that thine alms may be in secret : and thy Father which seeth in secret Himself shall reward thee openly."

Almsgiving is the giving of money, goods, or time, to the special service of God. The principle upon which almsgiving rests is contained in the words of David, " All things come of Thee, and of Thine Own have we given Thee." The practice of giving alms is a recognition of the sovereignty of God. By making a definite return of our substance to Him, we acknowledge that all we have is His. Almsgiving is a great safeguard against " the love of money, which is a root of all kinds of evil."

St. Paul's advice, " Upon the first day of the week, let every one of you lay by him in store, as God hath prospered him," is best fulfilled by giving regularly to the collections in church on Sunday. It is a necessary part of worship, and specially at the Holy Com-



The Rev. Vernon Staley: The Christian Way

munion, to give of our means to God ; and we should make a point of always giving in church, however little. " As thy substance is, give alms of it according to thine abundance : if thou have little, be not afraid to give alms according to that little." If we can only afford a penny, it is better to give that, than to give nothing. Our Lord praised the poor widow, who gave but a farthing.

If we only think of God's generosity, in the gift of His Son and of His Spirit, and of all His temporal and spiritual blessings, we shall wish to make some real return in liberal and self-denying almsgiving. To receive much from God, and yet to give sparingly and grudgingly to Him, is the very depth of meanness and selfishness, and quite unworthy of a Christian.

PRAYER.

Jesus said—" And when thou prayest thou shalt not be as the hypocrites : for they love to pray standing in the synagogues and in the corners of the streets, that they may be seen of men. Verily I say unto you, They have their reward. But thou, when thou prayest, enter into thy closet, and when thou hast shut thy door, pray to thy Father which is in secret ; and thy Father which seeth in secret shall reward thee openly."

In Prayer, we claim and enjoy our privilege as children of God. Our Lord teaches that men ought always to pray." St. Augustine interprets this command to continual prayer saying, " He prays always, who prays at fixed intervals." Christians ought to pray three times a day, as David says, In the evening, and morning, and at noon-day will I pray." Therefore, strive to pray thrice a day, however brief the midday prayer may be. Prayer should be as the key of the day, and the lock of the night.

No one in health, who realizes the majesty of God, and his own littleness, and unworthiness to receive the smallest favours from God's hands, dare sit at prayers. The very simplest person need never be at a loss for words in prayer; for the Lord's Prayer, used with various intentions, will answer every purpose.

The four great acts or divisions of prayer are :—

(1) *Adoration*, by which we acknowledge the supreme Majesty of God, and confess our entire dependence upon Him.

(2) *Thanksgiving*, in which we express gratitude for His mercies, and praise Him for all His good gifts, both bodily and spiritual.

(3) *Contrition*, in which we bewail, lament, and confess our sins against Him.

(4) *Petition*, in which we beg for deliverance from evil, and for the gift of all things needful for our souls and bodies, and for those of others.

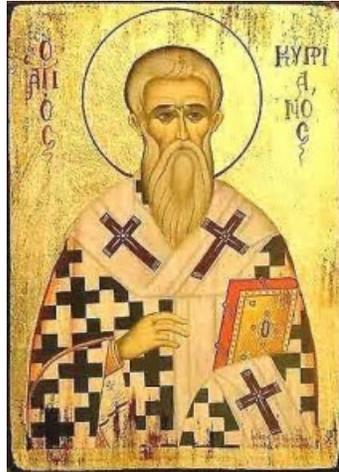
It is quite impossible to exaggerate the importance of prayer, or to bestow too much pains upon our prayers. Our condition in eternity depends very largely upon how we pray. Our Saviour has said, " Ask, and ye shall have Seek, and ye shall find : Knock, and it shall be opened unto you."

IN PRAYER, WE
CLAIM AND ENJOY
OUR PRIVILEGE AS
CHILDREN OF GOD.

Continued next month



St. Cyprian of Carthage: Treatise 4 — On the Lord's Prayer



ST. CYPRIAN OF CARTHAGE

A THOUGHT
 “THE SERMON ON
 THE MOUNT IS NOT A
 SET OF PRINCIPLES
 TO BE OBEYED APART
 FROM
 IDENTIFICATION WITH
 JESUS CHRIST. THE
 SERMON ON THE
 MOUNT IS A
 STATEMENT OF THE
 LIFE WE WILL LIVE
 WHEN THE HOLY
 SPIRIT IS GETTING
 HIS WAY WITH US.”
 OSWALD CHAMBERS

13. There follows in the prayer, Your kingdom come. We ask that the kingdom of God may be set forth to us, even as we also ask that His name may be sanctified in us. For when does God not reign, or when does that begin with Him which both always has been, and never ceases to be? We pray that our kingdom, which has been promised us by God, may come, which was acquired by the blood and passion of Christ; that we who first are His subjects in the world, may hereafter reign with Christ when He reigns, as He Himself promises and says, Come, you blessed of my Father, receive the kingdom which has been prepared for you from the beginning of the world. Matthew 25:34 Christ Himself, dearest brethren, however, may be the kingdom of God, whom we day by day desire to come, whose advent we crave to be quickly manifested to us. For since He is Himself the Resurrection, since in Him we rise again, so also the kingdom of God may be understood to be Himself, since in Him we shall reign. But we do well in seeking the kingdom of God, that is, the heavenly kingdom, because there is also an earthly kingdom. But he who has already renounced the world, is moreover greater than its honours and its kingdom. And therefore he who dedicates himself to God and Christ, desires not earthly, but heavenly kingdoms. But there is need of continual prayer and supplication, that we fall not away from the heavenly kingdom, as the Jews, to whom this promise had first been given, fell away; even as the Lord sets forth and proves: Many, says He, shall come from the east and from the west, and shall recline with Abraham, and Isaac, and Jacob in the kingdom of heaven. But the children of the kingdom shall be cast out into outer darkness: there shall be weeping and gnashing of teeth. Matthew 8:11 He shows that the Jews were previously children of the kingdom, so long as they continued also to be children of God; but after the name of Father ceased to be recognised among them, the kingdom also ceased; and therefore we Christians, who in our prayer begin to call God our Father, pray also that God's kingdom may come to us.

14. We add, also, and say, Your will be done, as in heaven so in earth; not that God should do what He wills, but that we may be able to do what God wills. For who resists God, that I He may not do what He wills? But since we are hindered by the devil from obeying with our thought and deed God's will in all things, we pray and ask that God's will may be done in us; and that it may be done in us we have need of God's good will, that is, of His help and protection, since no one is strong in his own strength, but he is safe by the grace and mercy of God. And further, the Lord, setting forth the infirmity of the humanity which He bore, says, Father, if it be possible, let this cup pass from me' and affording an example to His disciples that they should do not their own will, but God's, He went on to say, Nevertheless not as I will, but as You will. Matthew 26:39 And in another place He says, I came down from heaven not to do my own will, but the will of Him that sent me. John 6:38 Now if the Son was obedient to do His Father's will,

St. Cyprian of Carthage: Treatise 4 — On the Lord's Prayer

how much more should the servant be obedient to do his Master's will! As in his epistle John also exhorts and instructs us to do the will of God, saying, Love not the world, neither the things that are in the world. If any man love the world, the love of the Father is not in him. For all that is in the world is the lust of the flesh, and the lust of the eyes, and the ambition of life, which is not of the Father, but of the lust of the world. And the world shall pass away, and the lust thereof: but he that does the will of God abides for ever, even as God also abides for ever. 1 John 2:15-17 We who desire to abide for ever should do the will of God, who is everlasting.

15. Now that is the will of God which Christ both did and taught. Humility in conversation; steadfastness in faith; modesty in words; justice in deeds; mercifulness in works; discipline in morals; to be unable to do a wrong, and to be able to bear a wrong when done; to keep peace with the brethren; to love God with all one's heart; to love Him in that He is a Father; to fear Him in that He is God; to prefer nothing whatever to Christ, because He did not prefer anything to us; to adhere inseparably to His love; to stand by His cross bravely and faithfully; when there is any contest on behalf of His name and honour, to exhibit in discourse that constancy wherewith we make confession; in torture, that confidence wherewith we do battle; in death, that patience whereby we are crowned—this is to desire to be fellow-heirs with Christ; this is to do the commandment of God; this is to fulfil the will of the Father.

16. Moreover, we ask that the will of God may be done both in heaven and in earth, each of which things pertains to the fulfilment of our safety and salvation. For since we possess the body from the earth and the spirit from heaven, we ourselves are earth and heaven; and in both— that is, both in body and spirit— we pray that God's will may be done. For between the flesh and spirit there is a struggle; and there is a daily strife as they disagree one with the other, so that we cannot do those very things that we would, in that the spirit seeks heavenly and divine things, while the flesh lusts after earthly and temporal things; and therefore we ask that, by the help and assistance of God, agreement may be made between these two natures, so that while the will of God is done both in the spirit and in the flesh, the soul which is new-born by Him may be preserved. This is what the Apostle Paul openly and manifestly declares by his words: The flesh, says he, lusts against the spirit, and the spirit against the flesh: for these are contrary the one to the other; so that you cannot do the things that you would. Now the works of the flesh are manifest, which are these; adulteries, fornications, uncleanness, lasciviousness, idolatry, witchcraft, murders, hatred, variance, emulations, wraths, strife, seditions, dissensions, heresies, envyings, drunkenness, revellings, and such like: of the which I tell you before, as I have also told you in times past, that they which do such things shall not inherit the kingdom of God. But the fruit of the spirit is love, joy, peace, magnanimity, goodness, faith, gentleness, continence, chastity. Galatians 5:17-22 And therefore we make it our prayer in daily, yea, in continual supplications, that the will of God concerning us should be done both in heaven and in earth; because this is the will of God, that earthly things should give place to heavenly, and that spiritual and divine things should prevail.

OUR PRAYER IS
PUBLIC AND
COMMON; AND WHEN
WE PRAY, WE PRAY
NOT FOR ONE, BUT
FOR THE WHOLE
PEOPLE, BECAUSE
WE THE WHOLE
PEOPLE ARE ONE.



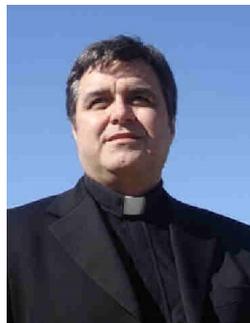
St. Cyprian of Carthage: Treatise 4 — On the Lord's Prayer

17. And it may be thus understood, beloved brethren, that since the Lord commands and admonishes us even to love our enemies, and to pray even for those who persecute us, we should ask, moreover, for those who are still earth, and have not yet begun to be heavenly, that even in respect of these God's will should be done, which Christ accomplished in preserving and renewing humanity. For since the disciples are not now called by Him earth, but the salt of the earth, and the apostle designates the first man as being from the dust of the earth, but the second from heaven, we reasonably, who ought to be like God our Father, who makes His sun to rise upon the good and bad, and sends rain upon the just and the unjust, so pray and ask by the admonition of Christ as to make our prayer for the salvation of all men; that as in heaven— that is, in us by our faith— the will of God has been done, so that we might be of heaven; so also in earth — that is, in those who believe not — God's will may be done, that they who as yet are by their first birth of earth, may, being born of water and of the Spirit, begin to be of heaven.

Continued next month



Fr. Charles Warner: Celebrating the 40th Anniversary of the Affirmation of St. Louis (1977-2017) concluded



FR. CHARLES WARNER

The Road To St. Louis

XI Media Coverage

The Congress of St. Louis was “*the watershed event for the Episcopal Church in the 1970s.*”¹ A large number of the secular press attended the meeting. “*Reporters of religion from Time, Newsweek, The Washington Post, The New York Times, The Chicago Tribune and Daily News, the St. Louis Post Dispatch, and the Cleveland Plain Dealer*”² seemed to confirm that there was interest from the non-Anglican world on what was happening in St. Louis. In addition, a number of television networks reported on the events as they unfolded. As a matter of fact, the ECUSA schism was voted, by the Religion News-writers Association, “*as the top religion story of 1977.*”³

Internationally, on September 23rd, 1977, The Church Times in England reported on their front page, that it was yet to be seen if the Archbishop of Canterbury and the other Provinces of the Anglican Communion would “*feel able to establish links*”⁴ with the newly formed Anglican Church in North America. Even though the ‘Affirmation of St. Louis’ called for continued relations with the See of Canterbury and the worldwide Anglican Communion, The Church Times continued, that the Archbishop of Canterbury would say nothing else until he “*studied reports of the St. Louis Congress and consulted with the Presiding Bishop of American Episcopal Church.*”⁵ The Church Times editorial wondered if the Anglican Church in North America could even be part of the powerful Anglican Consultative Council or if any of their Bishops would be invited to the upcom-

Fr. Charles Warner: Celebrating the 40th Anniversary

ing Lambeth Conference of Anglican Bishops, set for July 22 – August 13, 1978.

The Times of London speculated that this Conference would be a “*difficult occasion*”⁶ because of the split over women’s ordination in the ECUSA and conflicting opinions on the matter within the Church of England. Both English publications predicted that some dissidents may go directly to the Roman Catholic Church.

Back in the United States, the National Catholic Reporter of Kansas City reported that some priests, affiliated with the newly established Diocese of the Holy Trinity visited Pope Paul’s Apostolic Delegate to the United States, Archbishop Jean Jadot and the president of the US Catholic Conference, Archbishop Joseph L. Bernadin of Cincinnati, or their representatives, for what the priests say, may be “*a prelude to formal discussions on re-union.*”⁷

Though the coverage was, for the most part, accurate, its sympathy leaned toward the ECUSA, with whom they shared a similar liberal worldview. “*The Christian Century, the standard bearer for liberal Protestantism, described the Congress as “the Old Schism Trail,”*”⁸ and noted that there were armed guards stationed outside the Congress due to the hotel’s policy regarding ‘controversial’ meetings.

A critic mentioned earlier, Bishop David B. Reed, expressed what many liberal minded people thought of the gathering. He described the whole affair as being both very negative and lacking the right kind of leadership. Bishop Reed also pointed out that the people who attended the Congress were too diverse in their interest, which, as he put it would weaken their inner strength or resolve. He concluded by saying that there “*seemed to be a notable lack of Gospel—repentance, redemption, grace, hope and above all charity.*”⁹

In spite of this harsh criticism, those who had attended the Congress left confident and sure that they were on the road and beginning a prophetic journey.

Conclusion

Through the Congress of St. Louis and the ‘Affirmation of St. Louis,’ Anglican Catholic identity was strengthened. Though there were some signs of compromise with evangelical traditionalists, the document was overwhelmingly Catholic in its content. It is therefore no surprise that the document is interlinked with Anglican Catholicism.

The Congress of St. Louis was successful because it presented to the world, via the high media coverage, the answer to ‘Modernism and liberal Anglicanism.’ For the first time, Anglicans saw a large number of Anglican Catholics speaking up for traditional Anglican values. The numbers of how many would join the new church would be debated, but what was indisputable was that the Episcopal Church recognized that a regrettable split took place. The Anglican Communion also stood up and noticed what had happened in St. Louis. Their response would be no response. For the Continuers, however, it was time to move on, time to create that new Anglican Catholic Church, ‘the Anglican Church in North America.’

Some attendees came from the sixteen parishes which had left the ECUSA, while



CHURCH TIMES
FRONT PAGE COVERAGE
SEPTEMBER 23, 1977

Fr. Charles Warner: Celebrating the 40th Anniversary

others came from the dozen or so missions who had popped up over the last year or so. Others came to the Congress simply out of curiosity not yet sure about what do and what direction to go. The FCC President put it right when he said, “They want the certainty that something is there if they decide to jump.... They want to make sure they’ve got company”³

There was no real guess on the actual size of the dissident movement. Some believed that the new Church would attract many Episcopalians and Anglicans who were unsure of what to do. One estimate was that “250 of the 7,192 parishes”⁴ would move to the ACNA by the end of 1978, while another predicted that the Continuing Anglican movement within the ECUSA would represent “at least half a million of the 2.8 million member church.”⁵

In response, two Episcopalian bishops who attended the Congress felt that not so many would make such a jump. During an interview the Rt. Rev. David Benson Reed (1927-), Bishop of Kentucky and the Rt. Rev. Addison Hosea (1914-1985), Bishop of Lexington, responded to the question of how many would join a continuing church. “Bishop Reed said somewhere between 5,000 and 20,000, “closer to five.” Bishop Hosea’s response was: somewhere between 5,000 and 50,000, “closer to five.”⁶ Bishop Reed felt that a large number would immediately join the newly formed church, but growth would slow down in about five years and then become inactive.

Reaction from within the ECUSA was swift. For the first time, “the nasty word schism was heard.”⁷ On September 18th, 1977, the Episcopal News Service reported that the executive council of the Episcopal Church issued a statement which declared that these dissident groups, led by the Fellowship of Concerned Churchmen, had by their actions at the St. Louis Congress, “separated themselves”⁸ from the Episcopal Church and the Anglican Church of Canada.

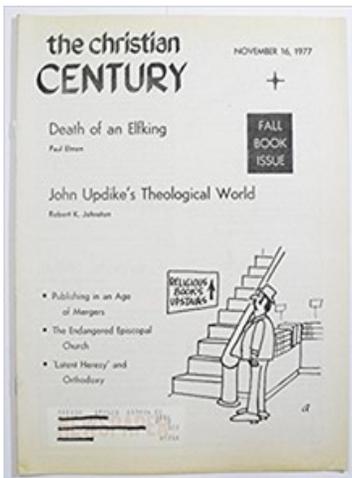
The Education for Ministry committee of the Executive Council offered up a resolution expressing the Council’s “deep regret”⁹ for the Congress’s decision to break away; adding that they felt a “deep hurt”¹⁰ because of these actions and expressed a desire to “witness”¹¹ to the Continuers on what the church truly means. The Council resolved, above all, to “continue to talk”¹² and not close any doors for an opportunity for all to “be reunited in God’s church”.¹³



Notes

1. Badertscher Chapter 2, p.1
 2. September 16th, 1977, Episcopal News Service, 77297
 3. Bess p.97
 4. Episcopal News Service, London Newspaper Comment On Episcopal Dissidents, September 29th, 1977, 77314

5. ibid
 6. ibid
 7. ibid
 8. Bess p.98
 9. ibid p.98



THE NOVEMBER 16TH, 1977
 ARTICLE:
 THE ENDANGERED
 EPISCOPAL CHURCH

Fr. Maieane Khaketla: *The Almost Christian*



FR. MAIEANE
KHAKETLA

The Almost Christian is a homily by Fr. Maieane Khaketla of Maseru, Lesotho. It is passed on via the Fellowship of Concerned Churchmen and commended to us by Fr. David Marriott, SSC.

The Almost Christian — Matthew 23:1-12

Grace and Peace to you from our Lord and Saviour Jesus, who is the Christ. Amen

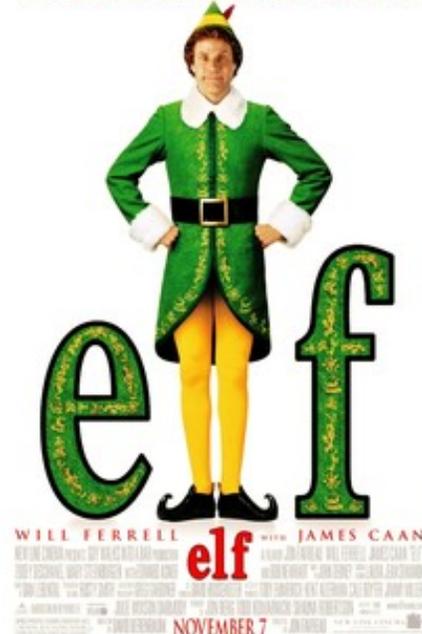
There's a movie out at the theatres now, and I'm wondering how many of you have seen it. Has anyone seen the movie "Elf" yet? Although I have yet to see it, I heard the basic storyline in a review of the movie and thought to myself that the storyline of the movie sounds remarkably similar to the topic I want to talk about this morning. Because I haven't personally seen the movie, I run the risk of getting a detail or two incorrect, so if I do, please forgive me.

In this movie, Santa Claus is making his rounds one Christmas night and during a visit to an orphanage an orphan infant sneaks into Santa's sleigh and ends up riding all the way to the North Pole. The child is discovered, and after realizing that he was an orphan from the orphanage, the elves decide to adopt and raise the baby there at the North Pole. They dress him like an elf, treat him like an elf, and raise him like an elf.

The more time passes, the more evident it becomes that he definitely is NOT an elf. One major clue is that he grows to be over six feet tall. With each passing year, everyone becomes more and more aware that he is not an elf, and no amount of artificial, outward elf-ness can make him truly an elf. Finally, realizing that he doesn't belong, he goes back to the real world to try to find his biological family, fit in, and become a normal person. As difficult as it was to try to be an elf, which he wasn't, it is just as difficult trying to be a normal person because he had been artificially shaped into a form of elfness, without truly being an elf. Though I have no clue how the movie ends, the previews I have seen show a person who is somewhere in-between, not fitting in anywhere. He is an "almost" elf. He is an "almost" human.

My message today is a 21st century adaptation of a message preached by one of our Anglican forefathers, John Wesley, back in 1741 called "The 'Almost' Christian." I read this sermon as a class assignment way back in my college days. And I must confess that often times when I read a sermon or book from a culture so long ago and so far away, I read it sceptical of it's ability to really speak well to us here in 21st century Lesotho. Not so with this sermon by John Wesley. As I read his words I was struck by how true and relevant his words are for us today. We live in a nation, a society filled with "almost" Christians. Many of our churches are filled with, even led by "almost" Christians. When asked why they don't participate in a church family, many non-church people say that it's because of all of the "almost" Christians who are there. It was Mahatma Gandhi who was

THIS HOLIDAY, DISCOVER YOUR INNER ELE



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almost persuaded to become a Christian, but decided against it saying, “I would become a follower of Christ if it wasn’t for those who claim to follow him.” In other words, he was turned away from Christ by observing the lives lived by “almost” Christians.

So what does an “almost” Christian look like? The first thing that we could say about the “almost” Christian is that they are good, ethical people. They know and understand the importance of a good social ethic. I recently saw a primary school report card which had a place, labelled “citizenship” for the teacher to evaluate the pupil’s social ethic. Now how in the world you can determine if a five year old is a good citizen or not is beyond me. The “almost” Christians are the people who would always receive an “A” for citizenship. They don’t steal. They don’t cheat one another. Lying and slandering one another is totally unacceptable to the “almost” Christian. They view liars and cheats as the pests of society.

They don’t oppress the poor, in fact, they probably look after them; engaging in all sorts of charity work. When they see someone hungry, they feed them. When someone needs clothing, they clothe them. They are typically philanthropists, giving generously to social programs.

The “almost” Christian is a hard worker, not lazy, but working long, hard hours to earn a good income, provide a comfortable life for his family, be recognized and praised by his superiors as he is promoted up the corporate ladder. This is the person who lives by the credo, “God helps those who help themselves.”

The second thing we could say about the “almost” Christian is that they are good, moral people. The “almost” Christian is someone who works hard at observing and adhering to a code of morality in which it is wrong to kill, commit adultery and other sexual sin, or destroy one another with his words. They avoid moral vices such as drunkenness, drug use, and gambling. This is a person, who is generally good to other people, and could quote to you and try to live by The Golden Rule, “Do unto others as you would have them do unto you.”

What else could we say about the “almost” Christian? Well, they are generally religious people. They are people who outwardly demonstrate a form of godliness. Every time the church doors are open, they are usually there. If they know you, they will greet you with a big smile, and perhaps a hug and when you ask them how they are they’ll assure you of how “blessed” they are.

During the singing they will sing loud and proud whether they can carry a tune or not. They could probably, off the top of their head tell you the titles and authors of hymns 142, 267, and 298...quite possibly even the year they were written. They listen intently and nod affirmingly to the pastor’s preaching and will even offer the occasional “amen.” Because of their religious piety they are often offered seats on the church board, dubbed as deacons, or handpicked to teach Sunday School.

Perhaps you’re thinking to yourself, “These sound like the descriptions of a true Christian. Can a person really look like this outwardly and still only be an “almost” Christian? John Wesley was born into a Christian family, the son of an Anglican minister. He was brought up not only respecting the Christian religion, but himself embodying it. At the age of 22 he was ordained as a deacon and began preaching. Three years



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later he was fully ordained as a priest in the Anglican Church. Over the course of the next ten years he busied himself with teaching and ministry in such places as Oxford University and even as a wanna-be missionary to Savannah, Georgia at which he ultimately failed, and returned to England disgraced.

John Wesley was a devoutly religious person, living a religious life, preaching religious sermons, teaching religious thought, leading a religious small group called “The Holy Club.” But by his own admission, he was an “almost” Christian. It wasn’t until May 24th, 1738, after 13 years of “Christian” ministry, at the age of 35 that John Wesley became “completely” Christian.

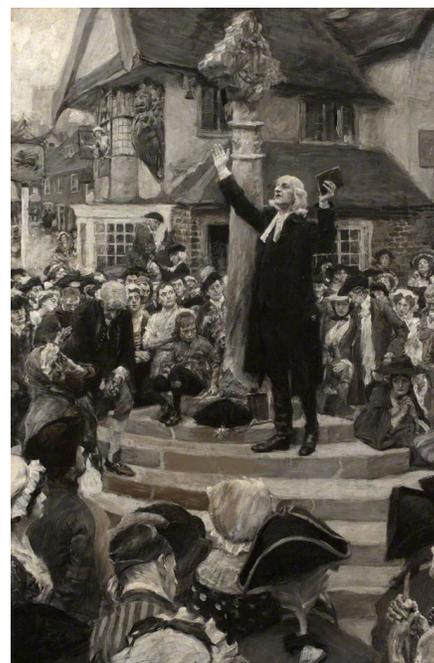
Observing his ethical, moral, and religious life, and the ethical, moral, and religious lives of the “almost” Christians that we come into contact with, what is it that makes these seemingly Christian people, “almost” Christian? The difference between an “almost” Christian and a “completely” Christian person is not what we see or don’t see on the outside, it’s determined by what’s inside of them, driving them to live ethical, moral, and religious lives.

You see, they are ethical, moral, and religious people as long as being ethical, moral, and religious serves them well. They like to be recognized as good citizens, sitting in places of leadership, admired by their fellow citizens, making the necessary connections to further their business, their good name, or their political ambitions. They love the respect and honour showered on them for being such outstanding people. They love being offered the seat of honour at the banquet. They love seeing their name and picture in the newspaper. They love their positions of leadership in the church because of the respect, the power, and the control that comes with such positions.

What we have to remember about the person who is “almost” Christian is that according to scripture, their heart remains deceitful and desperately wicked, regardless of how they may outwardly appear. And because of this, we have to remember that when it no longer serves their purposes to be an ethical person, then they will become less and less ethical. When morality no longer furthers their own agenda, then they will become less and less moral. When these things happen, they find themselves in the desperate state of being somewhere in-between, not really fitting in anywhere. As difficult as it was to try to be a Christian, which he wasn’t, it is just as difficult trying to be a non-Christian because he had been artificially shaped into a form of a Christian, without truly being a Christian. He is a person who is somewhere in-between, not fitting in anywhere. He is an “almost” Christian. He is an “almost” heathen. He is now one of the hypocrites who so often keeps spiritually hungry people from giving themselves to Christ.

I told you earlier that this message is an adaptation of John Wesley’s message by the same name. But even his wasn’t really original. Jesus first preached this message in Matthew chapter 23. Let’s take just a few moments and together read his words concerning those who could be called “almost” Christian.

There is an answer for the person who realizes that they are an “almost” Christian. There is hope. There is love. There is grace. The most sensible answer for the “almost”



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Christian is to become “completely” Christian. What does it mean to be “completely” Christian?

Let’s begin with the outward life. It looks much the same as that of the “almost” Christian. The “completely” Christian person is an ethical person. She is a moral person. And She is a religious person. She values truth, honesty, and charity, caring for the person who is poor and struggling in life. She faithfully participates in the life of her church family, incorporating spiritual disciplines into her day-to-day life. She respects and cares for her spiritual leadership. She prays for and encourages her brothers and sisters. She worships and listens to and reads the Word of God, applying it to her life. What is different, however, is that all of her outward Christianity is driven by and emerges out of three things that the “almost” Christian has no understanding of.

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The first is a genuine, all-consuming love for God; a love for God that engulfs the entire heart, a love for God that captures and transforms all of our interests and desires and passions, a love for God that fills every empty corner of our soul. This love for God causes her to wake up every morning thinking to herself, “Whom have I in heaven but you? I desire you more than anything on earth. My health may fail, and my spirit may grow weak, but God remains the strength of my heart; he is mine forever!”

The second thing that drives the life of the “completely” Christian person is genuine love for other people. Unlike the “almost” Christian, this person loves other people not because of what benefit they can receive from that person, but because that person is a living, breathing, feeling human being created in the image of God who needs to feel the love of another as desperately as we do. This kind of love compels us to lay aside concern for ourselves all for the sake of helping someone else know the feeling of being genuinely loved by another human being.

And finally, the “completely” Christian person is driven by faith. Without faith, the “almost” Christian can never hope to become “completely” Christian because it is by grace, through faith, that we are truly saved and born again. The faith we’re talking about here is not simply an intellectual belief in God, Jesus Christ, the Bible, Heaven, or Hell. Satan himself along with every demonic being in existence not only believes in God, but has seen Him face-to-face. Satan knows full well that Jesus Christ not only lived, died, but rose from the dead. Satan and his demons believe every article of faith, and Christian doctrine that has ever been taught. In fact, they are probably more accurate in their theology than we are; enabling them to effectively twist and distort it to deceive and lead astray even God’s chosen, if that were possible. A mere intellectual belief in these things makes us no better than the demons who will one day be eternally cast into Hell.

No, the faith that we’re talking about here is a faith and belief that Jesus Christ and he alone has made the way for us to become “completely” Christian, truly reunited with the one true God of creation. A faith and belief that no one comes to the Father except through Jesus Christ, and now Christ has opened that door to all who will walk through it regardless of their spiritual condition. This is a faith that once we enter that narrow door, all of our sins, past, present, and future are not only covered, but are altogether erased and forever forgotten. A faith that God will transform us into entirely new peo-



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ple, destroying the power of sin in our lives. It is this faith that is the spark igniting the all-consuming love for God and love for people, making us truly “completely” Christian. It’s this faith that frees us from the prison of being “somewhere in-between” and allows us to finally, fully belong.

Where in this analysis are you? “Almost” or “Completely?”

✠In the Name of the Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit. Amen



John Wesley’s Sermon The Almost Christian can be found, i.a., at <http://www.christianitytoday.com/history/issues/issue-2/wesleys-sermon-reprints-almost-christian.html>

Fr. Robert’s Remarks

as all men’s souls are concerned in the ordaining a fit clergy, so all may join in fasting and prayer for a blessing upon it. (2.) That both bishops and candidates, knowing the time, may prepare themselves for this great work.

Prayer and fasting is a great way of preparation for the feasts of the year and it seems to be singularly appropriate in the week of Advent 3. In the Collect for the Day (BCP. p. 99) we pray for the “ministers and stewards of [Jesus’} mysteries may likewise so prepare and make ready thy way, by turning the hearts of the disobedient to the wisdom of the just, that at thy second coming to judge the world we may be found an acceptable people in thy sight.”

In St. Luke’s narrative (St. Luke 1) of the announcement of the birth of St. John Baptist to Zacharias by the Archangel Gabriel. Gabriel speaks of how St. John would:

“[G]o before him in the spirit and power of Elias, to turn the hearts of the fathers to the children, and the disobedient to the wisdom of the just; to make ready a people prepared for the Lord.”

I am reminded of words that I have seen in various places:

“If you want a better priest, then pray for the one you have. Every priest carries not only the burden of his own sins, which are countless, but also the sins of everyone whom God has entrusted to his spiritual care. At the Dread Judgement Seat of Christ, priests will have much to answer for.”

While at present we are certainly not overwhelmed with ordinations, we do have clergy who would undoubtedly covet and appreciate your prayers as they prepare the way of the Lord.

It would be a wonderful gift that you have given. You would benefit from it; your priest would benefit from it, and undoubtedly the mission of Christ’s Church would benefit from it.

We look back to Jesus first coming in our Christmas celebration in the midst of our pilgrimage toward His coming again in great glory.

May God bless you and may you have a wonder-filled Christmas!
Until next month, God bless!



WHERE

IN THIS ANALYSIS

ARE

YOU?

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OR

“COMPLETELY?”

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EUNTES IN MUNDUM UNIVERSUM
GO YE INTO ALL THE WORLD

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