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Forward in Christ

The magazine of Forward in Faith North America.

Vol. 8 No. 6
November, 2016

The Solemn Declaration *and the Place of Holy Scripture*

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In the News

Election: *Forward in Christ* urges your prayers for the governance of this country. May God show Himself with great power to our elected representatives and nation.

Nigerian Primate Blasts Liberals: The Archbishop of Nigeria, the Most Rev. Nicholas Okoh, ripped into the presence of the Episcopal Church's Presiding Bishop, Michael Curry, at an ecumenical visit to Rome with the Archbishop of Canterbury, Justin Welby.

"This incident is just the most recent of many failures which the Cairo Communique describes as 'the inability of the existing Communion instruments to discern truth from error and take binding ecclesiastical action'," stated Okoh, "We need alternatives," said Okoh in his monthly Global Anglican Futures Conference (GAFCON) pastoral letter. Okoh went on to say that GAFCON would provide alternatives to existing Communion "instruments of unity."

Archbishop Nicholas Okoh is the Primate of the largest province in the Anglican Communion.

Stand Up And Be Counted: The Church of England Evangelical Council (CEEC) has sent a 19 page discussion document to all Church of England bishops, urging them to oppose gay marriage and uphold biblical teaching. The document comes as CofE bishops meet to discuss liturgies of welcome for same-sex couples, a compromise between accepting gay marriage and the Church's present position against it. The CEEC claims this would be a "recipe for continuing conflict" and that "the blessing of same-sex relationships would be a de facto change of Church of England doctrine".

According to the Rt. Rev. Pete Broadbent, Bishop of Willesden, who is a member of the CEEC:

"The House of Bishops are still engaged in conversations about the nature and shape of pastoral provision in this area. Many evangelical Anglicans would agree with the analysis and the concerns expressed in the CEEC document that any move towards further liberalisation would bring to a head the divisions in the Church of England and might well cause a split. My role -- and that of my colleagues in the House is to do all that I can to prevent a split and to hold people in the Church of England -- though that will not be easy, given what is at stake."

Wales Gets a Woman Bishop: The Church in Wales elected its first ever woman bishop, Canon Joanna Penberthy, in early November, prompting Welsh Primate, Archbishop Barry Morgan, to state:

"This is an historic moment for the Church in Wales as it hasn't been possible to elect a woman bishop until now. But what is really important to stress is that Joanna wasn't elected because she was a woman but because she was deemed to be the best person to be a bishop. She has considerable gifts -- she is an excellent preacher and communicator, can relate to all sections of the community, is a warm, charismatic, caring

priest and someone who is full of joy."

Archbishop Barry Morgan is set to retire in 2017 and announced earlier this year that gay marriage is "biblical."

Pope Francis Says No Women Priests: While travelling to an ecumenical event in Sweden on November 1, Pope Francis told journalists that the Catholic Church would not ordain women as priests.

"On the ordination of women in the Catholic Church, the final word is clear, it was said by St. John Paul II and this remains," stated Pope Francis.

This reiterates an earlier statement made to the press in 2013, when Pope Francis said, "With reference to the ordination of women, the Church has spoken and says, 'No.' John Paul II said it, but with a definitive formulation. That is closed, that door."

Patriarch Meets with Archbishop Welby: The head of the Russian Orthodox Church, Patriarch Kirill of Moscow, met with the Archbishop of Canterbury, Justin Welby, in October, and raised serious concerns over the direction of the Church of England.

According to Patriarch Kirill's press service: "The patriarch drew the Archbishop of Canterbury's attention to the fact the Russian Orthodox Church is seriously concerned by the liberalisation of the Church of England's teachings, particularly on the ordination of women as priests and bishops and on morals and family issues."

"His Holiness Kirill expressed hope that the Church of England will oppose challenges of the modern world and seek to preserve the Gospel's teaching," it added.

The meeting came at the end of a four-day trip to Britain, during which Patriarch Kirill also met the Queen and re-consecrated a Russian Orthodox Cathedral in Knightsbridge, London.

Iraqi Christians Fight Back: Christian militias have joined other Iraqi forces battling to retake the city of Mosul from the Islamic terror group, ISIS.

Christian units include the Babylon Brigade, of 1,500. The Christians are fighting along with Shia Muslims as part of a larger coalition of smaller fighting forces numbering around 60,000 fighters.

200,000 Christians fled the Mosul region in 2014 when ISIS militants swept through northern Iraq. The Kurdish Peshmerga provided protection for the displaced Christians, but the group disappeared as ISIS advanced through the Biblical region of the Nineveh Plains, which had been home to Assyrians and Chaldeans for centuries.

Iraqi Christians have raised small, fierce military forces over the last two years, which are now among the hundreds of thousands poised surrounding Mosul.

Forward in Christ asks for your prayers on behalf of Iraq's Christians and an end to their persecution.



Ad Orientem or Ad Populum

By Fr. John Himes

Whaat? Most likely the title of this article doesn't mean anything to you. However, it is a topic that has been recently come back into focus in liturgical circles within the Anglican/Episcopal Church and the Roman Catholic Church. The terms have to do with the way the priest faces when he is celebrating the Holy Eucharist. *Ad Populum* means simply that the priest is facing the people. *Ad Orientem* means the priest is facing the same way (east) as the people.

Now the next question that comes to mind is what difference does it make? In reality it makes a difference in that it reflects what we believe worship is about and how we worship together. I am going to take a moment and briefly explain what is taking place at the Holy Eucharist and what direction the priest is facing reflects about what we believe.

The focus of the celebration of the Holy Eucharist is Jesus Christ and his atoning sacrifice upon the cross. With that being said anything that draws attention away from the Blessed Sacrament is a distraction and leaves a person to focus on temporal things. Such temporal things could very well be the celebrant himself.

Celebrating *Ad Populum* is a relatively recent change in the celebration of the Eucharist. It was an unintended consequence of the liturgical changes made as a result of Vatican II, and perhaps the one change that the Anglican/Episcopal Church was too quick to adapt to its own liturgy. One of the key liturgical "reforms" of Vatican II was to make the Mass, how shall I say it; more user friendly? The most notable change being to celebrate the Eucharist in the language of the people; no longer was Latin the language of the Mass. However, Vatican II did not address the change of the direction in which the celebrant faces. It seems that the instruction that the Altar be free standing was assumed to mean, by many, that the priest was to celebrate facing the people. However, not all assumptions are correct.

In 2000 Cardinal Jorge Estevez,



Prefect of the Congregation for Divine Worship and the Discipline of the Sacraments wrote a Letter on the position of the priest during the Eucharistic Liturgy. Responding to a question from the European cardinals about the position of the priest during the liturgy of the Eucharist:

"The Congregation for Divine Worship and the Discipline of the Sacraments has been asked whether the expression in no. 299 of the *Instituto Generalis Missalis Romani* constitutes a norm according to which, during the Eucharistic liturgy, the position of the priest *versus absidem* [facing towards the apse] is to be excluded. The Congregation for Divine Worship and the Discipline of the Sacraments, after mature reflection and in light of liturgical precedents, responds: Negative, and in accordance with the following explanation. It is in the first place to be borne in mind that the word *expedit* does not constitute an obligation, but a suggestion that refers to the construction of the altar *a pariete sejunctum* [detached from the wall] and to the celebration *versus populum* [toward the people]. The clause *ubi possibile sit* [where it is possible] refers to different elements, as, for example, the topography of the place, the availability of space, the artistic value of the existing altar, the sensibility of the people participating in the celebrations in a particular

church, etc. It reaffirms that the position toward the assembly seems more convenient inasmuch as it makes communication easier (Cf. the editorial in *Notitiae* 29 [1993] 245-249), without excluding, however, the other possibility."

The gist of this letter is that in the celebration of the Holy Eucharist celebrating *Ad Orientem* is the norm rather than *Ad Populum*. After Vatican II the shift to celebrating *Ad Populum* seems to have developed with the movement of the Altar away from the wall or apse.

Vatican II came at a time when there was a strong desire by both the Roman Church and the Anglican Church to develop a closer relationship. The efforts spearheaded by Archbishop Michael Ramsey and Pope Paul VI had a positive impact on both Churches. One aspect of the influences was seen in the liturgical work done by both.

There are portions of the Mass that are to be said facing the people, such as what we Anglicans refer to as the Liturgy of the Word, which includes the introduction to the opening collects and Scripture reading. Traditional Anglicans have read the Nicene Creed the Prayers of the People facing east. However, facing the people in our tradition was not the norm, nor was it intended to become the norm. If we look at the rubrics for both the 1928 and 1979 Book of Common Prayer we find these

instructions prior to the Sursum Corda, "Then the Priest (the Bishop if present) stand up, and turning to the People say," (1928, BCP, pg. 75) "The people standing. The Celebrant, whether bishop or priest, faces them and sings or says," (1979 BCP, pg. 361) then after the Sursum Corda the rubrics indicate, "Then the Priest turns to the Holy Table, and says," (1928 BCP, pg 76) "Then facing the Holy Table, the Celebrant proceeds." (1979 BCP pg. 361) Clearly by the rubric the indication is that the celebrant turns and faces the same direction as the people which is facing the altar.

The Letter on the position of the priest during the Eucharistic Liturgy goes on to say, "However, whatever may be the position of the celebrating priest, it is clear that the Eucharistic Sacrifice is offered to the one and triune God, and that the principal, eternal, and high priest is Jesus Christ, who acts through the ministry of the priest who visibly presides as His instrument. The liturgical assembly participates in the celebration in virtue of the common priesthood of the faithful which requires the ministry of the ordained priest to be exercised in the Eucharistic Synaxis."

The central focus of the Eucharistic Prayer is Christ himself. It is the celebrant who facilitates that centrality by acting in *Persona Christi*. Ergo all that the celebrant does then should be to bring glory to Christ present in the Eucharist.

While the priest's physical position does not negate him acting in *Persona Christi*, his position can have an impact on what is the focus of the celebration taking place. By nature people tend to focus on the most active object in front of them. When the priest faces the people there is a tendency for the people to focus on his actions rather than on the act. Thus the individual's attention is drawn away from the central act of the Holy Eucharist. If, on the other hand the priest is facing in the same direction as the people it turns the focus on the act that God is doing rather than the priest. Also, it unites the celebrant and the congregation in the unity of the mystery that God leads in the Eucharist.

Prior to the late 1960's and 1970's the liturgical tradition had been for the priest and the people to face east towards the rising Son; to be united in the prayers of consecration of the surrounding the epiclesis. The entirety of

the focus was on the Real Presence of Christ in the bread and the wine. The position of the priest mirrored that of the congregation that all were worshipping Christ together, rather than one leading others in the worship. Celebrating facing east is an ancient tradition reflecting that His return will be in the way he ascended. All, priest and people, turn to the east to behold the coming of the Son. At the Holy Eucharist it is represented in the body and blood of Christ. "The turning of the priest toward the people has turned the community into a self-enclosed circle. In its outward form, it no longer opens out on what lies ahead and above, but is closed in on itself." These words of Pope Benedict XVI are reflective of the theology that has taken over much the Anglican/Episcopal communities over the last sixty years. Rather than seeing ourselves as a community facing outward proclaiming the salvation of Christ to the world we have turned inward into our own comfortable view of our own righteousness.



Fr. John M. Himes, OSF, D.Min. is Rector of Trinity Episcopal Church in Marshall, Texas.

Revival of the Pusey Guild

By Joseph Francis

The Society of the Holy Cross has historically played an important role in the revival of catholic faith and practice among Anglicans. Its rule of life, ethos, and principles have shaped the lives and ministries of thousands of priests. Countless laypeople have benefited from its work. I myself have seen the fruit of the Society, as I was formed by many SSC priests in my home diocese of Fort Worth.

Thus, when I came to Nashotah House for my first year of seminary last fall, I knew that I wanted to be involved in the Society's outreach to seminarians, called the Pusey Guild (affectionately named after one of the great fathers of the Oxford Movement, Edward Bouverie Pusey). The Guild, like the Society, provides a framework for fraternal support, and members live under a rule which encourages holiness of life.

Unfortunately, the Nashotah chapter had all but died out, with no currently active members. After several months of conversation, a group of catholic-minded peers and I went about reestablishing the chapter. As of this September, we currently have 14 members, constituting more than half of the MDiv students at the seminary. We have been told that this is the largest the Pusey Guild has been at Nasho-



tah House within recent memory. Praise God! In addition to providing each other fraternal support, and living according to the rule of life, our chapter has made plans to sponsor pilgrimages to various holy sites around Wisconsin, as well as to host several Masses of different liturgical rites.

I have been honored to lead the revitalization of this organization, which seeks to boldly proclaim the catholic faith. The future of Anglo-Catholic clergy is bright indeed!

If you would like to learn more about the Pusey Guild or if you would like to support catholic-minded seminarians,

contact Joseph Francis at jfrancis@nashotah.edu. 

Joseph D. Francis is a Middler Seminarian at Nashotah House from the Diocese of Fort Worth (ACNA).

Holy, Holy, Holy

By Bishop Keith Ackerman

It has been said that we live in a world that has shifted dramatically from people learning to respect people in authority, to now putting all people in authority in the position of having to earn respect.

One can assert that there have been, are, and will be people in authority, personally, who have lost respect, but the culture seems to assume that there is no such thing as the respect of an office or position, simply because of a few offenders.

What a sad reality since many have had to learn that one does not show disrespect to an ethnic group, a race, or a socio-economic group because of several bad encounters. And yet, much of what we see today at various gatherings is generalized disrespect.

When I was ordained in 1974 gentlemen tipped their hats (only baseball players wore baseball caps in those days) and stood when a priest entered the room. Of course – they did the same for ladies. This was done whether one knew the priest or lady or not. Children did not eat until everyone was seated and grace was said, and no one left the table until they asked to please be excused, if they could not wait until everyone was done.

Many meals in houses today look like feeding frenzies, and the tell-tale signs of the previous night's meal are seen in the forms of fast food wrappers and half empty fast food cups on the floor in front of the family altar. (the television set.)

With a general and overall lack of respect and loss of manners, we should not be surprised that this has been transferred to the Church. Not too many years ago no man would ever think of wearing his baseball hat while in the pews. People would never think of talking inside the church (since others were praying), and behind the Altar Rail gentleman put on their cassocks before entering the "Holy of Holies" and ladies donned a mantilla.


At face value one might conclude that these are minor points; after all, the goal is to get people into the church – not create circumstances (as some say "making man-made rules") that might offend worshippers (I think they are called "religious consumers" now.) But these church behaviors flow out of the desire to be in the Presence of the Holy.

We can be as casual as we wish in the streets, but does God deserve our respect? Must He conform to the ways in which our culture has become less respectful with fewer manners? The way of approaching the Holy – the Presence of God – is well documented in the Bible.

Admittedly, most people do not take off their shoes as



they enter the Holy areas, but can we participate in helping maintain an environment in church, where we pay all honor and respect to God: the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit, and can we learn to show more respect, with manners, to the people for whom He was willing to die? Maybe some people "don't deserve respect," but apparently Jesus overlooked that at Calvary. For a summary of that, simply read 1 John 4:20.

Participating in the Holy has a direct relationship with good manners and showing respect to one another, but if it is not taught... 

Bishop Keith Ackerman is the retired VIIIth Bishop of Quincy and now lives in the Dallas/Fort Worth area.

Chaplaincy and the Cross

By Fr. Timothy Gables

But we have this treasure in earthen vessels, that the excellency of the power may be of God, and not of us (2 Cor. 4:7).

John Henry Newman's motto sums up my philosophy of ministry in just a few words: *Cor ad cor loquitur* (Heart speaks to heart). I functioned as a conduit in which His heart spoke through mine to others. It is a form of self-denial in a way. There was no room for ego in this ministry but a crucifixion of self.

Chaplaincy is a unique ministry in not only its context but in its calling. As a chaplain for twelve years in a retirement community and one who ministered exclusively to those in pain, suffering and dying, it became very clear to me that not all ministers are called to this ministry full-time. However, it likewise became clear to me that you could not minister effectively unless you allowed yourself to "feel" a measure of the hurt and pain of those you were ministering to. You had to enter their world in order to understand their world of pain and sorrow.

You see, I didn't "do" visitations I "experienced" them. For example, after being a physics teacher at New York University for 30 years, I now have to reconcile with the insidious disease of Parkinson's. A lifetime couched in problem solving and analytical thinking as a scientist seems to be overcome by a cloud of darkness when confronted by one's own mortality. I have experienced the intensity of a French nurse crawling through farm fields at night behind enemy lines in occupied France hiding in haystacks during the day just trying to make it to the allied lines without being captured. I have felt escaping the Nazis only to come to America with no money and no prospects, but eventually going on to earn two degrees and teaching American women becoming nurses the value of human life and the care of the suffering. Now, fifty years later with no family and friends left to visit, the long lonely nights are eerily similar to the ones in occupied Europe, only this time without any prospect of hope, the thought of which presents a creeping despair, as the cancer in the stomach continues to consume the treasured



past, present and future. All of which causes one to wonder, what awaits me after this? Again, I have felt the excitement of a Princeton graduate enlisting in the Air Force to serve his country only to be shot down over Nuremberg, Germany, and taken to a prison camp hospital where night and day for two weeks he heard the screams of gypsies in railroad boxcars outside the prison windows until, day after day, they became quieter and quieter in the summer heat as they died in their compact hell. Now, every night in his sleep he can hear those cries as if they were yesterday, mixing with his own, while the tumor in his brain continues to grow and he thinks, *where is God in all this?* I have experienced the confusion of a helicopter door gunner in Vietnam who still doesn't understand the war that changed his whole world, much less the stroke that paralyzed his left side two days after his sixtieth birthday and the lung cancer they found in him at the same time. Confused and watching his life slip away from his grasp, he poses the question, "Father, if I ask God politely for a few more years, do you think He will give it to me?"

When it comes to those suffering, pastoral care must guide, nudge, and move people in the right direction so they can use their suffering, so they

can make something out of it for their eternity. Essentially I am a midwife because just as giving birth is hard and painful, so is dying. We, as Chaplains, must help people to use their mortality for their immortality, to help them suffer well. I have found that in order for a minister/chaplain to be effective in this, they must first look to themselves. Holiness is essential to this task because a priest will never bring anyone closer to Jesus than he is. The object of the Cross; the Passion of Christ, is where a priest must self-identify so he can bring those dying to see the fellowship they have in Christ's suffering. Only in the light of the Passion does suffering and death have meaning and this is where we, as priests, must bring those who are scared, confused, and are going through the birth pangs of dying to live. The Cross is the central place where all three - Christ, the sufferer and the priest - meet. Again, you don't go into the ministry unless the ministry is in you first! Because of this reality we don't do visitations, we experience them. Because in order to tell someone their suffering has meaning necessitates you experiencing it with them, albeit in a different way. A pre-planned script or a guarded heart, so as to not feel pain during a visitation is not only not being real, but is also

a hindrance to Christ's working through you. If the Christian life is to participate in Christ, how much more is being a priest, and in my context, a chaplain, ministering to the dying, grieving and suffering?

He is the potter, we are the clay. If we are willing to suffer with Him, we will be willing to suffer with those we minister to. Dying to ourselves we become a conduit for His grace to bring healing to others as He brings life out of death. So too, all priests who hope to minister effectively to the image of God in man must in *praxis* say, "But we have this treasure in earthen vessels that the excellency of the power may be of

God, and not of us (2 Cor. 4:7). Here, pastoral *theoria* meets *praxis* and becomes *eucharistia* to the Glory of God.



Fr. Timothy Gahles is a priest of the Diocese of the Holy Cross, most recently serving as Vice-President of Chaplaincy at Fellowship Village Senior Living in Basking Ridge, New Jersey. He was awarded the DMin degree from Nashotah House in 2015. Fr. Timothy and his wife, Vanessa, and their family, make their home in Bloomsbury, New Jersey.

The Solemn Declaration and the Place of Holy Scripture

By David Jeffrey

I. The Solemn Declaration of 1893 expresses a commitment to unity of the Canadian with the English Church, of Toronto with Canterbury. Expression of that unity is to be use of the Book of Common Prayer in all its liturgies and ordinances, and, preeminently, a theological orthodoxy as defined by the classic tenets of the Anglican tradition which are expressed in the Thirty-Nine Articles. The paragraph which most pertains to our reflection here, however, is the second:

We declare this Church to be, and desire that it shall continue, in full communion with the Church of England throughout the world, as an integral portion of the One Body of Christ, composed of Churches; which, united under the One Divine Head and in the fellowship of the One Holy Catholic and Apostolic Church, hold the one faith revealed in Holy Writ, and defined in the Creeds as maintained by the undivided primitive Church in the undisputed Ecumenical Councils, receive the same Canonical Scriptures of the Old and New Testament as containing all things necessary to Salvation, teach the same Word of God; partake of the same Divinely ordained Sacraments, through the ministry of the same Apostolic Orders; and worship One God and Father through the same Lord Jesus Christ, by the same Holy and Divine Spirit who is given to them that believe to guide them into all truth. (1962, viii)

What is the value of this *fin de siecle* nineteenth-century statement for our own close-of-the-millennium discussions about the place of Scripture in the Anglican Church?

First, it reminds us that Christian unity as classically defined is based not upon the lowest common denominator of plausibly Christian identity, but upon a substantial accrued deposit of faith—a weighty structure or edifice, one extensively articulated, and “universal” (not merely local) in its character.

Secondly, the foundation of this edifice is to be Holy Scripture, Christ himself implicitly being the cornerstone.

Third, the building up of this edifice is to be observed in the Councils (e.g., especially Nicea, 325 A.D., and Chalcedon,

451 A.D.).

Fourth, the use of this edifice is to be worship of the God to whose glory it has been established, a worship conducted according to the Sacraments and ordinances established by Jesus Christ, the chief architect, and his faithful workers after him, liturgically as formulated in that user-friendly manual we know as the Book of Common Prayer. [1]

Our National Director, or so I suspect, had something like this architectural view of Anglican faith and worship in mind when he assigned me tonight's topic - desiring that “the place of Holy Scripture” be contextualized in the larger scheme of things, so to speak. I hope I shall not entirely disappoint him - or the rest of you either. But to accomplish this rather full agenda in less than an hour is a challenge more flattering to your servant than manageable. I shall have to take shortcuts through the brambles, at the risk of a few abrasions.

II

Article VI

Let us begin by looking at Article VI, the chief article in question for our subject:

Holy Scripture containeth all things necessary to salvation: so that whatsoever is not read therein, nor may be proved thereby, is not to be required of any man, that it should be believed as an article of the Faith, or be thought requisite or necessary to salvation. In the name of the Holy Scripture we do understand those Canonical Books of the Old and New Testament, of whose authority was never any doubt in the Church.

The intent of this article is abundantly clear, I think, but in case it should not be, the venerable commentary of Evan Daniel describes the object of the Article as:

1. To assert the sufficiency of Holy Scripture for the establishment of whatever doctrines are necessary to salvation, as against the teaching of Rome, which asserts the coordinate authority of tradition.

2. To determine the limits of the Holy Scriptures, and to distinguish between the Canonical and non-Canonical Scriptures.

3. To condemn those fanatics who disparaged all 'book religion,' and relied on the immediate illumination of the Holy Spirit. [2]

For myself, I take Article VI to have been indispensable to the faithfulness and spiritual authority of the Anglican Church, and to reflect opinion about the order and procession of reference to Christian truth more or less standard since the time of St. Augustine's *De Doctrina Christiana* in the late fourth century A.D. At the same time, I recognize that the critical principle it embodies - that all of the essential matters of faith are provided by Revelation, by what the Church has understood as Scripture - to be capable of misunderstanding and indeed abuse. Moreover, it is easy to show how this misunderstanding and abuse has weakened the faithfulness and spiritual authority of the Church - and not only in our own communion, needless perhaps to add.

I was visiting an RCMP (Royal Canadian Mounted Police) detachment in the province of British Columbia recently, just as a major "grow operation" of marijuana was being brought to a conclusion by the apprehension of the owner and two employees. The owner, a most pleasant chap actually, summoned his lawyer to read a prepared statement, the first sentence of which was, "I am a born-again Christian." The statement of this remarkable (if criminal) entrepreneur went on to say that he took the Bible as his rule of faith and

conduct, and that he had fond warrant for his marijuana "farm" (a fluorescent-lit warehouse) in Genesis 1:29: "And God said, 'See, I have given you every herb that yields seed which is on the face of the earth, and every tree whose fruit yields seed...'"

But we can find many examples of as blatant contradiction among more conventional folk who also claim to take the Scripture as their sole rule of faith and life. As the Angus Reid and other polls have shown us, millions of North Americans claim a faith that could be imagined as expressed in Article VI, but they have little remorse of conscience over a life which bears little relationship on many points to their supposed ethical authority. Who can but weep at the "God, I want it all," success gospel religion of those who wish to rationalize an extravagant lifestyle as somehow God's cash-on-the-barrel, all the while claiming the Bible as their sole authority?

I wish I thought that such people were the most serious threat to Anglican orthodoxy. I don't. Although Pharisaism is an endlessly permutating virus, one constant among its innumerable forms is incongruity of a gross order between lived life and the actual content of Scripture. As our Lord reminded the Pharisees, keeping the surfaces clean does not substitute for a consistently clean heart and an inner life of obedience (Matthew 23:25-26). At its least damaging, it stunts or kills altogether the spiritual life of the one who behaves in this image-conscious but inwardly corrupt way. At its worst, it adds to this miscreance self-justify-

ing misdirection of the whole Church: gross implausible rationalization of such discrepancies through subjective, unbalanced, and *eisegetical* (reading into) reading of Sacred Scripture. Even the uncatechized, or the cheerful pagans of our time, can usually recognize this sort of horse feathers when piled up in front of them by the bushel.

What is far more subversive of real faith among Anglicans is the posturing "authority" of pseudo-intellectual churchmen telling us (in their silences as much as by their words) that the very foundation of the Church - the life and discourse of Jesus Christ and other accounts and precepts of Holy Scripture - are in fact ephemera, projections of the insecure subjectivity or mythologizing politics of the biblical writers, and that they have greatly diminished relevance to the "needs" of Christians today. And these are a still more numerous brood. Perhaps we might usefully think of them as somewhat like the Sadducees, "not knowing the Scriptures or the power of God" (Matthew 22:29). Unfortunately when it comes to the governance of today's Church and revisions of the Book of Common Prayer, the modern Sadducees are a far more considerable force in shaping the development of doctrine than the Pharisees.

But I want to go deeper. The Anglican Church has historically been ambivalent about the development of doctrine. It was, after all, against an excess of doctrinal development beyond what Scripture would seem to support that got us started; the assertion by the medieval Church of doctrinal development apparently disconnected from Scripture (or an apprehension that this was happening) such as was proclaimed at the Council of Trent. English reaction to the formal recognition of certain extra-biblical doctrine lies behind the conservative framing of many of The Thirty-Nine Articles, not just Article VI.

Among Anglicans, return to a strong notion of doctrinal "development" has since then tended to produce either Catholicism or gradual apostasy. For example, the Catholicism of J.H. Cardinal Newman, was intimately connected to his great multi-volume study of the development of Christian doctrine. At the other extreme, perhaps, we might locate the preface to the first American Book of Common Prayer (1789), where



it is stated that “rites may be altered, abridged, enlarged, amended, or otherwise disposed of, as may seem most convenient for the edification of the people.”

In recent years in the U.S. Episcopal Church this had been a sentence much appealed to, and with various notions of “edification of the people” not supported by Scripture in mind. (One wonders how many supporters of the Book of Common Prayer have reflected on the problematic origins of the American revision of 1789. It was accomplished largely by the profligate Lord Francis Dashwood of eighteenth-century England’s notorious Hell Fire Clubs and the deist Benjamin Franklin, neither of whom showed any visible susceptibility to the ultimate authority of Scripture for matters either of doctrine (or, in Dashwood’s flamboyant case, of conduct.) Anglicans have many times been prompted to suspect that not all “doctrinal development” is reliable, and hence to retain their ecclesiastical conservatism.

In 1996 the issue before us in respect of Article VI is still, accordingly, its relation to Articles VIII, XIX, XX, and XXI. [3]. I do not think that the Book of Common Prayer can be accused of maintaining an unresolved opposition between Luther’s independent Bible reader, *sola scriptura*, and that more Catholic view of Scripture which sees its Christian reading as forever being mediated by the traditional understanding of the Church as reflected in its Creeds and councils. It was certainly evident to Cranmer that if Scripture was to be followed, it could not be only as a matter of individual interpretation (cf. 2 Peter 1:20), and advocates of the Book of Common Prayer have realized that only in the most naive of conceptions is the understanding of Scripture ever tradition-free. We all have a past, and we all read in relation to other readings, tacitly if not explicitly expressed, of those who have gone before. Thanks be to God! There is not enough objectivity in any one of us to make a faithful personal understanding really possible without recourse to such support. What we all need is for our personal reading of Sacred Scripture to be anchored in a valid shared memory, our common Christian recollection of God’s redemptive action in Christ Jesus, reconciling the world to himself once and



for all, and, as a consequence, continually and generationally, in every tribe and nation, in our families, in ourselves

and in the Church as weekly we enter into the paschal mystery in Holy Communion.

The issue is more precisely (today as ever): how do we know which “traditioners” to trust? As we observe and struggle with the opposing claims of contradictory (often self-contradictory) “developmentalists,” by what base-line criteria may we distinguish between the authentic architecture of our common home and the vulgar renovations that have too often masked its truth as well as trivialized its beauty? By what criteria may we distinguish Christian truth from falsehood, authentic from inauthentic interpretation, shepherds from wolves? By what standard may we separate out individualistic subjectivist and self-justifying interpretation from Catholic, intentionally objective and self-critical interpretation which seeks the common and eternal good of the Body of Christ?

Let me put these rhetorical questions about Article VI itself in a truncated but summary and on-interrogative way. Article VI effectively proclaims the foundational authority of Sacred Scripture for all other authority in the Church and in the life of the believer. For an orthodox Christian, by a definition consensual and near timeless, Holy Scripture is our ultimate authority, our base-line of critical resort. Those who judge Holy Scripture not to be sufficiently authoritative, not to be the foundation of faith which may not

without transgression be contradicted, are, by definition equally venerable and universal, not orthodox Christian believers.

Since this is largely a gathering of orthodox believers, Article VI itself should not then be a stumbling block for us. But what the Solemn Declaration of 1893 obliges us to recognize, among other things, is that Article VI cannot adequately, faithfully be observed without the generous, truth-seeking facilitation and teaching of faithful shepherds, pastors and lay-persons, past and present, such as together make up the great cloud of witnesses to our common life in Christ Jesus. Accordingly, for those of us who believe, the question about how to use Scripture will always be crucial. That is, those of us who seek obedience to the Word of God must try to decide how much our understanding of Scripture can be a purely private matter, and to what degree in fact our reading depends for its reliability upon a common, shared understanding to which, as members of Christ’s Church, we apprentice ourselves. If the debate between believer and apostate is typically about whether the Bible should have authority at all, the debate among believers is about what sort of authority we have granted, thoughtfully or unthoughtfully, to the individual reader. The question of authority remains central in either case.

But for the Christian who seeks both understanding and obedience, the questions about authority in the reader can too easily become confused with the question of the authority of the



Scriptures themselves. They are not at all the same question, and it is necessary that we should see how conflating the two can quickly put us in danger.

To minimize offence, let me illustrate more with historical than contemporary examples. I begin with a famous Christian who celebrated Article VI, but whose way of doing so (excluding Articles VIII, XIX-XXI) put him at odds with the Church in a way indicative of one of the two dangers we have been considering. I refer to John Bunyan, who wrote:

“Having [the Bible] still with me, I count myself far better furnished than if I had [without it] all the Libraries of the two Universities: Besides, I am for drinking water out of my own cistern: what GOD makes mine by the evidence of his Word and Spirit, that dare I make bold with.” (*Preface to The Holy City* [1665])

For Bunyan, the Bible is the one book needful; all other human learning is beside the point, more likely to confuse than to clarify the Bible’s precepts. To be able to say that he relied upon the Bible alone gave him, he believed, much greater personal authority. The authority of the Church now became increasingly extraneous, an inauthentic authority. As Bunyan develops his argument in *Grace Abounding* (1666), his spiritual autobiography, it is only to the degree that his life and words stand in unique relationship to the Bible that they have spiritual authenticity and, by implication, authority for his readers. And there’s the rub. Bunyan was a Christian of monumental spiritual integrity. But the implication that his unshakable confidence in his own reading of the Bible could, without the mediating witness of other’s readings of the Bible, grant him authority to direct the spiritual lives of others, laid him open to confusing his own originality and his personal teaching authority with the truth and authority of the Scriptures themselves, even in his own life. Perhaps it is needless to add that this error has certainly confused others of more modest gifts and lesser integrity.

The greatest Puritan theological writer of the seventeenth century, Richard Baxter, was often preoccupied with much specious conflation, in his own community, of the Word of Scripture with the “inward word” of the individual’s

private interpretation. In his book *The Life of Faith*, Baxter warns his fellow Puritans that it is possible to abuse the central authority of scripture by “looking for that in Scripture which God never intended it for,” a practice, he said, which “doth tempt the unskillful into unbelief.” How right he was. Among the worst abuses he identifies is Bible-roulette, the practice of letting the Bible flop open at random, and taking the first verse one’s eyes fall upon as a divine directive - really a borrowed pagan practice (cf. *Sortes Virgilianae*).

More insidious was a rationalizing use of general biblical promises concerning God’s rewarding of faithfulness to justify the maximization of personal profit and of personal pleasures as God’s will for the believer. The seventeenth century - no less than the second century or the twentieth century - abounds in examples of would-be faithful Christians who, lacking the sound hermeneutical basis which comes from apprenticeship to the historic understanding of the faith, combine a very high view of the Bible with extremely naive views of language, text, and (consciously or unconsciously) self-justifying motivations in the individual reader. The results in any time of this kind of epistemological cocktail include a free-wheeling entrepreneurial reading of the Bible, perilous at best, self-serving and, often enough, finally tyrannous at worst.

In our own era it has certainly led to widespread confusion of Christianity with “the American way of life.” [4] The incommensurability of attested scriptural faith and actual life practice among contemporary Christians, a felt inconsistency which leads at last to self-justifying, appetite-justifying triumphs of ego over the text, is not, we can see, a novelty in our time. It is, however, perhaps unprecedentedly rampant in the contemporary western Church, and, as various polls confirm, not notably less so among professing Christians who claim the Bible alone, *sola scriptura*, as their sufficient authority.

The persistence of both ignorance and disingenuousness makes the collective wisdom of the Church, time-tested and time-honored for its consistent, coherent application of Scripture to shared life in the Body of Christ, all the more pertinent to our needs today. We need more vigilantly than ever to guard against that least fortunate impulse of the logic of the Reformation by which, in the search for a personal (individual) experience of authenticity or “empowerment,” we find ourselves at last in a “church of one.”

This is the counter-epistemic path that has led from Puritanism and some experiential biblicism to the Romantics, from the life authenticated by Scripture (Bunyan, Baxter, Newton) to the idea that Scripture is rather to be authenticated by life (Coleridge, F.D. Maurice, Bishop Spong). That is, when authority in the reader becomes individualized, and is not in humility subject to the collective reading-in-common of the Universal Church, the slippery slope from a well-intentioned subjectivity can quickly accelerate the ego through Pharisaism to that other form of resistance to “the gospel of Christ the power of God to salvation for everyone who believes” (Roman 1:16). I refer again to the apostasy which Jesus identified with the Sadducees. The Sadducees, you remember, “Say there is no resurrection” (Matthew 22:23)-notably, Jesus tells them, because they have chosen to forget what the Bible teaches, and know neither “the Scripture nor the power of God” (v. 29; cf. Mark 12:24).

The Church in its catholic wisdom teaches us in Article VI to trust the Scriptures fully, and to regard them as sufficient for knowledge of our salvation. The Bible is our baseline criterion for judging all else, the standard which may not be contradicted. But in Articles VIII, XIX, XX, XXI, it also teaches us to be exceedingly wary of relying on ourselves in all matters of interpretation and doctrine. We ought not to imagine, as Louis Weil puts it, that faith is merely “a private matter between God and the believer.” Rather, “faith is corporate: it is the common faith of the Church into which new members are baptized and come to participate in the power of the paschal mystery.” [5] It is together in the Body of Christ that we come most reliably to know “the Scriptures and the power of God,” and to depend for our life - and for our death - upon the power of the resurrection which the Bible proclaims, that power without which, as the Apostle Paul says, our faith would be in vain.

How ought we who would be accountable to the faith once delivered to the saints, and to the spirit as well as the letter of the Book of Common Prayer, use our Bibles? Well, by implementing in our practice two biblical injunctions. The first is what Jesus recommended to the religious folk of his day, the acquisition and encouragement of deep biblical literacy such as can protect our understanding of Scripture from fragmented or individualistic interpretation which would rob us of knowing the power of God (Matthew 22:21ff).

Second, and corollary to this, is what is recommended in the catholic epistle of 2 Peter, that we remember that “no prophecy of Scripture is of any private interpretation,” that just as we must depend upon the fact that “holy men of God spoke as they were moved by the Holy Spirit” (v.21), so too must we seek the authenticated biblical teaching of godly persons today. This has been a cardinal principle for the interpretation and application of Scripture and the faithful development of Christian doctrine down through the ages, for, as the very next verse of the epistle warns us, “there were also false prophets among the people, even as there will be false teachers among you, who will secretly bring in destructive heresies, even denying the Lord who bought them” (2:1). The writer of 2 Peter predicts further that “many will follow their destructive ways, because of whom the way of truth will be blasphemed,” and that “by covetousness they will exploit you with deceptive words” (2:2-3). Yes, we too can attest to the accuracy of these warnings.

How might the Solemn Declaration of 1893 suggest to faithful Anglicans today that they should regard the place of Holy Scripture in the life of the Church? Well, I think by encouraging them to see it in terms modelled in both of these biblical injunctions. What is commended by our Lord Jesus to us is a thorough-going biblical knowledge such as can transform our lives through articulate revelation of the power of God. What is commended to us by the apostolic Church is a reading of the Scriptures in common in the household of faith, a reading which is attentive to the authenticating presence of the Holy Spirit, and guided by “holy men of God” of all ages. What will protect us from specious and illegitimate use of Scripture, either ignorant or subversive of Scripture’s truth? The collective wisdom of obedient readers in the life and teaching witness of the Church (2 Thessalonians 2:15). What protects, us from false teachers and “doctrinal development” extraneous or even corrosive of Scripture? The *to-*

tum integrum of Scripture itself, and its confirmation of the “whole counsel of God” (Acts 20:27) in the interpretation of faithful Christ-like readers down through the ages and, indeed, still in our own time.

To be faithful, biblical Christians, we need both Scripture and the Church. But for the Church to be faithful is first to seek obedience to Sacred Scripture, to proclaim its foundation in the Scriptures and to build up sound doctrine candidly accountable to this foundation in every time and parish.

Our Church at some times and in some places seems to have forgotten this. That its memory might be restored and our connectedness to our apostolic foundation be made full, we all ought fervently to pray. We might begin, I think, by praying together the Collect for the Eleventh Sunday after Trinity, that both we and our leadership shall earnestly seek obedience to the undivided Word of God:

O God, who declarest thy almighty power most chiefly in showing mercy and pity: Mercifully grant unto us such a measure of thy grace, that we, running the way of thy commandments, may obtain thy gracious promises, and be made partakers of thy heavenly treasure; through Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen.

END-NOTES

1. Two important articles reflecting on The Solemn Declaration appear in the Machray Review 5 (1994). The first of these is by Rev. David Curry, “The Solemn Declaration: The Net of Memory” (pp. 26-40), and the second is by Dr. Robert Crouse, “Anglican Spirituality and the Book of Common Prayer” (pp. 61-67), one of the most encouraging brief defences of the BCP to appear anywhere.

2. Evan Daniel, *A Commentary on the Book of Common Prayer*, 26 ed. (London: SPCK, 1948), p. 572.

3. Helpful here is Henry Chadwick, “Tradition, Fathers, and Councils,” in Stephen Sykes and John Booty, *The Study of Anglicanism* (London: SPCK; Philadelphia: Fortress, 1988), 91-104.

4. An extended discussion, is to be found in David Lyle Jeffrey, *People of the Book: Christian Identity and Literary Culture* (Grand Rapids and Cambridge: Eerdmans, 1996), esp. chs. 8-9.

5. “The Gospel in Anglicanism” in Sykes and Booty, p. 54. I am not in concurrence, however, with Weil’s apparent sense that a sufficient cause for liturgical revision is to be found merely in the press of fashion in worship (p. 58). Weil candidly acknowledges, as his endorsement of the American Prayer Book preface suggests he ought, prayer-book revision as “expressive of theological change.” In the end, his argument for corporate faith is thus merely synchronic and not, unfortunately, diachronic and catholic.



This address was given at Ashbury College, Ottawa, in 1996 as part of the Ottawa Branch’s “Prayer Book Basic Training” Series.

David Lyle Jeffrey is Distinguished Professor of Literature and Humanities at Baylor University, Professor Emeritus of English Literature at the University of Ottawa, and Guest Professor at Peking University (Beijing).

Parish Highlight

Trinity, Marshall, Texas

Trinity Church of Marshall, Texas, was founded in 1850 through the dedicated faith and efforts of Mrs. Francis Henderson, wife of Mr. J. Pinkney Henderson, the one-time Minister to France from the Republic of Texas. She was determined to see the Episcopal Church established in the Republic of Texas and her efforts bore fruit with the establishment of parishes in San Augustine and Nacogdoches, Texas. The Rev. Henry Sansom was appointed rector of both parishes. He was a missionary at heart and soon began planting churches throughout northeast Texas.

On Christmas Day 1850, The Rev. Sansom visited Marshall and gathered twenty-two men and women for worship. This small congregation formalized its commitment to serve our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ on January 4, 1851 when after Morning Prayer, the congregation was officially organized as Trinity Church, just four short years after the establishment of the Diocese of Texas. Since that small beginning Trinity Church has flourished in the northeast portion of Texas.

Today Trinity Church is a community of faith dedicated to the "faith once delivered". It seeks to be a people proclaiming the Good News of Jesus Christ with open hearts which in turn opens doors. Over the years Trinity has been reaching out to Harrison County. In the early 1930's Trinity opened a mission church, St. Paul's Leigh, Texas as an outreach to the rural community of Harrison County. St. Paul's still serves the farming and ranching families in that part of the county today. In the early 1950's Trinity opened a day school, Trinity Episcopal School, which provides a classical education for children grades Pre-K through 8th grade.

Trinity is known for its feeding ministries. In the 1980's, we opened the first Food Pantry in Marshall. The Food Pantry has now expanded to be a ministry of, not just Trinity, but the local ministerial alliance as well. In the mid 1990's, we began our Thanksgiving Outreach Program. The Thanksgiving Outreach provides 1200 plus tradition-

al cooked Thanksgiving meals to the working poor of Marshall, as well as the inmates in the county jail, and all the deputies, police and firefighters on duty on Thanksgiving Day.

This ministry led to the opening of Martha's Kitchen. Each Thursday, we open our doors and prepare nourishing home cooked meals to 100 to 180 people in our local community. Many of these individuals are homeless or subsisting on the margins of society. A number of these folks have become active in our parish and offer each of us greater insight to the needs of those around us.

Trinity has been associated with Forward in Faith North America since the arrival of Fr. John Himes, the rector. Our worship style is primarily Anglo-Catholic with the weekly use of the 1928 Book of Common Prayer for our early mid-week Mass.

Trinity has active and diverse programs for children and youth. Our Junior Daughters of the King Chapter has been recognized as the largest in the United States, not bad for a parish in a town of 25,000 people. Our Boy Scouts have produced six Eagle Scouts over the last 4 years. The scout Troop has only been active for six years so that is quite an accomplishment. Our new Girl Scout Troop has grown from eight Daisies to over thirty girls in just 4 years and their community involvement is setting the example of servanthood to other troops in the area.

We believe that our faith calls us to action where God has planted us to serve Him and all His people. As you can see this faith in action is something that permeates our DNA as disciples of



Christ. We look forward to serving the Kingdom of God and proclaiming the Gospel until our Blessed Lord's return.

Trinity Church is located at 106 North Grove Street, Marshall, Texas just 30 miles west of Shreveport, Louisiana.



Trinity's website is www.trinityepiscopalmarshall.org

Service times are Sunday:

8:00 AM Holy Eucharist Rite I

10:30 AM Holy Eucharist Rite II

Wednesday: 10:00 AM Holy Eucharist
1928 Book of Common Prayer

6:15 PM Healing Mass with Anointing

Living Water

By Fr. Gene Geromel

His name was Fr. James Reasner and he was a good and holy priest. He was an excellent confessor. He was also a character. One day at a clergy gathering he said out of nowhere, "My water from the well at Walsingham has turned green." At that time, I had no idea what he was talking about. (Walsingham, if you don't know, is an ecumenical shrine located in the Norfolk area in England and it has a holy well, like so many shrines in Europe and Asia)

It took me six years before I was able to visit Walsingham myself. Now, like many priests, I have a bottle of Walsingham water on the shelf in my office. When you go to Walsingham, one often visits the Holy Well. There is a Walsingham blessing. You drink the water and the priest blesses you with it; It is a very holy place. After the blessing a prayer is said, "Grant, we beseech thee, O Lord God, that we thy servants may rejoice in perpetual health of mind and body, and at the glorious intercession of blessed Mary, ever Virgin, may be delivered from present sadness and attain to eternal joy. Through Jesus Christ our Lord."

I also have water from other holy places. I have water from Lourdes. Some of it I got from FIFNA meetings at Our Lady of the Snows. Some of it was brought to me by a family for whom our youth group raised funds to send them and their grandson to Lourdes. When he was born the doctors told the family that he would not live past the age of one. He was ten when he went to Lourdes. He will turn nineteen in December. They bathed in the water, drank it, took part in processions and blessings and were constantly surrounded in prayer.

There is also a bottle of water from Fatima. It is an interesting shrine to visit. They were building the new basilica when I was there. The old one, where the two younger children were buried, was indeed a very holy place. I am told that, while Fatima is famous for physical healing, it is also known for emotional and spiritual healings. The Mass we attended was extremely moving but the visit to the children's resting place was a very special spiritual experience.

Just east of Quebec City is the town of St. Anne de Beau-pré. It is a town full of monasteries and convents. There is also a basilica known for its healing water. We took our school there a number of years ago, including the young man who later went to Lourdes. There we prayed in many chapels dedicated to the healing of various diseases. I remember one which was for those suffering from addictions. I prayed for one our parishioners whose son suffered from drug and alcohol addiction. He was still drinking when she died, but she had come to the realization that he would not change until he wanted to change his life.

The last place I have holy water from is Mary's House near Ephesus, which is out in the hills. Even though it was a bit of a tourist trap the house itself was holy. There were no clergy there that I could see, I suspect because it was owned by the Turkish government. But when you entered the building or walked by the holy spring, I knew I was walking on sacred ground.



I suspect that your church has a holy water font. When you enter the church, you dip your fingers in it and make the sign of the Cross. You may also have the asperges as part of your Sunday Mass. But do you have holy water at home?

I am sure, when you moved into your house, you asked your priest to bless it. You may have the tradition of having it blessed at Epiphany or Easter. What about times in between those blessings?

Let us look at a simple example every parent and grandparent has experienced. The wee one wakes up screaming because of a nightmare. There are numerous ways in which can deal with this. When we go in, we can tell them that everything is fine; there are no monsters under the bed. Isn't there a famous children's book which takes the alternate approach of making the monster under the bed a friend?

We can also convince them that there are no such things as monsters. Depending on the child, we might spend the next two hours answering yes, but questions. Yes, we really want to comfort them, but we also want to go back to sleep.

We may also believe that their real problem is a tummy ache. We know it will go away. We may even know the cause: that second helping of dessert. Again, we want to comfort them, but we also hope to get at least a half a night's sleep.

What tactics does the church give us for such nightly interruptions? Certainly prayer is one of them. The simplest thing to do is pray: "Visit, we beseech thee, this habitation, O Lord. Drive far from it all snares of the enemy. Let Thy Holy Angels dwell secure in thy peace through Christ our Lord." Then bring out the holy water. Dip your finger in it and make the sign of the Cross on your child saying, "In the name of the Father, the Son and Holy Ghost."

You can do the same with tummy aches, "boobos" and even bumps in the night. It doesn't have to be some negative spiritual "something" hanging around, but it also could be. Ask God's presence and sprinkle the holy water. In this way, you cast away all works of darkness, whether illness, bad dreams, or unwanted presences. Have any of you been

around Bishop Ackerman and told him you were a little under the weather, or feeling down? Quicker than superman can find a phone booth, Bishop Keith anoints you with oil.

The same should be true of us. How often do you wake up at three in the morning with concerns, fears and apprehensions? Isn't this the hour when every problem becomes a giant monster hanging from the ceiling because he is too big to be under the bed? We may be a wee bit older than our children and grandchildren, but we are still a child of God in

need of healing – whether it be emotional, spiritual or physical. Rather than ruminate and toss and turn, pray... and grab the holy water.



Fr. Gene Geromel is Rector of St. Batholomew's, Swartz Creek, Michigan.

A Sermon for Advent

Pope Benedict XVI

Dear Brothers and Sisters,

With this celebration we are entering the liturgical season of Advent. In the biblical reading we have just heard, taken from the First Letter to the Thessalonians, the Apostle Paul invites us to prepare for “the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ” (5: 23), with God’s grace keeping ourselves blameless. The exact word Paul uses is “coming”, in Latin *adventus*, from which the term “Advent” derives.

Let us reflect briefly on the meaning of this word, which can be rendered with “presence”, “arrival” or “coming”. In the language of the ancient world it was a technical term used to indicate the arrival of an official or the visit of the king or emperor to a province. However, it could also mean the coming of the divinity that emerges from concealment to manifest himself forcefully or that was celebrated as being present in worship. Christians used the word “advent” to express their relationship with Jesus Christ: Jesus is the King who entered this poor “province” called “earth” to pay everyone a visit; he makes all those who believe in him participate in his Coming, all who believe in his presence in the liturgical assembly. The essential meaning of the word *adventus* was: God is here, he has not withdrawn from the world, he has not deserted us. Even if we cannot see and touch him as we can tangible realities, he is here and comes to visit us in many ways.

The meaning of the expression “advent” therefore includes that of *visitatio*, which simply and specifically means “visit”; in this case it is a question of a visit from God: he enters my life and wishes to speak to me. In our daily lives we all experience having little time for the Lord and also little time for ourselves. We end by being absorbed in “doing”. Is it not true that activities often absorb us and that society with its multiple interests monopolizes our attention? Is it not true that we devote a lot of time to entertainment and to various kinds of amusement? At times we get carried away. Advent, this powerful liturgical season that we are beginning, invites us to pause in silence to understand a presence. It is an invitation to understand that the individual events of the day are hints that God is giving us, signs of the attention he has for each one of us. How often does God give us a glimpse of his love! To keep, as it were, an “interior journal” of this love would be a beautiful and salutary task for our life! Advent invites and stimulates us to contemplate the Lord present. Should not the certainty of his presence help



us see the world with different eyes? Should it not help us to consider the whole of our life as a “visit”, as a way in which he can come to us and become close to us in every situation?

Another fundamental element of Advent is expectation, an expectation which is at the same time hope. Advent impels us to understand the meaning of time and of history as a *kairós*, as a favorable opportunity for our salvation. Jesus illustrated this mysterious reality in many parables: in the story of the servants sent to await the return of their master; in the parable of the virgins who await the bridegroom; and in those of the sower and of the harvest. In their lives human beings are constantly waiting: when they are children they want to grow up, as adults they are striving for fulfillment and success and, as they advance in age, they look forward to the rest they deserve. However, the time comes when they find they have hoped too little if, over and above their profession or social position, there is nothing left to hope for. Hope marks humanity’s journey but for Christians it is enlivened by a certainty: the Lord is present in the passage of our lives, he accompanies us and will one day also dry our tears. One day, not far off, everything will find its fulfillment in the

Kingdom of God, a Kingdom of justice and peace.

However there are many different ways of waiting. If time is not filled by a present endowed with meaning expectation risks becoming unbearable; if one expects something but at a given moment there is nothing, in other words if the present remains empty, every instant that passes appears extremely long and waiting becomes too heavy a burden because the future remains completely uncertain. On the other hand, when time is endowed with meaning and at every instant we perceive something specific and worthwhile, it is then that the joy of expectation makes the present more precious.

Dear brothers and sisters, let us experience intensely the present in which we already receive the gifts of the Lord, let us live it focused on the future, a future charged with hope. In this manner Christian Advent becomes an opportunity to reawaken within ourselves the true meaning of waiting, returning to the heart of our faith which is the mystery of Christ, the Messiah who was expected for long centuries and was born in poverty, in Bethlehem. In coming among us, he brought us and continues to offer us the gift of his love and his salvation. Present among us, he speaks to us in many ways: in Sacred Scripture, in the liturgical year, in the saints, in the events of daily life, in the whole of the creation

whose aspect changes according to whether Christ is behind it or whether he is obscured by the fog of an uncertain origin and an uncertain future.

We in turn may speak to him, presenting to him the suffering that afflicts us, our impatience, the questions that well up in our hearts. We may be sure that he always listens to us! And if Jesus is present, there is no longer any time that lacks meaning or is empty. If he is present, we may continue to hope, even when others can no longer assure us of any support, even when the present becomes trying.

Dear friends, Advent is the season of the presence and expectation of the eternal. For this very reason, it is in a particular way a period of joy, an interiorized joy that no suffering can diminish. It is joy in the fact that God made himself a Child. This joy, invisibly present within us, encourages us to journey on with confidence.


A model and support of this deep joy is the Virgin Mary, through whom we were given the Infant Jesus. May she, a faithful disciple of her Son, obtain for us the grace of living this liturgical season alert and hardworking, while we wait. Amen.



A sermon given by Pope Benedict XVI.

The Advent Collect

ALMIGHTY God, give us grace that we may cast away the works of darkness, and put upon us the armour of light, now in the time of this mortal life, in which thy Son Jesus Christ came to visit us in great humility; that in the last day, when he shall come again in his glorious Majesty, to judge both the quick and the dead, we may rise to the life immortal; through him who liveth and reigneth with thee and the Holy Ghost, now and ever. Amen.



*Celebration
of Ministry*

Please join the clergy and people of
St. Nicholas Anglican Church in
celebrating the Ministry of
Fr. Geoffrey A. Boland, SSC
on the 43rd Anniversary of his
Ordination to the Priesthood
November 30, 2016.
Fr. Boland served as Rector from our
inception February 4, 2007 through
July 31, 2016.

May God continue to pour out His
spirit on you and bring you peace!

St. Nicholas
ANGLICAN CHURCH
Ft. Pierce, Florida

Fr. Geoffrey A. Boland, SSC

A Guide to the 39 Articles

By Fr. Richard Cumming

As Christ died for us, and was buried, so also is it to be believed, that he went down into Hell.

The descent of our Lord Jesus Christ into hell is one of those elements of the Christian confession of faith that tends to receive only marginal treatment. Indeed, it is somewhat surprising that an entire Article should be devoted to the descent into hell. But since the descent into hell features so prominently in the Articles, and since it is in fact an article of faith, as the Apostles' Creed attests, it is necessary for us to address this topic.

The first point about Article III that must be made is that all that Article III explicitly affirms is that Jesus Christ descended into hell. Article III endorses no particular theory as to the purpose of his descent into hell: Article III contents itself with the statement that this descent into hell occurred. This sets Article III into alignment with the consensus of the Church universal, since both the Apostles' Creed and Athanasian Creed content themselves with an affirmation of the simple fact of the descent: "he descended into hell."

It is necessary to state that, in areas where the Church declines to define a dogma comprehensively, a diversity of opinion should be admitted. In the treatment of Article II, for example, we noted a diversity of opinion on the doctrine of the atonement, and similarly, when it comes to the doctrine of the descent of Christ into hell, there is a similar diversity of opinion.

But there can be no dispute over the facticity of the descent into hell, since it is the universal consensus of Holy Tradition, as the Apostles' Creed and Athanasian Creed show. Many evangelical Protestants find the descent into hell unsettling, condemning it as unscriptural, and in an article in *Christianity Today* (February 7th, 2000), Prof. Millard J. Erickson reported that "a few years back at one Christian college, a series of chapel messages on the Apostles' Creed had to omit this item, because none of the 12 professors of Bible and theology believed it." As Catholics,



however, we believe that Holy Scripture must be read as a form of Holy Tradition, and so it is not appropriate for us to read Scripture independently of the consensus of the Church universal, which affirms the descent of Christ into hell as an article of faith. Furthermore, there is ample evidence from the New Testament indicating that Christ did truly descend into hell.

Let us now consider some of this biblical evidence in favor of the descent into hell. St. Luke speaks of the soul of Christ in hell in Acts 2, where, in his description of the testimony of King David, he endeavors to make sense of God's promise to King David, detailed in Psalm 16: "I foresaw the Lord always before my face, for he is on my right hand, that I should not be moved: therefore did my heart rejoice, and my tongue was glad; moreover also my flesh shall rest in hope: because *thou wilt not leave my soul in hell, neither wilt thou suffer thine Holy One to see corruption*. Thou hast made known to me the ways of life; thou shalt make me full of joy with thy countenance." In Acts 2, St. Luke notes that this promise clearly has not come to fulfillment in the person of David, since "he is both dead and buried, and his sepulchre is with us unto this day." Therefore, St. Luke reasons, this promise cannot refer to King David's personal dominion but must instead refer to the dominion of one of

his descendants: "God had sworn with an oath to him, that of the fruit of his loins, according to the flesh, he would raise up Christ to sit on his throne." According to St. Luke, therefore, the promise of God to King David has been fulfilled in the resurrection of Christ. King David cannot have been speaking of himself, since he "is both dead and buried, and his sepulchre is with us unto this day," but instead "spake of the resurrection of Christ, that his soul was *not left in hell, neither his flesh did see corruption*."

An evangelical might object that the Greek term for "left" technically means "abandoned," and so this text does not conclusively prove the descent of Christ into hell. But there is considerably more biblical evidence of the descent of Christ into hell. For example, St. Paul states in Ephesians 4 that the resurrection of Christ was preceded by a descent "into the lower parts of the earth": "When he ascended up on high, he led captivity captive, and gave gifts unto men. (Now that he ascended, what is it but that he also descended first into the lower parts of the earth? He that descended is the same also that ascended up far above all heavens, that he might fill all things.)" Furthermore, in 1 Peter 3, St. Peter describes both the descent into hell and its function: "For Christ also hath once suffered for sins, the just for the unjust, that he might

bring us to God, being put to death in the flesh, but quickened by the Spirit: *by which also he went and preached unto the spirits in prison; which sometime were disobedient*, when once the long-suffering of God waited in the days of Noah, while the ark was a preparing, wherein few, that is, eight souls were saved by water." It is difficult to imagine a more explicit reference to the descent into hell than this reference in 1 Peter 3, since the place to which Jesus Christ descended after his death was a place where he "preached unto the spirits in prison." So there is ample biblical evidence that Christ descended into hell.

In making sense of these references to the descent into hell, theologians have debated whether Christ descended only into Purgatory or whether he also descended into the hell of the damned. In this country, at least, the Anglican tradition appears to have responded in the negative. For example, the American Prayer Book presupposes that Christ did not descend into the hell of the damned: it permits the replacement of the phrase in the Apostles' Creed, "he descended into hell," with the phrase "he went into the place of departed Spirits," and it claims that these two statements are interchangeable. Furthermore, in his *Exposition of the Book of Common Prayer*, Andrew Fowler identifies this "place of departed Spirits" with "Paradise," a waiting place before the final resurrection from the dead, claiming that the place to which Christ descended "was never understood by the ancient Fathers to signify the place of sufferings peculiar to the wicked in another world." Among the scholastic theologians, St. Thomas Aquinas also holds the view that Christ descended only to Purgatory and not to the hell of the damned.

I do not find such denials of the descent of Christ into the hell of the damned convincing. 1 Peter 3 clearly refers to the place to which Jesus Christ descended after his death as a place where he "preached unto the spirits in prison," and it goes on to describe these "spirits in prison" not as those who had been obedient unto God, like Abraham but as those "which sometime were disobedient." This point is important, since in Luke 16, St. Luke distinguishes between hell and the post-mortem resting place for those obedient to the

commandments of God, like Abraham: "it came to pass, that the beggar died, and was carried by the angels into Abraham's bosom: the rich man also died, and was buried; and in hell he lift up his eyes, being in torments, and seeth Abraham afar off, and Lazarus in his bosom." We read in Luke 16 that this rich man, who unlike Abraham was disobedient unto God's commandments, went to hell, the place for those who, as we read in 1 Peter 3, "sometime were disobedient," and so when we confess that Christ descended into hell, while we do not necessarily have to deny that Christ visited Purgatory/Paradise, the clear implication of 1 Peter 3 - when it is read in light of the passage from Luke 16 where St. Luke speaks of the gulf between those who, according to 1 Peter 3, "sometime were disobedient" and those who, having been faithful unto God, were in "Abraham's bosom" - is that Christ descended not merely into the "place of departed spirits" but that he descended into the place of spirits who were enduring suffering on account of their disobedience.

In his *Letter to Evodius* (Letter 164), St. Augustine addresses the question of the descent of Christ into hell. And to speak candidly, for St. Augustine, the view that Christ only descended into Purgatory/Paradise and not into the hell of the damned is quite unthinkable. Whereas St. Thomas Aquinas, in his discussion of the subject of the descent of Christ into hell, presupposes the descent of Christ into Purgatory and then queries, as an ancillary question, whether Christ also descended into the hell of the damned, St. August-

tine pursues the opposite approach in his *Letter to Evodius*: St. Augustine presupposes the descent of Christ into the hell of the damned and then confesses that he does not quite understand how those in "Abraham's bosom" (Purgatory/Paradise) are affected by this descent. It is worth quoting St. Augustine's *Letter to Evodius* at some length:

"What benefit was conferred in that case on them by Him who loosed the pains of hell, in which they were not held, I do not yet understand, especially as I have not been able to find anywhere in Scripture the name of hell used in a good sense. And if this use of the term is nowhere found in the divine Scriptures, assuredly the *bosom of Abraham*, that is, the abode of a certain secluded rest, is not to be believed to be a part of hell. Nay, from these words themselves of the great Master in which He says that Abraham said, 'Between us and you there is a great gulf fixed,' it is, as I think, sufficiently evident that the bosom of that glorious felicity was not any integral part of hell... seeing that plain scriptural testimonies make mention of hell and its pains, *no reason can be alleged for believing that He who is the Saviour went there, except that He might save from its pains*; but whether He did save all whom He found held in them, or some whom He judged worthy of that favour, I still ask: *that He was, however, in hell, and that He conferred this benefit on persons subjected to these pains, I do not doubt.*"

Aware of the fact that St. Augustine views the question of the descent of Christ into the hell of the damned as primary and the question of the de-





scent of Christ into Purgatory/Paradise/Abraham's bosom as secondary, St. Thomas Aquinas introduces a nuance in *Summa Theologiae* III.52.2, according to which Christ did somehow descend further than Purgatory into the "hell of the damned," but that when he "preached unto the spirits in prison," he preached "not in order to convert unbelievers unto belief, but to put them to shame for their unbelief, since preaching cannot be understood otherwise than as the open manifesting of His Godhead, which was laid bare before them in the lower regions by His descending in power into hell."

There are two reasons why I cannot countenance such an interpretation of the descent of Christ into hell. First, St. Augustine's statement in his *Letter to Evodius* appealing to the consensus of the Fathers of the Church deals amply with that claim: "As to the first man, the father of mankind, it is agreed by almost the entire Church that the Lord loosed him from that prison." Unless Adam, the fallen father of mankind, was somehow blessed in Abraham's bosom according to some esoteric knowledge not given unto the Church, it logically follows that Christ

must have descended to the place of damnation in order to free Adam, a man who was "sometime disobedient" unto God, from his captivity in hell. Second, St. Thomas Aquinas' claim is perhaps inconsistent with the impetus of the Gospel. In John, Jesus Christ tells us precisely why he has become incarnate: "For God so loved the world, that he gave his only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in him should not perish, but have everlasting life. For God sent not his Son into the world to condemn the world; but that the world through him might be saved." God did not become incarnate in the God-man, Jesus Christ, as an act of condemnation, but as an act of love, and the suggestion that, having become incarnate, lived, suffered, and died for the salvation of mankind, the God-man would then descend into hell in order to condemn the imprisoned spirits of 1 Peter 3 strikes me as inconsistent with Christ's own description of his mission. In this consideration, we should take St. Augustine's remarks seriously: "no reason can be alleged for believing that He who is the Saviour went there, except that He might save from its pains."

As St. Augustine acknowledges in his

Letter to Evodius, it is difficult to know for certain the precise scope of Christ's salvific ministry in hell and whether only certain categories of the dead benefit from Christ's descent into hell. But what we know is what Article III teaches and what we learn in our Apostles' Creed, "he descended into hell," and while we may speculate about the various reasons why he descended into hell, nevertheless, trusting in God that, as St. Paul writes in Hebrews 1, he "hath in these last days spoken unto us by his Son, whom he hath appointed heir of all things," we trust that the descent of Christ into hell constitutes one of his acts of saving grace towards us which enables him to proclaim in Revelation 20: "I am he that liveth, and was dead; and, behold, I am alive for evermore, Amen; and have the keys of hell and of death."

That's good enough for me. ☩

The thoughts expressed in this article are the author's own and do not necessarily represent FIFNA. Forward in Christ welcomes your comments and replies.

Fr. Richard Cumming is Rector of the Anglican Church of St. Mary the Virgin in Liverpool, New York in the Diocese of the Holy Cross.

The Forward in Faith Daily Prayer

O God our Father, bless Forward in Faith. Inspire us and strengthen our fellowship. Help us to witness to the saving power of the Gospel of Jesus Christ, that with love and patience we may win many hearts to Evangelical Faith, Catholic Truth, Apostolic Order, and Godly Life within the fellowship of thy Holy Church. We ask this through Jesus Christ thy Son our Lord, who liveth and reigneth with thee and the Holy Spirit, one God, for ever and ever. AMEN.

Malawi, an Appeal

By Frank Kampalusha

Anglicanism is nothing but a culture to those who adopted it.

Anglicanism started in the Central Africa around 1861 with the coming in of David Livingstone. In a country like Malawi, Anglicanism was the first Christian church. Besides being the first Christian church, Anglicanism is facing lots of hurdles as far as Spiritual and Physical developments are concerned. In short the church is going down. This short article will analyse some of the factors that might be contributing to this.

One of the factors that is causing gradual decline, particularly in the Central African Province, is infrastructure. Most churches in rural areas are in bad shape. Most of them cannot attract members in the community to join the church. In some Diocesan areas there are no buildings for worship and as a result services take place under trees. To make matters worse, you discover that most priests never visit such places because they feel there is nothing they would get from such church stations. Due to such attitudes members easily fall out. In addition to this, most Diocesan Headquarters have nothing to do with rural congregations. They receive a quota from such congregations but they cannot manage to release any funds to allow these congregations to worship under a roof. This causes some members to absent themselves from worship services and encourages decline.

The second observable factor is the mushrooming of Pentecostal churches in every space available. In Malawi, for instance, they are found in every classroom block while our churches are found far away. These churches are so vibrant in their activities, their service involves dancing and singing using powerful sound equipment, and the performing of so-called miracles. Such activities attract youngsters from permanent churches, including our own. In addition to this, they quickly raise funds for church building while for Anglicans this is complicated because of the way monetary issues are sometimes handled by those in authority. If worship services were to be conducted in a vibrant way without changing tradition, there would have been much less loss of membership to other churches.

The other factor that is depleting membership in the Anglican church here is the issue of marriages. Anglican tradition does not encourage friendships between young men and young women as do the Seventh Day Adventists and Jehovah's Witnesses. In fact, our teaching discourages these kinds of relationships. As a result of this negative attitude towards such relationships, youngsters look for partners elsewhere and in most cases the Anglican church loses members. If a deliberate policy was made in the church where special teachings on such subjects would be given to young people, then the church wouldn't be losing so many members.

The last factor is the issue of transparency in the way the church authorities handle financial issues. Most churches in the Central African Province are dependent on the church offerings which are usually given by poor people for the



development of the church. But instead of initiating church developments, sometimes the money is used for personal gains. This corrupt behavior frustrates those that are financially able to help in the development of the church. In most cases, it's not known how finances are used in the church and there is no one to respond to queries. If authorities were to be transparent about each and every penny collected, then less people would leave the church because they feel some individuals are misappropriating their offerings.

There are many other factors that are contributing to the down fall of membership in the church but the ones discussed are also of paramount importance.

I ask for your prayers for our church.



This article was written by Frank Willard Tchale Kampulusha of the Diocese of Lake Malawi and submitted by Elizabeth Langford, who is a member of the FIFNA Council.

The Right to Life

By James Sweeney

Upon you I have leaned from before my birth; you are he who took me from my mother's womb. My praise is continually of you. ~ Psalm 71:6

And when Elizabeth heard the greeting of Mary, the baby leaped in her womb. ~ Luke 1:41

As biblically-informed Anglican Christians, we believe all human life is a sacred gift from God and that it must be preserved and protected from the moment of conception to natural death. Life is God's precious gift to us. It is his creation and it is a direct and tangible expression of his profound and unequivocal love for each and every human person. Scripture tells us that, from the moment of our conception, and even before then, God knew us and, in his very personal and real love for each of us, consecrated us as his own. (Jer. 1:5.) The Bible also teaches us that God knit us together in our mother's womb and that we are wonderfully made by a loving God who knows us better than we can ever know ourselves. (Ps. 139:13-16.) Each one of us is unique and special to God.

But, Scripture is also clear that life does not begin at birth, but rather at the very moment of our conception in the womb. While we ourselves attribute the beginning of our lives to our birthday, this is not so with God. The mystery of human life has its origins in the creative will of God, who fashioned us in his own image and likeness, and it is upon him that, from the moment of our conception, we depend for our very existence. (Gen. 1:26; Ps. 71:6.) In God, we live and move and have our being. (Acts 17:28.) Thus, from the moment of our conception, our lives do not belong to us, or to our mothers or our fathers or any other person. We belong to God, whose will is that we live until such time as he calls us in death.

All human life is consecrated by God and is therefore sacred. And, because life is sacred and is God's to give, God has revealed to us, in sacred Scripture, that we may not intentionally take another's life except in the most limited of circumstances (e.g., self-defense, to prevent the killing of others, etc.). (Gen. 4:10.) In speaking directly to his chosen people, the Israelites, God directed us, in the Ten Commandments, that "you shall not murder." (Ex. 20:13; Deut. 5:17.) Just as life is God's to give, it is also exclusively God's to take. Christians believe, therefore, that the direct, intentional killing of another human being is contrary to God's express will revealed to us in the Bible and, as such, is gravely sinful. In the New Testament, Jesus, in response to a question as to what commandments should be kept in order to enter eternal life in the Kingdom of God, tells his disciples that, among other things, they must not murder and must love their neighbors as themselves. (Mt. 19:16-22; Lk. 10:27-28.)

Jesus, consequently, commands us, as his disciples, to respect the lives of others and to defend the right of others to live as we would defend our own lives. Indeed, during his earthly ministry, Jesus expressed particular concern for the well-being of children and spoke of children as being a



blessing, telling his apostles that "whoever welcomes one such child in my name welcomes me." (Mt. 18:5.) We cannot welcome children in Jesus' name if they are killed in the womb before they are even born. In fact, the act of killing unborn children violates the very commandments that Jesus himself told us were essential to be worthy of eternal life in God's Kingdom.

So, how does this all relate to abortion? Abortion is the destruction--the direct and intended killing--of an unborn child in its mother's womb. As Christians, we believe (because the Bible tells us so) that an unborn child in the womb is a human person, created, consecrated, and loved by God. An unborn child, just like any other human person, enjoys a right to live until his or her natural death. The direct, intentional killing of an unborn child through abortion is a grave sin--no different than any other form of direct, intentional killing.

This has been the clear and unqualified teaching of the Christian Church from its very beginning. In an ancient document called the Didache, which many scholars date from the first century and attribute to the direct teaching of Apostles, it is written that "you shall not murder a child by abortion." (Did. 2:2.) Indeed, the first Christians saw no distinction between murder and abortion, as both acts resulted in the direct and intentional killing of another person. Both were grave sins. This was the understanding of the ancient Church and, until just a few decades ago, was the shared understanding of the entire Christian world. For most of the history of the west, abortion was, consistent with the Christian perspective on the issue, regarded as a form of homi-

cide and was illegal in every western nation.

However, over the past fifty years, abortion advocates have succeeded in decriminalizing abortion and persuading many people that abortion, rather than being a grave sin as the Bible teaches and Christians believe, is a fundamental right, a social good, and an indispensable aspect of American liberty. Abortion advocates falsely argue that abortion is a morally neutral medical procedure, no different than a tonsillectomy or an appendectomy, as opposed to being simply another form of intentional killing.

In order to make this erroneous argument, they strip unborn children of their humanity, arguing that unborn children, which they denote using the scientific terms “embryos” and “fetuses,” are not human beings, but rather biological material that may be excised in the same manner as a cancerous tumor or a diseased kidney. But, as faithful Christians, we know otherwise--the Bible tells us clearly that unborn children are human beings created, loved, and sanctified by God and, thus, entitled to the dignity and respect due any other human person.

As Christians, we are obliged as disciples of the Risen Lord to resist and speak out against the senseless slaughter of millions of unborn children through abortion. Jesus calls each of us, as his disciples, to be the “light of the world” and commands us to “let your light shine before others, so that they may see your good works and give glory to your

Father who is in heaven.” (Mt. 5:14-16.) We must proclaim the Truth of the Christian faith in our actions, our works, and our words. When innocent children are being put to slaughter through abortion, we must resist and speak out against it. To suggest that a faithful Christian can be “personally opposed to abortion” but support legal abortion is directly contrary to Jesus’ command to “let our light shine before others.” (Mt. 5:16.) We must in faith, and with the courage of our convictions as faithful Christians, proclaim the inherently evil and unjust nature of abortion, resist it without qualification, and oppose those in leadership who promote the ongoing slaughter of unborn children through public advocacy and political action. We do so at Jesus’ express commandment.

Christian life, particularly in an increasingly secular, pluralistic culture that rejects much of what the Bible says, is a challenge. We must pray for God’s grace and the strength to faithfully witness the Truths of the Christian faith to those hostile to us and to God’s word. But, we know and accept this challenge, knowing that our Lord, Jesus Christ, is with us always to the end of time. (Mk. 28:20.)

Written by James Sweeney, this tract may be downloaded from www.fifna.org.

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OF SAINT CHARLES, K.M.**
11 a.m., Saturday, 28 January 2017

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Brethren*

A Bishop Reflects on Ordained Ministry
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