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Forward in Christ

The magazine of Forward in Faith North America.

Vol. 6 No. 5

June, 2014

Pentecost and Mary

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Also in this Issue:

Don't Worship the Devil

The Moral Divide

Not All Religions are

Equal

Forward in Christ

The magazine of Forward in Faith North America.

Contents

6 In The News

Fr. Michael Heidt is Editor of *Forward in Christ* and a priest in the Diocese of Fort Worth.

7 The Moral Divide

David Virtue is a pioneering internet journalist. His website, Virtueonline.org, is the most widely read traditional Anglican news service. David lives in Philadelphia.

8 Don't Worship the Devil

Fr. Michael Heidt.

10 Spirit-Filled Prayer

Bishop Myers is the director of Graceworks, a ministry of teaching seminars and retreats. He is a bishop of ACNA.

12 Pentecost and Mary

Fr. Gregory Crosthwait is Rector of St. Mark's, Arlington, in the Diocese of Fort Worth.

13 Christians Who Lie

David Corey is Associate Professor of Political Philosophy at the University of Baylor, Waco, Texas.

16 Thinking Out Loud

Bill Murchison is an author and journalist, living in Dallas, Texas.

17 Greater Feasts and Fasts

Malleus is an Anglican priest living south of the Mason-Dixon.

18 Parish Highlight

The Church of the Redeemer, Sarasota, Florida.

19 Not All Religions Are Equal

Fr. Gene Geromel is Rector of St. Bartholomew's Anglican Church, Swartz Creek, Michigan, in the Diocese of the Holy Cross.

20 Minimalism, an Ecumenical Possibility

Fr. Donald P. Richmond is a priest of the Reformed Episcopal Church and a Benedictine Oblate, living in Apple Valley, California.

22 Reviews

Fr. Donald P. Richmond.

This month's cover is of the Rosary Chapel at Lourdes.

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Acts 2:42

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July 9-11



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Speakers



The Rt. Rev. Donald Parsons is the retired 6th Bishop of Quincy and a former Dean of Nashotah House seminary, where he continues to serve as a Professor.

Mother Gabriella is the Abbess of the Orthodox monastery of the Dormition of the Mother of God, at Rives Junction, Southern Michigan.



The Rt. Rev. Alberto Morales, OSB, is the Bishop of the Diocese of Quincy, and founder of St. Benedict's Abbey, Bartonville, Illinois.

“They devoted themselves to prayer”

(Acts 2:42)

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The FIFNA Annual Assembly

*Devoted to Prayer -Three Great Traditions: St. Teresa of Avila,
the Jesus Prayer, and St. Benedict*

July 9-11, 2014

Each year in the summer, FIFNA hosts an annual assembly of their membership and friends. We gather from all across the country and abroad for fellowship, worship, and engaging presentations. Our assemblies have become like family reunions where we see familiar faces from years gone by along with making new friends.

For the past three years, we have reflected on Acts 2:42: "And they devoted themselves to the apostles' teaching and fellowship, to the breaking of bread and the prayers."

In 2011, the theme was "They devoted themselves to the apostles' teaching." 2012 was "They devoted themselves to the breaking of bread." In 2013, we discussed the church in "Ecclesiology at the Crossroads." This year's theme is "Devoted to Prayer," with the subtitle of "Prayer: Three Great Traditions: St. Teresa of Avila, the Jesus Prayer, and St. Benedict."

We've worked hard to present you with a wonderful line-up of speakers. Bishop Donald Parsons' talk is entitled "St. Teresa of Avila on the Life of Prayer: Advice for Christians". Mother Gabriella of the Dormition Monastery of the Orthodox Church in America will speak on the "Jesus Prayer" and Bishop Alberto Morales, OSB, will present "Listening, Prayer and Work in the Benedictine Tradition and Daily Life."

Held at the beautiful Shrine of Our Lady of the Snows in Belleville, Illinois (just across the river from St. Louis). Our Lady of the Snows is one of the largest outdoor shrines in North America with 200 acres of natural beauty. Once there, you can park your car as your hotel and conference building are right across the parking lot from each other.

The cost is \$300/single occupancy or \$500/double. You can register online at fifna.org or print and mail your form to us. If registrations exceed capacity, we have an off-site hotel set up and a van to bring you back and forth.

Check-in begins at 3 PM on Wednesday, July 9 and the Assembly ends at noon on Friday, July 11.

We look forward to seeing you in July!



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of the Undivided Church*

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In the News

FIFNA Assembly: Registration is now open for this year's Forward in Faith Assembly at Our Lady of the Snows, Belleville, Illinois, July 9-11. Speakers to include Bishop Donald Parsons, the sixth Bishop of Quincy, Mother Gabriella, Abbess of the Orthodox Monastery of the Dormition, Michigan, and Bishop Alberto Morales, OSB, of the Diocese of Quincy. The theme of the event is prayer. Book now to reserve your place!

For information see pp. 2, 3, 5.

TEC Wins: Traditional Anglicans in California were dealt a setback in May, when Judge Donald Black of Fresno Superior Court ruled against the Diocese of San Joaquin. In Black's tentative ruling, diocesan assets and church property must be handed over to the Episcopal Church. Despite this, the Bishop of San Joaquin, Eric Menees, assured his diocese of ultimate victory. "I urge each one of you to trust in the Lord. He will never leave us nor forsake us, and no matter the fate of our buildings, we will be victorious in him!" The Diocese of San Joaquin's legal team are contesting Black's ruling. If the challenge is unsuccessful, the Episcopal Church will take possession of over \$7 million in frozen diocesan assets and 29 properties, as well as the diocesan headquarters in Fresno.

Forward in Christ urges your prayers for Bishop Eric Menees and the Diocese of San Joaquin.

Virtueonline.org, Anglicancurmudgeon.blogspot.com.

TEC Loses: In a hearing on Thursday, May 22, Judge John Chupp ruled in favor of the traditionalist Diocese of Fort Worth and against local Episcopal Church parties, setting a date for a new Summary Judgment hearing in December 2014. The Episcopal Church had attempted to delay the hearing until mid-2015 and argued for the consolidation of the case, which would have re-attached portions of the case that were not part of the 2011 Summary Judgment that the Diocese of Fort Worth appealed to the state Supreme Court.

Forward in Christ has to ask, if TEC wins in Fort Worth and elsewhere, what will it do with the empty property? Sell it off to restaurant chains and mosques?

The Diocese of Fort Worth.

Gene Robinson Divorces: The most famous gay bishop the world has ever seen, Gene Robinson, announced that he is divorcing his "husband", Mark. Writing in the *Daily Beast* on May 3, Robinson stated, "Recently, my partner and husband of 25-plus years and I decided to get divorced. While the details of our situation will remain appropriately private, I am seeking to be as open and honest in the midst of this decision as I have been in other dramatic moments of my life—coming out in 1986, falling in love, and accepting the challenge of becoming Christendom's first openly gay priest to be elected a Bishop in the historic succession of bishops stretching back to the apostles." Gene Robinson, defender of Apostolic Succession? Who knew.

Anglicanink.com.

Church of England Schools Get Gay: The Church of England has issued a stern set of guidelines to its schools, designed to prevent the scourge of homophobic bullying. Drawn up by the gay advocacy pressure group, Stonewall, the new rules stipulate that students will face tough disciplinary action for anti-gay behavior and speech. For example, using the word "gay" in a derogatory manner will no longer be allowed. But, while statements such as "your iPad case is really gay" will be forbidden, pupils will be taught to "revere" and "honour" Lesbian, Gay, Bi-Sexual and Transgendered persons. The Archbishop of Canterbury, Justin Welby, has said that the U.K Parliament's decision to legalize gay marriage is "great", even though he has stated that he is against gay marriage.

The Daily Telegraph.

COE Dioceses Approve Women Bishops Legislation: The Church of England's dioceses have voted overwhelmingly in favor of draft legislation to enable women to be bishops. The Bishop of Rochester, James Langstaff, Chair of the Steering Committee for the Draft Legislation for Women in the Episcopate said:

"The dioceses have now expressed their view very clearly and the matter now comes back to General Synod in July. I pray that the Synod will continue to approach this decision in a prayerful and generous way as we move towards voting on the proposal that women may be bishops in the Church of England."

Forward in Faith, along with the Eastern and Western catholic churches, is against the ordination of women.

Standfirminfaith.com.

Pregnant Christian Woman Sentenced to Death: An eight-months pregnant woman, Meriam Ibrahim, 26, was sentenced to death in Sudan this May for apostasy from Islam. Under Islamic law, Muslims who convert to other faiths, such as Christianity, are liable to the death penalty. Mrs. Ibrahim was accused by her brother of converting from Islam to Christianity, though she claims to have been raised as a Christian. She has refused to convert to Islam, which means "submission" in Arabic, and is awaiting execution by hanging.

As *Forward in Christ* was going to press, Meriam had just given birth.

Standfirminfaith.com.

Pope to Baptize Martians?: Pope Francis has said that he would be willing to baptize space aliens, such as Martians. The popular and holy Pontiff, joked with worshippers about aliens during a homily at his modest Casa Santa Martha residence at the Vatican. When asked, "If tomorrow, for example, an expedition of Martians arrives and some of them come to us ... and if one of them says: 'I want to be baptized!' what would happen?" The Pope replied that of course the aliens would be "embraced" and "treated as equals."

The Independent. 

The Moral Divide

David Virtue comments on gay marriage in Pennsylvania

An Episcopal Bishop and a Roman Catholic Archbishop were on opposite sides of the moral, spiritual, theological, and political divide when a federal judge in Pennsylvania John E. Jones III declared the state's ban on same-sex marriage to be unconstitutional.

"We are a better people than what these laws represent, and it is time to discard them into the ash heap of history," wrote Judge John E. Jones III of Federal District Court in a decision posted on Tuesday afternoon. Judge Jones, who is based in Harrisburg, Pa., was appointed by President George W. Bush in 2002.

The Rt. Rev. Sean W. Rowe, Bishop of the Episcopal Diocese of Northwestern Pennsylvania and Bishop Provisional of the Episcopal Diocese of Bethlehem, commented, "Today is a joyful day for Pennsylvanians who believe as I do that same-sex couples should be allowed to marry in our state. These couples work hard, raise children, volunteer for good causes and pay taxes. Pennsylvania would be poorer without them, and I am pleased that Judge John E. Jones III has moved them one significant step closer to equality under the law.

"The Episcopal Church has struggled faithfully with the issue of same-sex relationships for more than three decades, and in that struggle most of us have come to understand that same-sex couples and their families are blessings to their communities and to their neighbors and friends. Like opposite-sex couples, their love draws them more clearly into fidelity to one another and service to the world. Like opposite sex couples, they are signs and sacraments allowing us to see the boundless love of God more clearly."

Roman Catholic Archbishop, Charles J. Chaput of Philadelphia, called it "a mistake with long-term, negative consequences" and urged a quick appeal. By contrast, Bishop Rowe called the same-sex marriage ruling "a step toward justice."

"I am aware that faithful Episcopalians in the Dioceses of Bethlehem and Northwestern Pennsylvania disagree with me on this issue. I want to assure them that our dioceses will remain places where people of good conscience can differ charitably and remain united in the hope and healing of Jesus Christ," wrote Rowe.

"After reflection and consultation, I will write to both dioceses with guidance for clergy who want to officiate at same-sex marriages. For today, I am grateful to live in a state that has taken a step toward justice."

Pennsylvania is the last of the Northeast states with a ban on same-sex marriage. If Tuesday's ruling is not successfully challenged, it will become the 19th state to permit gay and lesbian couples to marry.

Judge Jones did not issue a stay, writing, "By virtue of this



Archbishop Chaput

ruling, same-sex couples who seek to marry in Pennsylvania may do so, and already married same-sex couples will be recognized as such in the Commonwealth."

Gov. Tom Corbett said he was studying the decision and considering whether to appeal it, even as state officials began issuing marriage licenses to overjoyed gay couples on Tuesday afternoon.

Outside City Hall in Philadelphia, several hundred people gathered to celebrate the decision, waving rainbow flags and holding up placards reading "Love Wins." At the Register of Wills office, which issues marriage licenses, same-sex couples started to arrive shortly after the decision was announced.

Over the last few months, judges have struck down marriage limits in several states: Arkansas, Idaho, Oklahoma, Texas, Virginia and, on Monday, Oregon. Courts elsewhere have said that states must recognize same-sex marriages performed outside their borders.

In most of the cases, courts have delayed the carrying out of the rulings until appeals can be argued in federal circuit courts and, perhaps, the Supreme Court. But state officials in Oregon said they would not appeal, and the opening of marriage to same-sex couples appears to be settled.

The lawsuit in Pennsylvania, brought by the American Civil Liberties Union and a private law firm on behalf of 11 couples, a widow and two teenage children of one couple, is one of more than 70 cases that have been filed around the country since the Supreme Court struck down parts of the Defense of Marriage Act (DOMA) in June.

A succession of federal judges, now including Judge Jones in Pennsylvania, have instead relied on the Supreme Court's finding last year that same-sex marriage bans are fueled by

animus and inflict stigma on gay and lesbian families.

Sadly, Archbishop Chaput is impotent in the face of this onslaught. He can thank "Catholic" Anthony Kennedy of The Supremes for this moral travesty.

The homosexual steamroller in America is now so powerful nothing it seems can stop it. Fueled by a bottomless pit of money and political power in Washington, it seems nothing can halt the gay marriage bulldozer. The Commonwealth of Pennsylvania joins the Left Coast in this hedonistic and libertine celebration that will, in time, bring about the destruction of traditional marriage, further distort the meaning of the family, and, from an Anglican perspective, further alienate Western Anglicanism from the Global South. Nothing good can come from this. Nothing. It will further cement the notion that the Anglican Church in North America was right in forming a separate Anglican province.

This unnatural "marriage" has no ontological or

cosmological basis. It defies Scripture, history and, more recently DOMA, which is still the official law of the land. Furthermore, it repudiates the maleness and femaleness established by God in the Torah and affirmed later by Jesus. Rowe is wrong. He is defying 2,000 years of church teaching and Scripture for a false inclusivity and diversity. This is another nail in the coffin of The Episcopal Church as it hurtles towards the abyss.

This judge's ruling will only increase the growing secularization of the West, further pushing heterosexual marriage onto the ash heap of history.

FC

David Virtue is pioneer in Internet journalism and his website, Virtueonline.org, is the most widely read source for worldwide, traditional Anglican news. This article is republished from Virtueonline with permission.

Don't Worship the Devil

Fr. Michael Heidt is against Satan's Vatican

It's long been said that Harvard, one of America's most prestigious schools, is little more than Satan's Vatican, albeit better funded. (Harvard's operating budget is \$3.7 billion as opposed to the Vatican's paltry \$300 million) With that in mind, it should come as no surprise to learn that the Bostonian liberal-left titan of Ivy League academe planned to host a Black Mass this May.

Understandably, Harvard's latest exercise in devilry provoked a storm of outrage, not least among Boston's Roman Catholics. Cardinal O'Malley, of the Archdiocese of Boston, called the act of devil worship "repugnant," and hundreds attended a Eucharistic procession from MIT in Cambridge to St. Paul's in Harvard Square, to pray against the event. Their prayers and the wishes of some 60,000 Alumni, students and professors, who signed a petition against the Black Mass, were successful. The infernal liturgy was cancelled and moved off-campus to a bar.

All's well, perhaps, that ends well, and in fairness to Harvard, the event wasn't directly sponsored by the university but by its Extension Cultural Studies Club. So, have these unfortunate students of what Senator McCarthy tellingly called the "Kremlin on the Charles," extended themselves into black magic and the worship of Lucifer?



Eyes Wide Shut at Harvard?

Apparently not; Harvard Extension claimed that the Black Mass wasn't an act of real anti-Christian worship but a performance.

"Our purpose is not to denigrate any religion or faith, which would be repugnant to our educational purposes, but instead to learn and experience the history of different cultural practices," announced the Cultural Studies Club President. "This performance is part of a larger effort to explore religious facets that continue to influence contemporary culture."

In other words, don't worry, the

satanic parody of the Eucharist in question is just a piece of theater to enlighten enquiring academic minds. Nonetheless, it's theater that scorns and mocks Christianity. The Satanic Temple of New York, whose members were invited to perform the blasphemous Mass, admits as much; they're not even real Satanists who believe in an actual Devil. According to Temple spokesman, Lucien Greaves, whose real name is Doug Mesner, none of the Temple's members believe in "a supernatural entity known as 'Satan,'" but use the Devil "as a metaphorical

construct by which we contextualize our works.”

So that’s alright then, the Temple’s devilish ritual is just a “metaphor,” but how can this express anything other than scorn and derision for Christianity? For people whose stated purpose doesn’t involve the denigration of a religion, Harvard Extension put on a pretty good show of doing just that. Imagine, for a moment, the outrage that would roil the university if a student club were to hold an anti-abortion performance, or a Mohammed-as-pedophile performance, or even, the horror, a play blaspheming feminist gender identity politics.

Unthinkable, isn’t it, but a virulently anti-Christian performance, and it doesn’t get much more so than a Black Mass, is apparently alright. Protestations to the contrary on the part of Mesner’s Temple and the Cultural Studies Club, there seems to be more than a hint of a genuinely diabolic spirit at play in this. A spirit, I’d argue, that runs deeper than merely offensive performance-art, bad as that is.

Say, for the sake of argument, that demons are real and really able to affect the world through the agency of their worshippers. What would that world look like? Without going too deeply into the arcane lore of occultism, we can safely posit certain things. A devilish society would, for example, encourage human sacrifice, especially infant sacrifice. That’s a satanic hallmark, look it up if you doubt me. Likewise, a demonic culture would encourage blasphemous inversions of Christian sacraments, such as marriage. It would pour hatred and derision on Christian Faith and Morals, all the while encouraging their opposite. And, granted that Satan is the “Father of Lies,” we can imagine his followers labeling their anti-virtues as the very thing they’re contradicting. Falsehood, in such a world, would be called truth, killing babies euphemized as “reproductive health,” and defending the love of a man and woman in marriage despised as

“hate speech.” By the same token, as C.S. Lewis reminds us, tricking humanity into disbelief in their presence would count as a useful weapon in the demonic armory of deceit.

In short, a world that’s influenced by devils would act in a way that is diametrically opposed to Christianity. With that in mind, surely it doesn’t take too great a leap of imagination to see a genuinely hellish glare, to put it mildly, in contemporary culture. Our abortion statistics and the continued multi-million dollar state funding of Planned Parenthood alone, are proof enough, from a Christian point of view, of real live diabolic activity.

Seen in this light, what nearly went on at Harvard stands out as something sinister. No matter that the players concerned professed disbelief in the evil spirits they pray to; their intended actions spoke otherwise. In this they were giving perhaps not-so-metaphoric form to genuinely evil currents in the world at large; currents moved by wickedness personified in the evil spirits who rebelled against God and “wander through the world,” as the prayer says, “for the ruin of souls.” Is it going too far to see what almost went on at Harvard as an outward and visible sign, as a sacrament, of a broader evil in the world at large. I think not, and I’ll leave you to consider whether such a thing is truly diabolic or not.

Against that, we stand for the Holy Spirit, the Spirit of life instead of death, of love instead of hatred, of truth instead of lies, of righteousness instead of rebellion and salvation instead of the damnation promised to all who are at enmity with God. May that same Spirit rest upon us and all of God’s Holy Church, as it did upon the heads of the Apostles at the first Pentecost.

And may St. Michael the Archangel defend us in the day of battle. 

Fr. Michael Heidt is Editor of Forward in Christ.

Prayer to the Archangel Michael

*Saint Michael the Archangel,
defend us in battle,
be our safeguard against the wickedness
and snares of the devil.
May God rebuke him we humbly pray;
and do thou, O Prince of the Heavenly host,
by the power of God,
thrust down to hell
Satan and all evil spirits
who wander through the world
for the ruin of souls. Amen.*

Spirit-Filled Prayer

By Bishop Kenneth Myers

Let's talk about Spirit-filled prayer. And by prayer I mean football. No, wait, I mean liturgy. Yes, prayer and liturgy. Oh, and football.

I grew up in a Pentecostal tradition that eschewed written prayers. Written prayers, we were told, were so insincere, so stuffy, so ineffective. We had our teeth cut on verses like 2 Timothy 3.15 which warns us about those religious people, "having a form of godliness, but denying the power thereof." Paul warned Timothy, "From such turn away," and we were taught that folk who prayed with a *form*, however godly it might seem, were actually denying the power of true down-on-your-knees-and-from-the-heart prayer, and we'd best stay away from them.

Another important verse in our arsenal defending contemporaneous prayer was James 5.16: "The effectual fervent prayer of a righteous man availeth much." Did you get that? It had to be (a) effectual, (b) fervent, and (c) coming from a person who was righteous - upright, moral, without sin. *Of course* written and read prayers from some sherry drinking cleric didn't measure up to *any* of these qualifications.

Real prayer, we were taught, really effectual prayer, had to be from the heart and off the top of one's head. No premeditating what to say, no writing it down ahead of time, and certainly no praying what someone else had written. How could that possibly be Spirit-led or Spirit-filled?

Of course, this logic spilled over into the worship service as well. The less planning the better. A truly powerful worship service was when nothing was planned and everyone just flew by the seat of their britches (not, mind you, cassocks or albs). Sometimes the Spirit's presence was measured by whether the preacher got a chance to preach or not. If he didn't, we all knew that it was a powerfully Spirit-filled service.

So, when I shocked a lot of friends by becoming an Anglican (mind you, I've still never tasted good sherry, but I'm open to the experiment), one of the questions they posed to me was, "How can you possibly exchange the freedom we have in prayer and worship for that stuffy and boring liturgy and written prayers?" To which I replied, "Football."

Football, Liturgy and Prayer

Football is the most popular sport in the United States. On any given autumn Sunday afternoon or Monday evening millions of people sit around television sets across the nation to pay close attention, scream instructions, pound the coffee tables, slap their foreheads, sigh, cry, jump for joy, and second guess the coaches. It is a game of skill, chance and power. And here's the important thing: no one has a clue at the beginning of the game what the score will be at the end of the game. It's so up in the air. Anything can happen. Fumbles, interceptions, Hail Mary passes, quarterback sneaks. Any game is anyone's game. That is what makes it our national pastime.

But wait a minute. Let's look at the flip-side of football.

Here is a little test (if space permitted I could give a much longer test, but you'll get the idea). See how many questions you can answer:

- How many players on each team?
- How many yards from goal to goal?
- How many yards for a first down?
- How many chances to make that first down?
- What are three pieces of regulation uniform?
- What is the job of the referee?
- What does it mean to rough the kicker?
- What is a penalty?
- How many points for a touchdown?
- How is an extra point scored?
- How long is a quarter?

On the one hand, football is the most exciting and unpredictable couple of hours in the week, and on the other hand, it is without question the most structured, full-of-rules, dare I say *ordered* thing on television.

How can something be so structured and laden with obligatory regulations and at the same time be so unpredictable and exciting?

Ah! The exact same thing happens every time we gather for the liturgy. If you will pardon the analogy, we have players and coaches and managers and uniforms and plays to run and a goal in mind. We have structure and rules galore. And at the same time, because the Holy Spirit is involved, you never know exactly what is going to happen. What will God speak to the young man trying to pay attention in spite of his distracting children? How will he change the heart of that woman on the third row? Who will he heal? Who will he turn around? To whom will he grant wisdom or peace or freedom?

Form and Filling

My point is this: freedom and form are not mutually exclusive. In fact true freedom demands form. One can't ultimately be Spirit-filled until one is Spirit-formed. In the Genesis account of creation, God took six days to make everything. But if you look closely, the first three days were days of forming (heavens, waters, land) and the last three days were days of filling what he had just formed (heavenly bodies, fish, plants and animals and us). And on the seventh day God didn't exactly rest, although that's the word we use in English. A better image is of a king sitting down on his throne and beginning to rule ("Arise, O Lord, into thy rest, thou and the ark of thy strength" - Psalm 132.8). He worked for six days on his machine, and then he sat down to operate it. Or if you prefer a different analogy, on the seventh day he got behind the driver's seat.

In the same way, the form of our ordered and liturgical worship and prayer, whether corporate or private, can be filled with the presence of the Holy Spirit. And the beauty of the thing is, I get to use words and phrases that are so much



Spirit-Filled Prayer

richer, better, more beautiful and more meaningful than I could come up with myself, and I can make them my own - I can own them for myself. Suddenly, I am not just praying what is on my heart, but I am praying with the Church and with God himself. I am praying Scripture and the wise, time-tested words of those who came before me. Dietrich Bonhoeffer said it best, "The richness of the Word of God ought to determine our prayer, not the poverty of our heart."

So, how do we pray in such a way as to be Spirit-filled and Spirit-led? We pray the way the early church did. Most

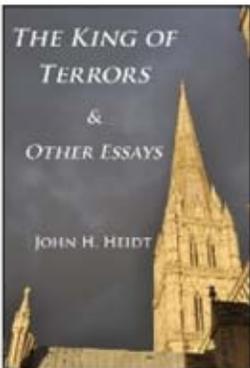
English versions of the Bible say something similar to what the King James Version says when it translates Acts 2.42, "And they continued steadfastly in the apostles' doctrine and fellowship, and in breaking of bread, and in prayers." I would simply point out that there is a word missing from the English translations: ταῖς; that is, "the". The text doesn't tell us that the Church of Pentecost continued steadfastly "in prayers," rather, "in the prayers." Yes, this Spirit-filled group of people, hot off the experience of stumbling down from the upper room speaking in tongues, continued in "the prayers." The prayers of their Jewish tradition, the prayers they had learned from the Apostles, the prayers of the Church.

None of this is to diminish or displace whatever the Holy Spirit wants to do (whether that is on a Sunday morning at church, or on a Tuesday morning on your back porch). But praying *the* prayers - the

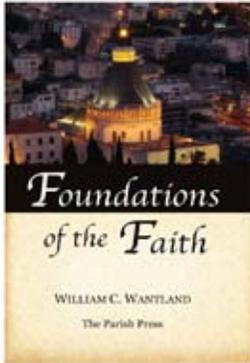
written, rehearsed, remembered prayers of the Church, is the best form for him to fill. On the one hand, you know exactly what is going to happen. On the other hand, you have no idea.

Ready to play? Down...set...pray!

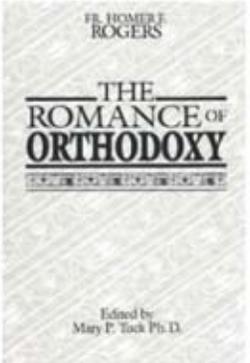
Bishop Myers is the director of Graceworks, a ministry of teaching seminars and retreats. If you are interested in hosting him for a conference, please go to www.kennethmyers.net or contact him at bishopkenneth@gmail.com.







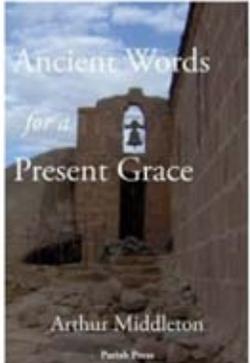
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Pentecost and Mary

Fr. Gregory Crosthwait reflects

I have a friend who camped out at Chick-Fil-A grand openings. I saw one of these recently in my part of town. There were many people sleeping in tents in a parking lot prior to the opening of a new store. It looked like a Feast of Booths for chicken sandwiches. That's what the campers can win: chicken sandwiches. At these grand openings the first 100 people get one free meal per week for a year. I don't think my friend won that particular prize. But she still had fun.

I would not have had fun. I don't camp out. Not for chicken. Not for anything. I'm no longer a fan of crowds and hoopla. And this part of my temperament is an annual challenge for me at Pentecost.

Pentecost is the big event, the outpouring of the Holy Spirit. In the midst of the crowds of the Feast of Weeks the Spirit descends and hoopla ensues, holy hoopla, but hoopla nevertheless. What part and portion of this event is good news here for the reserved?

Just as you can still eat a chicken sandwich if you didn't camp out at a grand opening, so also the Holy Spirit of Pentecost isn't restricted to the big event of Pentecost. The Holy Spirit is also available for those who inhabit quiet, sparsely populated places. In fact, the small and the quiet preceded and followed the main event of the Spirit's descent.

While the event of Pentecost happens in Acts 2, I think that we see the beginnings of the event in Acts 1. The Spirit of the Lord was active and present in the selection of St. Matthias. This is clear in the Apostolic prayer, "Lord, who knowest the hearts of all men, show which one of these two thou hast chosen" (Acts 1:24)

This particular prayer should be kept in the context of the church's first novena. "All these with one accord devoted themselves to prayer, together with the women and Mary the mother of Jesus, and with his brethren" (Acts 1:14).

Here we see the church in its embryonic state. The assembly of men and women brought to life by, with, and in Israel's risen Messiah. This small group, alive in Christ, is living by the means with which they will continue to share Christ's life, devoted to prayer. This devotion to prayer continues even after the Day of Pentecost, just with

more people. "And they devoted themselves to the apostles' teaching and fellowship, to the breaking of bread and the prayers" (Acts 2:42).

There was devotion to prayer after and before Pentecost because someone was devoted to prayer prior to the Incarnation and Holy Nativity of Jesus. That someone is Mary.

She's there in Acts 1, "together with the women and Mary the mother of Jesus." In this small group is the nascent Church, wonderfully and mysteriously praying with Mary, who prayed with Israel's Messiah himself when he was in her virgin womb. So if the fullness of Pentecost is found in Acts 2, with Acts 1 serving as a precursor, we can go still further back, to Luke 1.

In tracing the beginnings of Pentecost to Luke 1, we find that we are invited to pray both the beginnings and the fullness of the Feast in the Church's Daily Office, morning and evening. This is the grace and glory of responding to the Holy Spirit who was poured out upon and within the Church for the sake of the world.

This grace and glory is both particular and universal: the Holy Spirit particular in the incarnation of the Eternal Word in the womb of the Blessed Virgin; the Holy Spirit particular in the leaping prophet, John, in the womb of blessed Elizabeth; the Holy Spirit moving the formerly mute lips of Zechariah in the words of the *Benedictus*; the Holy Spirit continuing the same words in the praying Church Militant morning by morning in the Daily Office.

Each evening the Church joins with Our Lady in praying the *Magnificat*. The Holy Spirit, having moved Elizabeth to intone her three-fold blessing,

"Blessed are you among women, and blessed is the fruit of your womb! And blessed is she who believed that there would be a fulfilment of what was spoken to her from the Lord." Herein we see the Holy Spirit moving and, by grace through faith, join the particular grace made universal by the same Holy Spirit.

The Holy Spirit moves upon Mary, whose singular vocation is to be the Mother of the Word made flesh. The Holy Spirit also moves upon all who share her faith and by the same grace offer her praises to God who "hath put down



the mighty from their seat, and hath exalted the humble and meek.”

That Holy Spirit of God, moving upon the face of the new creation, the Church, as he once moved upon the face of the deep in Genesis 1, fashions and molds each of the baptized in their repentant faith for his or her particular vocation. He fashions them as they pray, morning by morning, evening by evening, Mass by Mass, in solitude, smallness, and even in crowds and hoopla (for those so inclined).

“Almighty and everlasting God, by whose Spirit the whole body of your faithful people is governed and sanctified: Receive our supplications and prayers which we offer before you for all members of your holy Church, that in their vocation and ministry they may truly and devoutly serve you; through our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ. Amen.”



Fr. Gregory Crosthwait is Rector of St. Mark's, Arlington, Texas, in the Diocese of Fort Worth.

Christians Who Lie

David Corey argues for genuine faith

Increasingly I find myself surrounded on all sides by people who call themselves Christian but seem to be worshipping something other than the Christ of the New Testament.

On the cultural Left today the problem is practically beyond cure. People want so badly to march in lockstep with the reigning zeitgeist that they wittingly or unwittingly adjust their religious beliefs and practices to match it. Even priests and bishops fall prey to this.

But evangelicals on the Right today have their own way of transmogrifying the faith, though no one seems to comment much on it, perhaps because it appears at first glance to be a form of piety. I am thinking of the kind of Christian who thinks he knows things which in fact neither he nor any human being can possibly know; those who claim to see and hear things that are not really there, and who expect everyone to play along with this charade as if it were a requirement of Christian faith. These are people who approach their faith in the way little girls believe in fairies. They create a dream world in which the most extraordinary things are believed to happen routinely, almost as a matter of course.

But we have to ask: is the “Christ” who resides in this dream world the same as the Christ of the New Testament? Did Jesus expect his followers to falsify common experience and thus traffic in lies?

Let me illustrate the problem as I see it, with two memorable encounters I've had with evangelicals of this ilk. The encounters have left such a mark in my mind that I've actually given them names. One is the “miracle of the dumpster.” The other is my encounter

with the “roving Gnostics.”

The “miracle of the dumpster” occurred one crisp autumn morning in 1996, when I was a graduate student working as a janitor for a large church in downtown Baton Rouge. I'd just removed the trash from various church offices around the building and hauled it out to the dumpster when I learned from a fellow janitor that some important sheet music had been placed in a trashcan by mistake. As it turns out, the head of the “worship team” had inadvertently discarded her sheet music for the following Sunday in her office trashcan and wanted to know if I could now search for it in the dumpster.

This was a Tuesday, and the trash truck always came on Fridays, so although some minutes had passed, I was sure to find the music upon searching. And so I did.

Imagine my surprise, then, when on the following Sunday I heard this relatively mundane experience retold in the form of a most extraordinary “testimony.” A “miracle” had occurred, or so the congregation was told by the head of the worship team. The day's music was “completely lost” a mere five days ago, when it had been inadvertently disposed of in the trash. And since the trash truck always comes efficiently every week, it could only be that the music was saved by the hand of God. Indeed, the janitor who went out in search of the music (that was I) discovered, despite all odds, that it was still lying there in a dumpster that should have been empty!

Such was the bogus miracle of the dumpster. Aren't similar exaggerations proclaimed by well-meaning Christians in churches all the time? I have certainly heard my fill of them.

(I will refrain here from relating the “miracle of the toilet paper” and other personal favorites.)

The story of the “roving Gnostics” is a bit different, but I'll make the connection clear in a moment. It was May, 2004, and I was by then a professor at Baylor University. Leaving my office one day, I encountered a group of young proselytizers—high school students from somewhere in Texas—who'd taken it upon themselves to preach the Good News to Baylor students and faculty. This seemed to me a bit like carrying coals to Newcastle, but, as it turned out, their “good news” was indeed something “new.”

“Sir, sir!” one of them shouted to me. “Do you know where you're going after you die?” “Why, no I don't,” I confessed. “Well, Jesus will save you,” he said and pushed a pamphlet into my hand.

I glanced at the pamphlet, but I admit I was too distracted to pay much attention to it. I decided instead to probe these students a bit: “Let me ask you something,” I said to the group: “Do you know where you're going after you die?” “Oh, yes,” they assured me. “We're going to heaven.”

“You know this?” I asked. And they nodded their heads with incredible confidence.

“But no one knows where he's going after he dies,” I said calmly.

“Well we know we're saved,” one of them replied.

“But if you *absolutely* know you're saved, then what is hope, and what is faith?” I asked. “You're basically saying you know the mind of God.”

“But we do know,” they replied. “Jesus gave us everlasting life.”

“But you don't know that,” I said.

“Oh yes, we do, sir,” they replied.

“Stop it!” I said, “You know no such thing.” And they finally fell silent. Some of them appeared to be examining themselves. Others were evidently trying to recall what they were supposed to say next to someone like me. Eventually I simply walked away, tempted as I was to remind them of St. Paul’s words about working salvation out in “fear and trembling.” And that was my encounter with the “roving Gnostics.”

Now what do the roving Gnostics and the miracle of the dumpster have to do with each other? It seems to me they are both instances of profound self-deception extending itself outward to others and passing itself off as basic Christianity. The deceptions may be well intentioned—I take that as a given—but they are deceptions nonetheless. And I want to argue here that Christianity should have nothing to do with this—indeed, that this way of approaching the Christian faith is ultimately harmful for those who practice it and for the future of the faith in our culture.

Let me try to defend this by making a few observations about Christian faith and the concrete harm such deceptions are likely to inflict.

In the Gospels and in the writings of such saints as Augustine, Anselm and Bonaventure, who wrote about faith in the most moving of ways, faith does not come to light as knowledge (*gnosis*), but belief (*pistis, doxa*). And this is a crucial point for anyone who hopes to sustain his faith over the long haul. Faith can of course appear at times as a “confidently held” belief—as in Hebrews 11, where it is described as “confidence in what we hope for and assurance of what we do not see”—but this is still belief, not knowledge.

And this is precisely what makes the Christian life at once so challenging and heroic for those take it up. The life of faith is one (let us be honest) of constant ups and downs; of sudden insights followed by spells of dullness and aridity; of moral breakthroughs followed by setbacks, guilt and despondency; of repentance and renewal; of rich communion and feelings of forsakenness; and, through all this, of love and grace, silently stirring us to the verge a certainty which is never yet certain and a fulfillment which is never quite full. Such is the life of faith. And the danger (in this light) of the pretense that faith is knowledge is that when the falseness of this at last comes

to light, the whole edifice is likely to come crashing down. Because the “knowledge” in question is not real knowledge, it is bound to falter in some moment of sober reflection. And then what is the would-be “knower” to do?

There is another reason to repudiate the kind of error that leads some to invent miracles and others to exaggerate their knowledge about salvation. It is that Christianity is ultimately a religion for people in need, not for people who have all the answers. “Blessed are the poor in spirit,” says Christ in the Beatitudes. Blessed are those who “hunger and thirst” for what they do not have. We might extend the insight to say, blessed are those who long for the miraculous, for they shall know a true miracle. And blessed are those who admit they do not know what happens after death and yet yearn to know, for they shall find eternal life. The point here is one that students of ancient philosophy (my own field of expertise) know well from Plato’s famous dialogue, the *Meno*. In order to seek, you must recognize that you do not already know. Those who think they know are not inclined to search. And the spiritual implications of this are quite obvious.

Christ who is the Truth needs to be sought. But those who rest in bogus miracles and false knowledge are the least inclined to seek. They are the farthest from the Lord, not the closest to him. “Who hopes for what he already has?” says St. Paul in Romans 8:14.



The FIFNA 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 with in 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.

In fact, I am inclined to say something even more critical of Christians who lie—however well-intentioned their lies may be. Not only are they ill-disposed to seek the truth, they are in effect making it up themselves. And this, so far from being a pious thing to do, it is actually the height of impiety. It is hubris bordering on blasphemy. It is to substitute the man-made for the divine in an effort to escape the tenuousness of the life of faith that Christ actually called us to live.

And, ultimately, I think the practice of lying is bad for the future of Christianity itself in our all-too distrustful culture. What the skeptics, agnostics and atheists around us think about Christians is that we are probably making things up. How better, then, to prove them right than to say things that are demonstrably false? We must be careful here. Christianity is a religion perfectly compatible with the most sober realism imaginable. Our faith is that Christ performed real miracles, not forgeries; that he died and rose again, as the Apostles said (including Thomas, who stuck his real finger in Christ's real wounds). And the life of faith which

we are called to live is not a life of pretending to know more than we do about the ways and means of salvation. It is a life of hope in things unseen.

Our message to the culture will be stronger, not weaker, if we refuse to peddle lies and if we present ourselves honestly as hopeful souls who combine intellectual integrity with faith. We should rather play the realists to a culture that tells idealistic lies of its own—the zeitgeist is a grand soteriological lie, after all. By failing to present the heroic adventure of Christianity in its true light, we are neither doing ourselves or our culture any good.



David Corey is Associate Professor of Political Science at Baylor University, Waco, Texas.

An Act of Faith

O my God! I firmly believe
that Thou art one God in three Divine persons,
Father, Son, and Holy Ghost;
I believe that Thy Divine Son became man,
and died for our sins, and that he will come to,
judge the living and the dead.
I believe these and all the truths which the Holy
Catholic Church teaches, because
Thou hast revealed them, who canst neither
deceive nor be deceived.
In this faith I stand
to live and die. Amen.

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This event precedes the FIFNA Annual Assembly by one day, so consider coming a day earlier to participate in both events.

Thinking Out Loud

Bill Murchison on the Twilight of the Gods and the New York Times

The U. S. Supreme Court's latest public prayer decision reminds us of what an increasingly terrible time our liberals have with God. To wit, they don't really want him around: well, certainly no more than necessary and when he does show up, the less said about it the better. Except that considerable numbers of Americans appear very much to want him around. How to make these obsessives take their obsessions discreetly out of sight? Such is the liberals' perplexity.

In Greece, New York, a suburb of Rochester, the town board has since 1999 invited local religious leaders to open meetings with prayer. The preponderance of these leaders have been Christian (there have been no calls in Greece, apparently, for the blessings of Zeus). Two disconcerted locals sued; they wished the town to demote the Christian/Jewish God to more generic status. A federal district court said Greece was doing just fine; an appeals court asserted the reverse; on May 5, 2014, the Supreme Court agreed with Greece, finding, 5 to 4, in favor of what Justice Anthony Kennedy called "a practice that was accepted by the Framers and has withstood the scrutiny of time and political change."

Kennedy noted the town's felt need "to accommodate the spiritual needs of lawmakers." He traced precedents in the case back to the republic's earliest years. He said under town patronage God had heard not just from Christians but from a Jewish layman, a Baha'i member, and, for heaven's sake, a Wiccan priestess. Greece worked at ecumenicity and inclusion: just not hard enough to suit the four liberal dissenters, namely, Stephen Breyer, Ruth Bader Ginsburg, Sonia Sotomayor, and Elena Kagan.

Kagan spoke for the liberal bloc in a manner that could leave one wondering whether the liberal mind has more than an inch of cobwebby space to spare for an old-fashioned premise – namely, that the God generally accredited with creation of the universe merits occasional public attention: at minimal, if any, cost to public unity.

Not so's the court minority appears to believe. Kagan scoured America's constitutional flooring for chinks through which prejudice and rancor could emerge in the event of undue public coziness with God. What about the Muslim woman wanting to address the town board about a traffic signal? Would she feel somehow less a citizen, less a petitioner following the mention of Jesus' name? Kagan wasn't – she said – in favor of shutting out prayer as prayer. But "we are a pluralistic people," and apparently that's

Oh, really? Religious faith is a Sunday diversion? That's it? A disposition? A mental habit? A yellowing inheritance from Great-Grandma? Nothing to do with the way the mind – far less the soul – imposes purpose and meaning on life?

the main thing going on here. The possibility for exclusion and division was ever on her mind.

What need for religion anyway?, is the question seemingly at the back of the court minority's mind. "When the citizens of this country approach their government," wrote Kagan, "they do so only as Americans, not as members of one faith or another." Oh, really? Religious faith is a Sunday diversion? That's it? A disposition? A mental habit? A yellowing inheritance from Great-Grandma? Nothing to do with the way the mind – far less the soul – imposes purpose and meaning on life?

No wonder, if this is so, that the four nay-sayers in the Greece case seem to see prayer as a needless imposition on



Bill Murchison

the patience of the non-prayerful. The minority's own account of reality is inward-looking: undisturbed by cosmic considerations; doubtful, perhaps, if such considerations exist at all.

The secularism of the Western cultural and political left – its persistent indifference to religious faith – may be its most conspicuous attribute. Having written off God for most worldly purposes, liberals can proceed to the construction of their own snug, secure, non-religious vision of human affairs and relationships: no unchangeable realities, no moral systems; just good old free-floating politics, founded on polls, warm thoughts, and law review articles.

That the town board of Greece, New York, might be more in tune with reality than Justice Kagan and the high court's three other fans of public-arena secularism – what a possibility! The proofs of prayer, at that, are said to be wondrous and sometimes totally unexpected.



William Murchison's latest book is The Cost of Liberty: The Life of John Dickinson. To find out more about William Murchison, and to see features by other Creators Syndicate writers and cartoonists, visit the Creators Syndicate website at www.Creators.Com. Copyright 2014, creators.com.

Greater Feasts and Fasts

Malleus blasts fake Saints

It amazes me that any Anglican Catholic would use anything that comes from the same people who brought us priestesses and laissez-faire sexual morality. It is as if we can trust these folks with liturgy, even if we cannot trust them with theology. So much for *lex orandi, lex credendi*! The 1979 Prayer Book of Common Prayer with its bizarre theology of baptism – “Will you strive for justice and peace among all people, and respect the dignity of every human being?” – was designed to pave the way for all the departures from the received deposit of faith.

The purveyors of the new religion were right to appeal to the 1979 Prayer Book. The once touted “Catholic victory” in the 1979 Prayer Book is only the triumph of Catholic Lite, which turns out to be little more than assuring the *New York Times-Washington Post* crowd that Episcopalians are not like those mean and nasty conservative evangelicals. After all, Episcopal Bishopettes wear miters. Is that a Catholic victory? They might even be able to persuade Brian McLaren to wear one. What a Catholic victory.

But the really disturbing thing is that innocent looking black and gold tome, *Lesser Feasts and Fasts*, (LFF) inevitably found even in the sacristies of priests and parishes which claim to be Catholic. Some might call this a matter of convenience, except it isn't. It's hard to imagine anything more inconvenient than the library that the wretched LFF demands to be carried into the sanctuary: Altar Service Book, Lectionary, the awful LFF itself and The Book of Occasional Services, maybe even the appalling Holy Men and Holy Women. The old missals are much more handy, with everything you might need in one book. Of course what you won't find in the old missals are those dreadful collects and agenda-driven biographies. Here's an example, the Collect for the “Feast” of Florence Li Tim Oi:

“Gracious God, we thank you for calling Florence Li Tim-Oi, much beloved daughter, to be the first woman to exercise the office of a priest in our Communion: By the grace of your Spirit inspire us to follow her example, serving your people with patience and happiness all our days, and witnessing in every circumstance to our Savior Jesus Christ, who lives and reigns with you and the same Spirit, one God, for ever and ever. Amen.”

Inspire us to follow her example? How? By breaking the integrity of Anglican Orders and being the first on the ground to destroy our part of the Church's sacramental communion? What a saint. Still, there it is, all ready for you to celebrate on January 24.

Recent editions of this terrible book have become little more than a gallery of left-wing activists. It would not surprise me in the least if eventually Che Guevara and Mao Tse-tung made it into the calendar. Why not Kim Philby? But I suppose Guy Burgess and Margaret Sanger might suit Episcopal tastes better. As silly as this may sound, in the absence of any understanding of what holiness is, it is perfectly possible. Anglicans, so that they will not appear to be mean and nasty like Roman Catholics, have been



Florence Li Tim Oi, not a Saint

quick to say that being included on their calendar is not a ‘canonization’. In other words these so-called saints do not have to be vetted, except to check if they ever uttered racist, sexist, or lesbitransgay sentiments.

The worst thing about *Lesser Feasts and Fasts*, and there are many, is that there's nothing ‘lesser’ about it. The Episcopalian notion of sanctity is tagged to importance. You get to be a “saint” if you are important enough to get your name in the newspaper or the history books, because you were the first this or that, or because you were a “prophet” for some inevitably leftist cause, or because you were a peace and justice celebrity. Maybe even a groundbreaking, red carpet “marriage equality” star, like the recently gay-divorced Gene Robinson. You certainly aren't holy because you loved God with all your heart and soul and mind, or because you were perfectly ordinary, or because you were little and unnoticed by the world.

There's no place in this for St. Therese and her little way. No place for St. Isidore the Farmer-Laborer, who had no complaint about how he was treated. No place for the penitential austerities of St. Rose of Lima. No place for St. Margaret Mary Alacoque, who madly and quietly gloried in the love of the Sacred Heart. No place for the lesser souls but only for the movers and shakers, the mighty in this world.

It is time for a book burning, a Bonfire of the Vanities. *Lesser Feasts and Fasts* is first on the fire.



Malleus is an Anglican priest, living south of the Mason-Dixon.

Parish Highlight

Church of the Redeemer, Sarasota

The Church of the Redeemer is a traditional Episcopal church that has been a part of the Sarasota, Florida community for over a century. Located in the heart of the city's vibrant downtown, Redeemer is the mother parish of all other Episcopal churches in the area, and is well-known for the beauty of its liturgy, excellent music program, ministry to families and outstanding work in missions and outreach. Redeemer is part of the Diocese of Southwest Florida, in the Episcopal Church in the United States, and is a member of the worldwide Anglican Communion.

The Very Rev. Fredrick A. Robinson has been Redeemer's Rector for 20 years, providing a rare stability and continuity to pastoral leadership in a parish. His Associate Rector, the Rev. Richard C. Marsden has been with the parish for 19 years, and Redeemer employs two other full time priests, as well as a full-time priest in charge of the church's growing Hispanic Ministry.

Founded in the 1880s by a group of Scottish Episcopalians who settled in Sarasota, the church was officially recognized in 1904 and was given parish status in 1934. Col. J. Hamilton Gillespie, the first mayor of Sarasota and founder of the area's first public library, was a deacon and one of the church's earliest leaders. The congregation quickly grew and, in 1950, moved to the bay front location it still occupies today.

Hundreds of travelers and non-parishioners visit Redeemer's stunning campus every year, from all across the globe. The tall trees, flower-lined pathways and gardens offer a respite from the Florida sun, and many people enjoy the serenity of the St. Francis Garden as they visit the downtown area. The great Bell Tower extends sixty-five feet above the ground and stands as a permanent offering of glory to Almighty God. Housed within it are five bronze bells, which, day by day, call the people of Sarasota to the worship of God. Both the exterior of the church and the interior are beautifully embellished with artwork ranging from mosaics to great paintings and a thirty-foot icon painted by world-renowned religious iconographer and Romanian Orthodox Nun Sister Elisea Papacioc.

The Church of the Redeemer has nearly 2,000 members and is a eucharistically-centered Christian community which serves God by preaching the Gospel, teaching faith, administering sacraments and making disciples. Year-round, there are hundreds of opportunities for parishioners to be vitally connected to each other, the parish, the clergy, their faith, and in service to the community. Fellowship abounds in prayer gatherings, book clubs, needlepoint groups, and many more offerings. Adult education opportunities include weekly classes and study groups, seminars and courses on history, the Bible, and other great writings, and Redeemer frequently hosts noted theologians, preachers and speakers from around the globe.

Offerings for children, youth and families are no less robust, with a variety of programs and ongoing activities for all ages. During the school year, the church hosts LOGOS,



St. Francis' Garden at Redeemer

a weekly opportunity for students to learn about faith in a fun environment. Redeemer is also home to an active and popular Episcopal Youth Community program, which gives youth in grades six through twelve a chance to enjoy activities and learn together under the guidance of the church's Youth Minister. Redeemer youth also travel frequently on mission trips, working to improve the lives of others, and they also volunteer their time and talent in their own community.

Through a plethora of missions and outreach programs, Redeemer serves those in need locally and globally, and offers opportunities for the unchurched to learn about Christ in a multitude of ways.

In all it does, Redeemer is guided by a simple mission statement: "To build up the Body of Christ by Word and Sacrament, equipping the people of God for the work of ministry, that Jesus Christ may be known, loved, worshiped and obeyed in our homes and parish, community and diocese, and throughout the world."



For additional information, check out Redeemer's website at redeemersarasota.org or call the parish office at 941-955-4263. Masses on Sunday are at 7:30, 9 and 11 a.m., with a Spanish mass each Sunday afternoon at 1. Additional services are offered throughout the week. The Church of the Redeemer is located in downtown Sarasota, 222 S. Palm Ave., Sarasota, Florida.

Not All Religions Are Equal

Fr. Gene Geromel on the Islamic persecution of Christians

As you read this I hope that our Delta forces or some such special operations unit has rescued the 260 young Christian girls. I also hope that they have destroyed the group which abducted them and wrapped them in bacon. But as I write this, it has only been three weeks since the abductions have occurred. The world is full of images of Hollywood stars and politicians who are upset. It is about time.

What troubles me is that our celebrities act as if this is the first time anything like this has happened. I have not been active on ESA/FIFNA for a number of years. But I remember Canon Bill Atwood telling us in the '90s about African priests whose children were abducted in an attempt to stop faithful priests from preaching the Gospel. I remember Bishop Broadhurst telling me about meeting with Christians in Egypt and seeing on their hands little crosses. These tattoos were put on Christians early in life so that the child could be identified as a member of the Church.

He also described the depth of theological knowledge of the laymen of the Coptic Church. Undoubtedly, depth of understanding and commitment go hand in hand. In my own parish at the time I had an Assyrian family who told me about the treatment of Christian girls in Middle East. When they reached puberty, they were taken from their parents' houses and returned when they were pregnant.

All of us who were in education forty or more years ago remember being taught about Thomas Jefferson sending the Marines to Tripoli because of the abductions and kidnappings being carried out there by Muslim slavers. According to Dr. Thomas Sowell, there were more European slaves in the coast of North Africa than there were black slaves in American in the early 1800's. Terrorism and abduction and sexual abuse of Christians goes back to the beginning of Islam. It is nothing new.

But as I think about those two-hundred-and-sixty girls and their families, I am amazed at their faithfulness. After all, none of this needs to have happened to them. Their parents could merely have taken these girls out of school, made them wear burkas and taught them to deny Christ. In other words, converted to Islam. Yet, faced with brutality and death and the loss of their children, these Christian parents continue to lead faithful lives. My parishioners, and yours, cannot stand up to a football coach who wants practice on a Sunday morning. I lose sleep over my grown children. I worry about their health, difficulties at work and their finances. I don't ever have to worry about their being taken into slavery. What would we do if someone offered us the choice between taking our children forever, or converting to Islam?

I am reminded of the early martyrs who walked with their children into the Coliseum, all the while exhorting them to be faithful to Christ, singing hymns and praising God. We know what keeps a Christian going in times of trial - their faith - but none of us have been called to rely so heavily on our faith. Our martyrdom is being stoned with popcorn. Theirs is life and death.

I am not suggesting that we go look for suffering and

martyrdom, for that would be a sin. But I do hope we hold these admirable Christians up in our prayers and praise God for their faithfulness.

Almighty God, we cry to you on behalf of our suffering Christian family in Nigeria.

We especially remember families who are grieving today: be for them a father to the fatherless and a defender of widows.

We cry to You Lord: bring justice and righteousness to Nigeria, give strength and hope to Your people, enabling them to shine as lights in the darkness.

In the name of Jesus we pray. Amen.



Fr. Gene Geromel is Rector of St. Bartholomew's Anglican Church, Swartz Creek, Michigan.

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Minimalism, an Ecumenical Possibility

By Fr. Donald P. Richmond

A recent discussion, sponsored by *First Things* on “The Future of Protestantism,” has generated many important considerations. During one of the exchanges between the Rev. Dr. Peter Leithart and Rev. Dr. Carl Trueman, the latter questioned what appeared to be Leithart’s Christian minimalism -- a challenge which Leithart rejected. Upon hearing this exchange, especially Trueman’s inquiries, I had an immediate response: Why not Christian minimalism?

Indeed! Why not? Although I am not an historian, it seems that the Church has repeatedly rejected simplicity. Instead, and unfortunately, we have complicated the simple gospel of Jesus Christ. Out of fear, much like Eve’s, we have consistently added to God’s revelation. This inclination is not in keeping with biblical revelation as evidenced at the first Jerusalem Council, and suggests (albeit under different categories) ongoing Judaizing tendencies within the Church. That is, in other words, we have established dogmas that are not biblically justifiable (strictly speaking) and enshrined doctrines that tend towards isolation. The systems we have created smother God’s simple revelation and retards relationships. We have, as such, built walls and not bridges.

The first Jerusalem Council (Acts 15) asserts a principal that must be prioritized. Having converted to Christ, Gentile Christians were being told that salvation in and through Christ was not enough. Specifically, according to the “party of the Pharisees” (vs. 5a), they needed to keep the law and its expectations of circumcision (vs. 5b). After hearing a presentation by Paul and Barnabas, Peter asserted that the Gentiles should not be “troubled” by additions to the gospel of Christ (vss. 12 – 19) but should embrace certain basic

expectations. This “seemed good to the apostles and the elders and the whole church” (vs. 22); a position that had both theological and practical implications. Paul accepted and applied this emphasis upon minimalistic simplicity.

But the Church has not been so swift to assert such simplicity. Examples of this would, no doubt, fill a book. However, let me cite a few Socratic inquiries. Are Copts, because they reject all Councils, beyond the 3rd, truly not Christians? Are members of our Orthodox family not truly Christian because they venerate icons? Are monks not Christian because some of their historic teachings *may* lend themselves to “works righteousness?” Is the Latin Church excommunicated because of the *filioque*? Is the Greek Church excommunicated because of its rejection of the *filioque*? Is the Eastern Church excommunicated because a Pope said so? Are Luther and Calvin heretics because Latin and Eastern churches reject them? Are Anglicans heretics because at least one Metropolitan, or even an entire denomination, said so? The questions are endless, and more often than not reflect an unwise and impractical emphasis upon pronouncing “shibboleth” properly (Judges 12: 6).

To be sure, issues of orthodoxy and orthopraxy *do* matter. Essential shibboleths do exist. Theology and thought, liturgy and life, dynamically intersect. God IS interested in these things. Nevertheless, examples of hair-splitting exist to the point of producing baldness. And, by extension (pun not intended), the realization of our receding “hairline” has resulted in our applying a host of theological gels, goops, glues and sprays that render us ridiculous. Much of our Theology has become a sad yet obvious comb-over.

The question, among other questions, is “What is essential?” When Leithart was asked what his “Reformed Catholicism” would look like, his answers (no doubt tied to the schedule he had been keeping) were succinct yet scant. When offered, they were also far too broad (by and large) to be functionally applicable -- although his emphasis upon local communities, while limited and limiting, was well taken. As such, adding to a cacophony of voices, I will add my own limited perspective.

An effective Christian minimalism will be bounded by the following guidelines.

Holy Scripture will be acknowledged, asserted and upheld for what it is: The “inspired” (2 Timothy 3: 16) “word of God” (1 Peter 1: 25) to humans, from God, through humans (Hebrews 1: 1). It must be admitted, however, that problems exist among fellow Christians regarding both the nature of the Text and the number of books that are contained therein. In both cases, however, a reserved minimalism should be employed. Regarding the latter, ALL Christians embrace the 66 books of the “Old” and “New” Testaments. These should be firmly proclaimed. Regarding the other books, varying in number between Greek and Roman Christians, we



should have freedom to choose.

I, as an example, hold to an Anglican perspective: The other texts, known variously as the Apocrypha or Deuterocanonical texts, are good for edification but not for establishing doctrine. As such I would encourage their private reading -- as did Athanasius. It must be stated as well, regarding these 66 books, that the Church has uniformly accepted the Holy Bible as "authoritative" and imperative to life in Christ in all of its socio-psycho-pneumatic applications (2 Peter 1: 3). Regarding the former, the nature of the Text, it is sufficient that we acknowledge and adhere to these texts as the inspired written word of God that has practical authority over our lives.

Historic Creeds are central to an ecumenical authority, antiquity and apostolicity. They are not, as they are rooted in the Sacred Text itself, disposable declarations. I recall some years ago hearing a minister (I use the word loosely), after urging us to recite one of the Creeds, encourage the assembly to sit or stand according to our rejection (sit) or acceptance (stand) of this Creed's affirmations. Talk about misfiring "pistons"! As Christians we do not have an option on this matter. We either say "no" or "yes." If we say "no" to these assertions, we are not Christians. If we say "yes" (keeping in mind that these assertions reflect significant head, heart and "hand" changes) we are Christians. Please know that I am well-aware of the need to wrestle with questions and issues. Some people, at times, struggle with certain articles of faith.

As well, there is the unfortunate gloom of the *filioque* to be addressed -- which, thankfully, has begun (but inadequately) to be rectified in some corners of the Church. When I was first "Commissioned" in 1980 my certificate suggested that this document would remain effective as long as I upheld "the three articles of faith (the Apostolic, Nicene and Athanasian)" and "shall be found living and teaching in accordance with Holy Scriptures." This tri-fold expectation (believing...teaching...living) seems very reasonable to me, and I have found that such broad rubrics work well in a wide variety of denominational settings - including among those that are not, strictly



speaking, creedal. I am reminded by my friend, the Rev. Dr. Chris Alford of the Epiclesis Community, that the Creeds are models of minimalistic simplicity. Amen!

Catholic Practice is also critical to ecumenism. Admittedly this is a difficult concept to embrace. One problem, among many, is the issue regarding the nature and need of being "Catholic." My Roman Catholic friends assert an entirely Roman focus. My Protestant friends assert a far more "universal" application -- even to the point of changing the word "Catholic" to "Christian" in the Articles of Faith. Some of my other friends, drawing from both, assert a catholicity that profiles Vincent of Lerins' dictum, "that which has been believed always by everyone." Each of these positions has advantages and disadvantages attached to them. The "catholicity" folk, as an example, cannot entirely assume or assert a time when all Christians subscribed to an essential Vincentian Canon -- in its emphasis upon an all... everywhere... always experience. Roman Catholicism, on the other hand, will have a hard time asserting its claims to sole authority, antiquity and apostolicity. Similarly, my Protestant friends will need to account for their flat (quite accurately described) rejection of "Catholic" priorities and, instead, insist upon a tepid "Christian" qualifier. Properly understood, we are Catholic or we are not Christian. Christians must have distinct Catholic identifiers. As such, along with Holy Scripture and the Historic Creeds, a

viable and visible Catholic ecumenism will enthusiastically embrace biblical Sacraments. Baptism and Eucharist inform the day-to-day practices of committed Christians. While endless discussion and debate has been generated by the Sacraments, and their number, the Bible is quite clear about two. We are told in Holy Writ to be Baptized. We are told in Holy Writ to participate in Holy Communion. Both Sacraments, regardless of denominational nuancing, assign salvific importance to them (1 Peter 3: 21 and John 6: 53). As such, regardless of subtle nuancing, we cannot escape the biblical imperative attached to each.

Quite frankly I do not care one whit about sprinkling, pouring, dunking, transubstantiation, consubstantiation, or a whole host of other negotiable qualifiers. What I do care about is active, informed and transformative participation in them -- leaving each assembly, even within denominations, to embrace the practice(s) suited to them.

Moral Imperatives are also crucial to Christianity -- a word, frankly, to which I have some resistance. Our life in Christ engages "head," "heart," and "hands." Faith is not simply a matter of belief (although proper belief is important) it is a matter of behavior. Walking with God has certain moral expectations. If we *believe* in God, we must strive to *behave* accordingly. In other words, Scripture, Creeds, and Sacraments challenge us to live according to the calling of Christ

(Ephesians 4: 1 - 16). Christians do not get to do as they please. We are called to live in and by the Holy Spirit as a holy Catholic Church.

This has dynamic implications, and is found in the Apostles' Creed. Here we say that we believe in the Holy Spirit, under whose creedal and practical subheading exist the *Holy* (my emphasis) Catholic Church, the communion and saints and the forgiveness of sins. These affirmations are not arbitrary. It is not as though the composers and compilers, having arrived at the doctrine of the Holy Spirit, were scrambling as with an Appendix to draw their thinking to a swift but carefully notated conclusion. No! To be a *Holy* Catholic Church, who lives by the power of the Holy Spirit, will have dynamic impact upon our communion and upon our need to live lives of radical forgiveness. Our behaviors are not afterthoughts of our beliefs -- they are inherent to them. To believe in God, as well as in each of the other creedal affirmations, places behavioral expectations upon us that dynamically intersect (and at times interfere) with the lives of other people. Morality is critical to a Catholic ecumenism.

The forgiveness of sins, for many reasons including "the life everlasting," is where a robust Catholic ecumenism must begin. And, sadly, it must begin with me. Near my community is a church that appears to be enjoying some evangelistic success. Their numbers are very high. Their programs are expansive. They do "good work" in our communities. However, when they are mentioned to me, I have frequently

referred to them as the "Jesus Lite" church. This was and is not a holy response.

It is not, properly speaking, a "spiritual" response. It is, quite frankly, biblical slander. Thank God for a brother who challenged me regarding my attitudes and actions! And maybe that is what we should do for each other. We could all use a good challenge to our pet doctrines, arrogant assumptions, bold assertions and militant dogmatism about the non-essentials. Leithart is correct: We need each other as communal and Christ-centered correctives. (And, as Leithart also noted, we will have a lot to discuss.)

The Eucharistic Expectation provides a fitting conclusion to these thoughts. In 1 Corinthians 11, the setting of which is a divided Church, St. Paul's review of "The Lord's Supper" calls us to serious personal and social reflection (vs. 28). His warning, not to eat or drink in an "unworthy" manner, is chilling (vss. 27 and 29). I think most Christians are aware of Paul's cautionary statements. Unfortunately we all-too-frequently apply them personally, but not socially. We acknowledge, and seek to rectify, our personal guilt -- but fail to do the same regarding our denominational guilt. We prohibit Christians who share a basic faith and practice, a "mere Christianity," from the Table because they do not speak "shibboleth" with the same denominational accent. What nonsense! What sin and unmitigated arrogance! Is it not enough to say, and agree upon, that we affirm what Jesus and St. Paul said about Holy

Communion? It is, according to both, "body" and "blood." Let us not get lost in a tangle of misguided philosophies and denominational qualifiers. It is simple: Do we or do we not accept what the Bible says about the Table? This same simplicity might be applied to a great many other theological issues that we have systematized and philosophized out of all practical reason or usefulness.

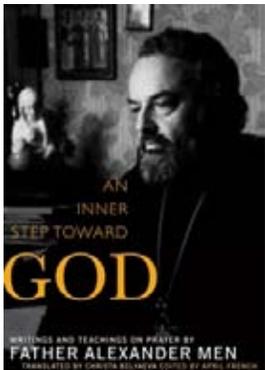
If we Christians are serious about the foundation of our faith and practice, Holy Writ, God's written revelation, maybe we should suspend all Eucharistic celebrations until such time as we are reconciled (Matthew 5: 24). No functional ecumenism = No Eucharist. I am quite aware of many of the difficulties with this proposal. I am well aware of the difficulties associated with confessional and denominational rewrites. History cannot be re-written, but much of it can be repented of. Come let us reason together. No functional ecumenism = No Eucharist.



This article does not necessarily represent the views of Forward in Faith. We invite your response.

The Very Rev. Dr. Donald P. Richmond, a Priest-Oblate with the Reformed Episcopal Church and Order of Saint Benedict, is a frequent contributor to Forward in Christ.

Reviews



An Inner Step Toward God: Writing and Teachings on Prayer

Father Alexander Men
Paraclete Press, 2014

Reviewed by The Very Rev. Dr. Donald P. Richmond, Obl. OSB.

Father Alexander Men was a priest, martyr, and master of prayer. Lacking time, and under a great deal of pressure, Men provided perceptive insights into both the philosophy (in

the best sense of the word) and practices of prayer. Knowing its primacy in Christian formation, Men articulated an accessible appreciation for prayer -- apprehended and applied.

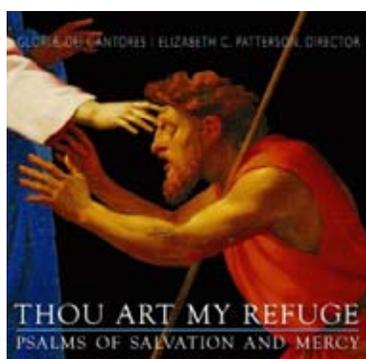
Part One, An Inner Step, discusses the personal and parish applications of prayer. The priority is established in Chapter One, and its applications from "sacramental encounter" are discussed in Chapter Two --- with emphasis given to the "Lord's Prayer."

Part Two, A Practical Guide to Prayer, provides poignantly practical tools for prayer. Included are his thoughts on preparation, place, posture and helpful practices. Spirit, structures and struggles are also discussed, with important attention given to the "Jesus Prayer."

Part Three, Prayer and Great Lent, is my favorite section in this book. I was most pleased that I received the text during this Season of the Church Year. Beginning with a meditation on the Prayer of Saint Ephrem of Syria, so very central to Orthodoxy, Men then gives guidelines for the "Observance of the Great Lent." Most useful, in this regard, were Men's words on the focus for each of these weeks --- providing an excellent framework for spiritual focus and formation.

Part Four, Prayer and the Communion of the Saints, centers upon selections from Men's sermons (or Homilies) on Prayer that capitalize upon certain Saints, Public Prayers and Personal Guidance. As well, in the Appendix (A - D), Men discusses certain exercises, catechetical considerations, and provides a "collection" of prayers referenced in the text itself.

More than a manual on prayer, *An Inner Step Toward God* provides sound and structured spiritual direction for those who want to convert liturgy into life.



Thou Art My Refuge: Psalms of Salvation and Mercy (2005);

He Has Heard My Voice: Psalms of Thankfulness and Hope (2007);

His Love Endures Forever: Psalms of Thankfulness and Praise (2008)

Paraclete Press

Reviewed by The Very Rev. Dr. Donald P. Richmond, Obl.OSB.

These three discs, celebrating the Psalms and utilizing Anglican Chant, form an auricular triptych. Each of the volumes, under the direction of Elizabeth C. Patterson and performed by the Gloriam Dei Cantores, communicates a progressive movement from repentance through renewal to a richer and far more robust relationship with the living God. They chronicle, as do the Psalms of Ascent (Psalms 120 - 134), the song-laden pilgrimage of God's covenant people.

Volume 1, Thou Art My Refuge, contain selections from the "Psalms of Lament." As is appropriate, the tone is somber and subtle. Both voice and music, albeit the music is minimal, communicates the depth of our need and the quiet

assurance of God's provision.

Volume 2, He Has Heard My Voice, centers upon and celebrates the provision of God. God IS faithful and we can trust in Him. Somber subtlety slowly shifts into certain celebration. Beginning with the natural world (Psalm 24), the audience is guided into an increased appreciation of God's supernatural intervention. That is, while "The Earth is the Lord's" (Track 1), and we must wait (Track 2), there is delight in God's presence (Tracks 3 - 4) and manifold provision (Tracks 4 - 19).

Volume 3, His Love Endures Forever, radically shifts our attention from our need (Volume 1) and God's provision (Volume 2) to God's Person (Volume 3). We now move from thanksgiving for what God has done to worship for who God is. This is an important musical and spiritual shift. As appropriate to such a shift, Psalm 96, "O Sing unto the Lord a new song," is the first track of the third volume.

Along with the diversity of composers and arrangements included in these Volumes, the Liner Notes provide an articulate and accessible history of Anglican Chant and, as well, thoughtful Meditations on each of the Psalms covered in this collection.

Upon listening to these discs, and reflecting upon the current state of Anglican worship, I am convinced that we are in desperate need of a "new song." This, of course, might apply to any ecclesial community that is rooted in tradition -- but whose eye is focused upon the future -- and who see the Psalms as critical to socio-psycho-pneumatic renewal. Many churches today are shrinking and, often, have little to no musical talent or training. I am certain that many of us have been in churches where a spoken service would have been far more effective (and efficient) than a sung service - considering, of course, the awful state of music and song in many assemblies. These Volumes, although likely not intended for this purpose, are perfect for these smaller congregations as a means for enhancing meditation, worship, catechesis and training. As well, being centered in the Psalter, they are very useful in our private worship by setting the tone for both Seasonal considerations and Self-reflection. (This is not to say, however, that these Volumes would not be of use in either moderately-to-large sized congregations or in Cell Group settings.)

Paraclete Press, rooted as it is within liturgical renewal and reform, has provided us with wonderful resources for personal reflection and congregational renewal.



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