



The Shepherd's Staff

***Newsletter of the
Diocese of the Western States***

December 2020

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Our King and Saviour draweth nigh: O come, let us adore him.

Forgiveness: words to live by.

In 1983 when teaching WW II history to a bunch of Gr. 10's I discovered that the text was O so dull. Put it away and brought in a number of Vets to talk to the kids and had others put their experiences on tape so that the classes could listen to them. Small groups were then asked to take some of the information and look up just where things were happening as far as that Vet was concerned.

Then I and the classes were fortunate to be able to listen to a 'Survivor' of Auschwitz whom I asked to come into the classes to speak of his 'life' in the camp. He showed them his tattooed # and the bullet scars on his leg and spoke of some of his experiences. Ninety students soo very quiet!

One bright lad at the end asked, "Sir, why are you doing this?" The elderly gentleman replied, "We are asked to forgive and forget. To forget I cannot because that is a part of me, of my history. But I would ask one thing of you: Please don't hate." Peter D. Sandercock +

A Sermon for Advent Sunday

OF ALL those present at Jesus' triumphal entry; I most identify with one. There were His apostles and disciples, and probably Mary, Martha, and Lazarus whom Jesus had raised from the dead. Members of Jesus' own family were probably there, with the Magdalene, and other close friends. Crowds shouted in excitement as crowds do at a commotion. And priestly officials and Pharisees came watching for opportunity to hatch their conspiracy to do away with this country prophet. But of all those we remember on Advent Sunday's procession to Jerusalem, I feel most like the donkey.

I am the one Jesus rode into town. If I can do just that, carry Jesus into the city as His beast of burden, I am content. I recently realized something about this colt. Jesus "sent two of his disciples, Saying, Go ... ye shall find a colt tied, whereon yet never man sat: loose him, and bring him hither..." Luke 19:28ff St. Mark reports the same thing: this donkey had never been ridden. Jesus was a carpenter, not a horse trainer, and His skills with animals hadn't been mentioned, but I think Christ's divine power made a young, unbroken donkey tame under the cloaks and sheets Jesus sat upon. With the commotion of crowds shouting and waving branches, it had to be a great test of that poor animal's obedience to Jesus that he bore our Lord to His destination. I'm proud of our little beast. That's me.

But hear the crowds. They are all of us, truly. What are they shouting? Praises of Jesus, for sure. "Blessed is the King who comes in the Name of the Lord." They also call out, "Hosanna to the Son of David." Hosanna means "save now." Their message was of hope, crying for a new day to dawn on Israel. Save our nation. Save our souls. Deliver us from darkness. For three years people had gone out to Jesus with their desperate needs. Heal my daughter. Deliver my son from a devil. Let me see again. Our friend can't walk. Cleanse us from leprosy. Still others had requested knowledge: What must I do to I be saved? Show us the Kingdom of God. Give us a sign.

From the day of Jesus' first showing Himself to the world, the world clamored for His wondrous and powerful gifts. His mother simply told Him, "They have no wine," and His fame spread. Before the end of the first chapter of St. Mark, Jesus is leaving town because He can get no rest, day or night, because of the throngs who are seeking something from Him.

The procession nears Jerusalem. The people's chants have risen in pitch and promise. He will save us! He is the King! Our lists of pleas go on and on, and we pray them in hopes that He will listen and comply. Our Litany gives form to many fervent concerns. Our procession to Christ's throne and altar comes with many requests, many urgent needs, unfulfilled hopes for our lives and the lives of the ones we love. Our litany. A litany is a form of prayer that consists of invocations, supplications, petitions, and intercessions, offered by a leader, with responses by participants. The sizable list of prayer concerns has led our language to use the word "litany" as a reference to any long (and tiresome) list of complaints: a gripe sheet, that simply enumerates the many causes of a belly-acher. Leaving that definition, the word "litany" is Latin, a word for prayer. There are many traditional litanies: to saints, angels, the Blood or Heart of Jesus, and many topics, some of which you may find in a little volume called "The St. Augustine's Prayer Book." Our Kyrie Eleison: Lord have mercy upon us, is a kind of litany.

Time and suffering might be a subtitle for a litany. We spend time, we do the work of prayer, we give up a sacrifice of caring for a broken world, over fallen fellow men and women, over a broken Church, over lost generations, our own prodigal children, a sick relative, natural disasters, human wars, general apostasy, the hold that Satan has on our world, the dangers of travel, the plight of prisoners, the many sick in hospitals, the homeless, fatherless, lonely, depressed and despairing, and those who under their loads have given up or lost faith. Our prayers make a difference, surely in the outcomes of many of these concerns. But even when they haven't done so, the prayers change us.

The change in the little donkey was remarkable. His disciples may have wondered at it, an unbroken steed, yet another miracle, and this one happening without comment, without notice: the donkey was changed. He humbly submitted to Jesus' sitting astride his back, and obediently let them lead him into a whirlwind of excitement, noise and controversy. But the little donkey trusted the Lord on his back. Perhaps a word of encouragement had been given by Jesus before the beast calmed down and let it happen, "I ask, my friend, that you let me ride you into the city, and I promise, in the end, to return you home again to a good supper and security. Just allow me to get on you now, okay?"

Okay, I said.

+PFH

2021 Ordo Kalendars

The 2021 Ordo Kalendars have been prepared, printed and are available for immediate purchase. The Ordo Kalendar conforms to the 1928 Prayer Book and both the American and Anglican Missals. The Ordo Kalendar is in full color and edited for Church use by Father Matthew Weber of Saint Ann's Chapel in Palo Alto. Direct inquiries to Mrs. Nona Gourley (209) 862-2582 or email: order1928bcpcalendar@gmail.com. Ordo Kalendars are not only a necessity for every sacristy but good advertising for visitors. Mail them to shut-ins. Have them available in the narthex. Give them away. They are the cheapest advertising I know.

Visitation and Confirmations at Saint Paul's Missionary Chapel in Newman CA



On November 14th, the Feast of the Bestowal of the American Episcopate, Bishop Ashman traveled to Newman CA and confirmed Paul Antone Christensen and Katherine Elizabeth Christensen (the granddaughter of Nona Gourley), after which Father Larry Shaddix celebrated the Holy Communion. The two left pictures show the Laying on of Hands. The upper right picture shows Bishop Ashman, Paul and Katherine Christensen, Father Larry Shaddix and Robbie Messer. The middle right picture shows the reading of the Comfortable Words after the General Confession. The bottom right picture shows Father Shaddix reciting the Decalogue.

Some Thanksgiving Season Reflections

The gracious hour for thanking Almighty God is a festal time which permeates the season. What follows are reflections from my Quaker and Anglican roots and childhood and the symbolism that they provide us during this time of pestilence. Set an extra plate at the table for Our Lord Jesus Christ; for he is guest of honor at Thanksgiving and always: or he is with us always and it is meet for us to give hearty thanks. Indeed, our earthen tables are extensions of the Churches altars. For the very word Eucharist comes from the Greek word for giving thanks. And our altars are extensions of the Heavenly Banquet mentioned in the Parables. At this hour we should hunger after the Holy Eucharist with every fiber of our being. For in the Holy Eucharist we are fed in at the Heavenly Banquet with the Body of Christ.

It is appropriate that hosts take Our Lord's example of service and seat the guests first. Likewise, we are to prefer others in the distribution of the table's bounty. For in this act we remember the needs of others including the poor and all those we did not invite to partake with us. For these acts we are well assured of a place set for us at the Heavenly Banquet. Nor disparage the dinner for its paucity. And thank God for all that we have. Nor disparage and fret over this year's lack of guests or for our loneliness. For Lazarus was once poor and lonely and now is in the arms of Abraham while we languish in self-pity. Remember all the lonely and call them. So, shall we be received of Christ at the Heavenly Banquet. And let us not spurn the needy and homeless for they surely will be preferred before us at the Heavenly Banquet. Nor despise other sinners or folk we detest, for we will see them again in Heaven while we fume in feigned self-righteousness.

For our Heavenly Lord extends his gracious invitation to all the Baptized. Likewise, then it is appropriate for us to give thanks. For our tables are but shades of our altars whereon we offer our humble thanks, our Eucharist. And our tables and altars are extensions of the Heavenly Banquet. Round about gather all the Baptized: The living and the dead as the swell the chorus with the angels and saints. Therefore, let us also give thanks.

Robert H. Greene+

Anglican Church Women Notes

Thanksgiving has come and gone, and now we enter the new church year with the season of Advent. We look forward to the wonder of Christ's Nativity and to his Second Coming.

I grew up in England, and in my family, we had a tradition on Christmas Eve. We would all be racing around, cooking, decorating, wrapping presents, but at 3pm we gathered around the fire, and turned on the radio for the annual Festival of Nine Lessons and Carols from Kings College, Cambridge. As the first clear soprano boy's voice began "*Once in Royal David's City*" we were transported into the true meaning of Christmas. We listened to the familiar lessons of the fall of humanity, the promise of the Messiah and the birth of Jesus, and heard the beautifully sung carols, both familiar and new. We forgot about the worries of our world and rejoiced in the promises we heard. Many years have passed since I spent a Christmas in England, but I have always had a recording or a tape or a CD of King's College Festival of Nine Lessons and Carols which I play on Christmas Eve to bring me back to the true meaning of Christmas. This year, many of you will not be able to celebrate Christmas at your church but will be able to follow a service on Zoom or Facebook or YouTube. You can also follow a service of carols and readings that Bishop Ashman will have on Zoom on the Sunday and Wednesday evening before Christmas.

On a more mundane subject, a new year means that shortly 2021 ACW Dues Notices will be sent out. Please fill out the forms with your officers and return them with your checks before the end of January, so that Nona will have current information for our ACW Handbook. Remember that ACW Dues are mandatory, even if your church does not have an active ACW Chapter. Wishing you all a very blessed Christmas and praying that in this new year we will all be able to come together again.

Gillian Golden, President ACW-DWS

News from Saint Joseph's Seminary

Bishop Hansen's class in Church History, Canon Jones' class in Spiritual Discernment and Bishop Ashman's Third Semester Greek class will be concluding. Next semester the Bishop will offer Fourth Semester Greek. From January 5th to March 16th there will be a mixed class for postulants, clergy, and laity, *Historical Theology Made Simple* and from April 13 to June 15 there will be a Deacon's Practicum class for all current deacons and postulants. Finally, a one semester Latin *Bible Reading Class* can be offered, designed with easier passages for enjoyment as much as for academic prowess and understanding the Scriptures.

Starting in September 2020, three classes will be offered. Bishop Blair Schultz will teach an expanded yearlong class in the Book of Common Prayer. Archbishop Upham will teach Ecclesiology in the Fall and Ecclesiastical Polity in the Spring (2021). And Bishop Ashman will teach Greek Five and Six.

We are deeply indebted to our Librarian, Mrs. Carol Karcher (right), who is in the process of cataloging and organizing the stacks of the library. She has worked tirelessly in establishing a computer database based on the Library of Congress organization system so volumes can be found easily and efficiently when needed. The Seminary library has needed this for a long time. Thank you, Carol!



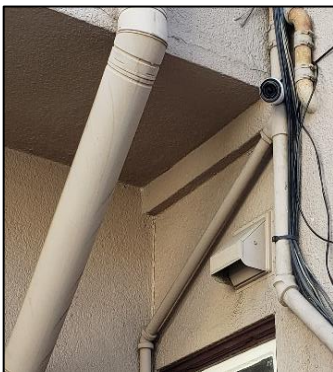
Finally, under the chairmanship of Bishop Blair Schultz, the Archbishop and the Council of Bishops have established a Provincial Board of Examining Chaplains, whose main function is to develop a rotating system of standardized ordination exams for our Provincial Postulants, both for the Diaconate and the Priesthood. This Board will in no way replace the Diocesan Boards of Examining Chaplains who will continue to be responsible for all Postulants in their respective Dioceses. In addition to Bishop Schultz, the Provincial Board of Examining Chaplains will be composed of Fr. Michael Mautner, Dr. Paul Russell, Dr. J. Albert Starr, and Canon Ben Jones.

Bishop Morse Hall

The Saint Joseph of Arimathea Governing Board met on Wednesday, November 18 and among its regular business items, the motion was made and passed to rename the Bowditch House (at the corner of Bowditch and Durant in Berkeley) as Bishop Morse Hall, in order to honor our founder whose vision was to train men for Holy Orders. Bishop Morse Hall (or Morse Hall) is a part of the Saint Joseph Chapel Complex that also includes a back residential house (The Back House) and Saint Joseph of Arimathea Seminary Chapel.

Physical Improvements at Saint Joseph's Seminary and Chapel

On November eighteenth and nineteenth, the Saint Joseph Chapel Complex underwent a long overdue technological upgrade, falling into two areas. First, security cameras have been installed which will cover the entire property (Morse Hall, the Back House, and the Chapel itself) twenty-four hours a day, uploaded into the cloud with industrial battery backup in the event of power outages. Second, the internet connections and access points have been upgraded and placed behind a secure firewall (The students and non-authorized guests will be in front of the fire wall; able to use our system, but must use their own security, if given appropriate credentials). These measures will not only greatly reduce the possibility of hacking and phishing but also provide much needed higher quality reception for our Zoomed services at Saint Joseph's Chapel.



Well Done Thou Good and Faithful Servant

When God needs me, I am ready to Go RJP+



On Advent Sunday, November 29th, Father Robert J. F. Ponc went home to Our Saviour. Eternal victory for him but a great loss for us. *Requiescat in perpetua pace cum angelis!* Earlier this year, Father developed sepsis from an unknown source, and had been hospitalized a couple of times. He was at home and his doctors had planned other tests to determine the cause of the infection.

Father was born in Omaha in 1952 and married his high school sweetheart Debra in 1977. They were true and loving soulmates for 43 years. Robert trained for his service to Holy Orders his entire life and began as an acolyte at St. Martin of Tours Episcopal Church. He served as Junior Warden at age 19 and later as Senior Warden for several years. In 1999, he began study for the diaconate in the Anglican Province of Christ the King (APCK) and was ordained a deacon in 2000 and a priest in 2006. Fr. Ponc was a classmate of Bishop Blair Schultz at Saint Joseph's Seminary, Vicar of Saint John the Baptist Church in Omaha (which he established in 2007) and had been nominated as Bishop Suffragan of the Diocese of the Western States.

One of his nieces said A niece stated, "Uncle Bob never wanted to press for accolades, he served in the background...whether it was cooking for a crowd or making sure that everyone had a good time with one another. He was truly a servant leader." Deacon Ron Reno said that Father Ponc wore the love of God on his shoulder and all that were around him knew that he was a God-fearing man.

TOWARD EVENING

***And now the sun sinks toward the west;
The first lay pointed shadows long upon the grass,
Not in fear that darkness soon shall come but pointing
to the East whence tomorrow's sun shall come....***

***And so it is with age; the sun of life lays long the memories of years now spent.
Not all is as it should be or as I would it were.
There are dark shadows there where all should shine.
But yet I do not fear the dark that is to come,
For those same shadows point to the Risen Son.***
(Penned (?) by an aging priest, KLS.)

Dear Brothers and Sisters...

...of your charity, please pray for: Father Mike Mautner (Saint Peter's Oakland) who has tested positive for COVID 19. Yesterday, Father developed a fever of 102° and was taken to the hospital. Rough night but he is returning home today. He has underlying medical conditions, so prayer is especially desired. Connie Shepard, wife of Deacon Paul Shepard (St. Luke's Redding), who is undergoing continuing medical tests for continuing medical complications. Belinda McNeely who is (Deo volente) making a strong recovery from a nasty fall earlier this year. Deacon Mike and Susan Ruffino (knee replacement and stroke like symptoms). Susan was taken to the E R with severe abdominal pain yesterday and seven hours later was released to go home. [From the Atlantic States] Fr. Tom Mills (St. Andrew's FL) Ongoing health issues, Canon Mike Church (St. Thomas Aquinas AL) skin cancer, Tasha Clark - Recently diagnosed with COVID-19, Fr. Shannon Clark (Holy Comforter AL) - Recent hurricane Zeta blew down a tree which hit their carport and destroyed both their cars, as well as the family has now been exposed to COVID. [From the Southwestern States] Fr. Gordon Hines and his wife Carmela (St. George's Las Vegas NV) who both have been down with COVID-19 for over two weeks. Carmela, a nurse, is not as ill as Father whose fever spiked two weeks ago at 104°, but he is home and improving but the cough is still bad. Deacon Larry Anderson (VA), Deacon Ed Miller (WA) and Father Richmond Grant (MT), all retired from the Diocese of the Western States, feeling their age but good and faithful servants of God's Kingdom. And finally, please remember the repose of the soul of Father George, the dad of Father Richard Andrews (All Saints', WY) – and Father John Pennington (Saint Paul's Bend OR) who went to God in January.

The Final Word

(Screwtape to Wormwood, after Wormwood's "human patient" has been killed and has gone to be with God) *My dear Wormwood...You have let a soul slip through your fingers. The howl of sharpened famine for that loss re-echoes at this moment through all the levels of the Kingdom of Noise down to the very Throne itself. It makes me mad to think of it. How well I know what happened at the instant when they snatched him from you! There was a sudden clearing of his eyes (was there not?) as he saw you for the first time, and recognized the part you had had in him and knew that you had it no longer. Just think (and let it be the beginning of your agony) what he felt at that moment; as if a scab had fallen from an old sore, as if he were emerging from a hideous, shell-like tetter, as if he shuffled off for good and all a defiled, wet, clinging garment. By Hell, it is misery enough to see them in their mortal days taking off dirtied and uncomfortable clothes and splashing in hot water and giving little grunts of pleasure - stretching their eased limbs. What, then, of this final stripping, this complete cleansing? The more one thinks about it, the worse it becomes. He got through so easily! No gradual misgivings, no doctor's sentence, no nursing home, no operating theatre, no false hopes of life; sheer, instantaneous liberation.*

C. S. Lewis, *The Screwtape Letters*, Number 31

A Sermon for Advent Sunday

There is an old fable about an elderly man who was traveling with a boy and a donkey. As they walked through a village, the man was leading the donkey and the boy was walking behind. The townspeople said the old man was a fool for not riding, so to please them he climbed up on the animal's back. When they came to the next village, the people said the old man was insensitive to let the child walk while he rode. So, to please them, he got off and set the boy on the animal's back and continued on his way. In the third village, people accused the child of being lazy for making the old man walk, and the suggestion was made that they both ride. So, the man climbed on and they set off again. In the fourth village, the townspeople were indignant at the cruelty to the donkey because he was made to carry two people. The frustrated man was last seen carrying the donkey down the road.

We might smile but the fable makes a good point. If we try to please everybody, we please nobody and carry a heavier burden for ourselves. That heavier burden is a symbol for sin which (stop and think) is doing what the world wants us to do. The only person we need to please is God and the propers for Advent Sunday are designed to help us do just that. Consider the Gospel. Jesus the Saviour rides into Jerusalem not to please everybody but to do the will of his Father. He rides into the city much like a conquering hero. The people call out to him as the Son of David, the Messiah, who, they hope will kill Romans and restore the ancient kingdom of David and Solomon. But rather, Jesus enters the Temple and casts out the money changers and the salesmen who cheated the poor people and says, *It is written: My house shall be called the house of prayer; but ye have made it a den of thieves.*

Saint Paul in the Epistle is just as direct, and its concluding verses were made famous by Saint Augustine of Hippo. In his *Confessions* or autobiography, Saint Augustine says that as he walked in a certain garden, he was in agony and distress because of his inability to lead a good life. He kept crying how long would it be until he might live a good life and when would his depravities come to an end. Then he heard a voice, saying, "*Take and read! Take and read!*" He looked around and found a scroll of Saint Paul's writings on a bench in the garden and his eyes fell these verses: *Let us walk honestly, as in the day; not in rioting and drunkenness, not in chambering and wantonness, not in strife and envying. But put ye on the Lord Jesus Christ, and make not provision for the flesh, to fulfill the lusts thereof.* Saint Augustine said that he did not need to read further for the light of assurance had filled his heart.

The nonconformist minister and brilliant biblical commentator Matthew Henry (1662-1714) called these same lines "*a Christian's directory for his day's work.*" Like the fable, Henry reminds us that the only one we need to please is Christ; and it follows that when we love our neighbors as we love ourselves, we please Christ. It is then, I submit, that, like Saint Augustine, we see the light of God's assurance. Now we can't do this on our own. We are frail creatures burdened with the Original Sin of our first parents. So it is in the Collect for Advent, the one we repeat every day in Advent, that we petition God to give us his grace that we may cast off the works of darkness and put upon us the armor of light, so that when Jesus comes in the last day to judge the living and the dead, we may rise to immortal life.

The monk and mystic Thomas Merton understood both Saint Augustine and Matthew Henry when he wrote this prayer: *My Lord, God, I have no idea where I am going. I do not see the road ahead of me. I cannot know for certain where it will end. Nor do I really know myself, and the fact that I think that I am following your will does not mean that I am actually doing so. But I believe that the desire to please you does in fact please you; and I hope that I will never do anything apart from that desire. And I know that if I do this you will lead me by the right road though I may know nothing about it. Therefore, will I trust you always though I may seem to be lost and in the shadow of death. I will not fear, for you are ever with me, and you will never leave me to face my perils alone.*

+dma

"For to me to live is Christ, and to die is gain." Philippians 1:21.