

THE LION

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Message from the Rector

*“And let us consider one another ...
not forsaking the assembling of ourselves together...”*

Hebrews 10:24-25

Part 2

In my Rector’s message in the June/July 2017 issue of *The Lion*, I mentioned how in his book, *The Benedict Option*, author Rod Dreher offers not only a critique of the current state of our Western culture (in particular the Western culture of the United States), but also just how far the Church has imbibed in, and has now been shaped by, what he calls the “liquid modernity” of our Western culture, i.e. a modernity that changes so rapidly that the social institutions that make up our culture no longer have a chance to solidify, nor are those changes any longer either predictable or manageable. The reason for this, according to Dreher, is simple: with each passing year the traditional Biblical undergirding and boundaries of our Western culture have been thrown off, and we now find ourselves free-wheeling in whichever direction those unbounded cultural winds happen to blow.

Current examples of this abound. We now talk about things like alternative facts, gender fluidity, moral relativism, self-defined virtue, self-defined reality, and things like that; and the only constant seems to be change. Perhaps Heraclitus was right: Everything is in a state of constant flux, constantly shifting, constantly changing, and always becoming something other than what it was.

Unfortunately this restless unrootedness has made its way into the Church where many of us always seem to be on a quest for something new, something exciting, something novel, something interesting, something else. In other words, in our quest for self-fulfillment and self-satisfaction – egocentrism being one of the hallmarks of “liquid modernity – we move from place to place (i.e., congregation to congregation), looking for something new, exciting, novel, and interesting: what we are looking for is something else. Or, as I mentioned in my last article, we have turned the Church into just another commodity, just another consumerist experience – which is exactly what our “liquid” culture has formed us to do. We truly *are* “children of our age.”

While rootlessness may be one of the hallmarks of our Western society, it was nevertheless not something that was unheard of in St Benedict’s time. In the first chapter of his *Rule*, St Benedict describes those monks whom he calls the “gyravogue,” spending their entire lives going from place to place, always on the move in order to satisfying their always changing wants and desires, with no stability in their lives. They were, in effect, just like us, constantly seeking out some new worship “experience” when we become bored with the “same old thing.” The result, of course, is that we are never fully able to put down deep spiritual roots in one single place.

St Benedict’s solution to this is the vow of stability that each monk was – and still is – required to profess upon entering one of his monasteries. In a nutshell, what this vow of stability says is this: When you enter this monastery, plan on dying here because barring any very unusual circumstances, this will be your home until your death. Period, end of discussion.

And so it should be with the church.

Message from the Rector - Continued

Of course, there certainly are valid reasons that justify one's leaving one congregation for another; however, those reasons are far fewer than many of us, formed by our very consumerist culture, realize. For instance, we may leave a congregation over issues of heresy. That is certainly justification for leaving. Or we may leave for reasons of doctrinal change or a shift in our ecclesiastical outlook. Those might be reasons as well. But to leave over matters of taste, "boredom," inadequacy (i.e., are you *really* spiritually stagnant, or have you simply stopped feeding yourself?), personalities, a loss of personal focus (even though the church itself has maintained its focus on God), and so-forth are simply *not* legitimate reasons for abandoning one congregation for another. Or, as one Benedictine monk put it, "When a man first comes to the monastery, the first thing he notices is everybody else's quirks—that is, what's wrong with everybody else. But the longer you're here, the more you begin to think: what's wrong with me? You go deeper into yourself to learn your own strengths and weaknesses. And that leads you to acceptance of others" (p. 70-71). Only a commitment to stability, a commitment to place, can provide that level of spiritual maturity.

This idea of ecclesiastical stability is entirely counter-cultural in a society that has turned everything, including the Church, into a commodity, that commodity being an egocentric consumerist experience. And yet is it also one of the greatest contributors to our spiritual well-being. As Dreher puts it, "...a tree that is repeatedly uprooted and transplanted will be hard pressed to produce good spiritual fruit. So it is with people and their spiritual lives" (p. 65). It is stability, staying in one ecclesiastical place, that not only allows us to learn to live together and love one another, but it also anchors us in place in a world in which everything around us is in a state of constant flux. If we truly are going to put down deep spiritual roots, then like a tree we are going to have to stay in one place in order for those roots to reach deep into the soil. A commitment to stability anchors us in place.

In the next installment of this series, I will discuss one of the chief benefits of a commitment to stability: the development of a true sense of Christian community. Until then, may our Lord bless us in our continued journey to him.

Music Notes

Kathleen Knott, Music Director

Morning Song

Hymn 9 (1982 Hymnal)

During September the choir sang an anthem called "Awake, awake to love and work" which was based on the Hymn 9. The beautiful melody comes from *Kentucky Harmony* and is attributed to Ananias Davisson (1816). Some sources credit the tune to Elkanah Dare (1782 – 1826) who was a Presbyterian minister and musician.

The words of this hymn are especially meaningful and become more significant with some knowledge of the poet. The text is taken from Geoffrey Anketel Studdert-Kennedy's poem entitled "At a Harvest Festival" which was published in 1921 in *The Sorrows of God and Other Poems*. Studdert-Kennedy (1883-1929) was born in Leeds, England and was one of nine children of an Anglican vicar. He also became an Anglican priest and volunteered to serve as a chaplain to soldiers on the Western Front at the outbreak of WWI. While in the service he became known as "Woodbine Willie" because he gave out Woodbine cigarettes to the troops. In 1917 he received the Military Cross for crossing into no man's land to rescue the wounded. On his return from the war he became a pacifist and a social reformer who worked tirelessly for the poor and downtrodden.

Music Notes - Continued

The words of Hymn 9 have a buoyancy and optimism you would not associate with a person who had survived the trenches of WWI.

Vs. 1: Not here for high and holy things we render thanks to thee,
But for the common things of earth, the purple pageantry
of dawning and of dying days, The splendor of the sea.

Vs. 5: Come, let thy voice be one with theirs, shout with their shout of praise;
See how the giant sun soars up, great lord of years and days!
So let the love of Jesus come and set thy soul ablaze.

Synod Notes

Diocesan Synod

The 49th Synod of the Diocese of the Eastern U.S. of the Anglican Province of America convened on the morning of October 4, 2017 in Atlanta, Georgia. There were 50 clergy and 57 laity present to do the work of the Church. As of that date, the DEUS consists of 44 congregations with 3,373 members,

Reports from several boards, committees, and ministries were received. Fiscally, the diocese is in a very strong financial position, the budget for 2018 being set at \$342,604, with parish/mission pledges totaling \$356,040, leaving a pledged surplus of \$13,436. The budget was fully funded on the first pledge round.

Other reports of note:

The Board of Examining Chaplains, of which Fr. Ward has been a sitting member since 2003, met three times during the previous year, examining and recommending four men for ordination to Holy Orders, while 25 individuals are in the process for either ordination or for being set apart for the office of Deaconess. Fr. Ward, along with the other Chaplains, was reappointed by the Bishop to the board.

Our Domestic Missions Board reported that two missions, St Philip's Church in Blacksburg, Virginia, and St Peter's Church in Kingsport, Tennessee, are currently receiving support as a result of our Lenten Appeals. Both missions are being led by very capable and hardworking priests.

Three congregations are in the process of starting Christian schools, either on their own church property or in partnership with other like-minded churches in their community. All are being eagerly received by their communities.

The diocesan summer camp, held in the mountains of western North Carolina and lead by Fr. Michael Cawthon, Rector of St Michael and All Angels' Church in Charlotte, had 48 campers this year. They managed to completely wear out the 11 adults who served as camp counselors.

Provincial Synod

The 11th Synod of the Anglican Province of America convened on the morning of October 5, 2017, following the close of the DEUS Synod the day before. The province is comprised of 57 parishes/missions in three dioceses, served by 10 Bishops, 92 Priests, 19 Deacons, and 6 Deaconesses. Total domestic membership of the province equals 4,027, however this does not include the members of our global partners in India, the Philippines, Haiti, and our newest global partner, the Anglican Church in Ecuador (made up of 22,000 indigenous people in 33 congregations, served by 5 Priests and 5 Deacons).

Once again, many reports were given by various committees, boards, and ministries. Several of these will be highlighted in upcoming issues of *The Lion*. The province remains strong, both spiritually and financially, with a very sharp vision of mission and ministry for the future.

Synod Notes- Continued

Ecumenical Highlight

The highlight of this year's synod was the signing of a Concordat of Intercommunion between the Anglican Province of America (The Most Rev. Walter Grundorf, Presiding Bishop), the Anglican Church in America (The Most Rev. Brian Marsh, Presiding Bishop), the Anglican Catholic Church (the Most Rev. Mark Haverland, Archbishop), and the Diocese of the Holy Cross (the Rt. Rev. Paul Hewett, Archbishop). This concordat is the first step in what is hoped to be the eventual organic unification of these four provinces, as they have determined to walk together in Christian love, charity, and union as a witness to an increasingly fragmented world, not the least of which is an increasingly fragmented Church. It is also hoped (and expected) that other like-minded Anglican jurisdictions will also join this movement towards unity. Union will take time, as many issues and details must be worked out; but with open hearts and the blessing of the Holy Spirit, we look forward to the day when we truly can answer the prayer of our Lord, "that they may be one."

Upcoming Holy Days

October/November/December

October 18 (noon) – St Luke the Evangelist
October 28 (10:00 a.m.) – St Simon and St June, Apostles
November 1 (noon) – Feast of All Saints
November 23 (10:00 a.m.) – Thanksgiving Day
November 30 (noon) – St Andrew the Apostle
December 21 (noon) – St Thomas the Apostle
December 24 (11:30 p.m.) – Carols and Midnight Mass (*with incense*)
December 25 (10:00 a.m.) – Feast of the Nativity
December 26 (noon) – St Stephen, Deacon and Martyr
December 27 (noon) – St John, Apostle and Evangelist
December 28 (noon) – Feast of the Holy Innocents

St. Mark's Anglican Church

Rev. Canon Michael L. Ward, SSA

Rector

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