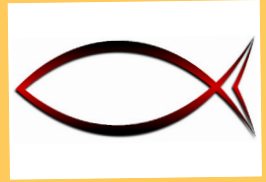




The Line

Convocation of the West

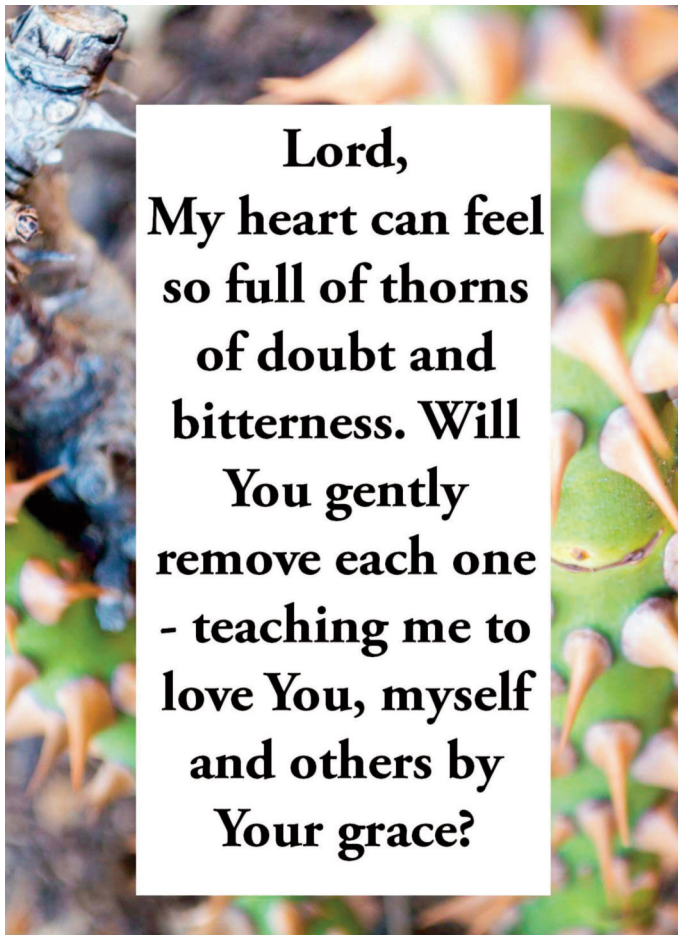


February 2017 Volume IV Number 2

Vicar-General Rev. Michael Penfield: mapenfield@earthlink.net
 Editor: Susan Peterson: smprp@sbcglobal.net

Hello Brothers and Sisters

As we are in our second month of a new presidency, we are still seeing a lot of division in our country. We need to come together and work out our differences in a peaceful manner. But first of all, we need to examine our own hearts.



**Lord,
 My heart can feel
 so full of thorns
 of doubt and
 bitterness. Will
 You gently
 remove each one
 - teaching me to
 love You, myself
 and others by
 Your grace?**

The Vicar's Venue

As many of you may know, I get up pretty early in the morning to work out at a gym near where I teach. This gym tends to attract a lot of people who work out before going to work, but it also attracts a fair number of ex-cons and homeless.

Right around the corner from the gym is a homeless shelter. For many people who cannot afford the rents in San Jose, but who still have a job, staying there is all they can do to survive. However, for a basic membership at my gym, which is \$15 a month, the homeless can come each morning and get a hot shower before going to work. But this also means that sometimes someone will show up who seems a little "off."

Well, the other day after working out, I went into the locker room to shower. I usually take a locker which is in one corner and which only has one bench big enough for two people. There was a young gentleman already in that area, dressing after showering. As I approached, I said hello and started to unlock my locker. He, in turn, started moving his stuff. At first, I was very impressed that this young man was making space for me. This doesn't often happen; I often





The Vicar's Venue (continued)

have to ask for space. However, I soon realized he was moving out of the area. I was a little taken aback and said to him that he really didn't have to move. He then launched into a whole lecture as to how I should have automatically moved.

Although I suspected that this gentleman might have had a condition like schizophrenia, he kept on repeating something that struck me. He kept on saying that if I were street smart, I would have known that since he was in the area first, I should have moved. I kept on thinking he didn't realize that, since most of us were in a rush to get to work and we all seemed to get to the locker room at the same time, we have learned to share. But then I decided that keeping my mouth shut was wiser. But this young man's comments touched on a subject that has been plaguing me for years. I fear that our society has been moving steadily away from civilization and towards a new barbarism.

I grew up in the 1960s. I was raised at a time when we were putting forth "The Great Society." Mankind was starting to conquer space and we believed, was becoming increasingly literate and civilized. Even our entertainment echoed this feeling. "Star Trek" was born in this era, precisely because of this great hope in the future. In the musical "Camelot," King Arthur is constantly talking about becoming more civilized. Somehow, somewhere along the way, we lost it. Our hopes for a more civilized world changed.

Being civilized soon was associated with being sophisticated and therefore hypocritical. Being down-to-earth soon moved into being less civilized.

It became cool to reject all the trappings of civilization. And then there was an unfortunate reaction to education.

In many of the poor, black communities, being well educated and well read meant that you were trying to "act white." In schools where they were trying to alleviate the discrepancy between boys and girls, they started stressing opportunities for girls, which is good, but in the process they seemed to forget the boys. Now young men associate being well educated with being effeminate and eschew it. Add to this both pop culture and hip-hop music, which glorifies the barbaric, and you begin to see a trend.

As a result, our society seems more violent and, quite honestly, more savage. Young men and women have so many tattoos and piercings that they seem to be from another world – a world of tribalism – which is foreign to a civilized society. However, more important than the look of our young people, is the actions and the attitudes of both the young AND the middle aged.

Both the young and the middle aged think of themselves in tribal terms. They divide the world between their group or tribe and the rest of the world. And they try desperately to preserve this segregation. They listen to specific news that supports their clan. They follow certain people who express their clan's philosophy. They think, live, love, and learn only within their tribal existence. And, lest we feel superior, this includes some Christian groups. The only question remaining is "to which group do you belong?" As a result, each group downgrades and demeans all others



The Vicar's Venue (continued)

who are not in their clan. The people within the group feel superior to those outside the group and feel entitled.

If you do not believe me, try a little experiment I have conducted for over a year. Walk down a street in your nearest downtown. See how many people step aside as you are walking in the opposite direction. I think you would be shocked how many people do NOT step aside to make room. They may have four people abreast and you are the sole person on the other side. I do not know how many times I have had to step aside to avoid being plowed over. Try another experiment. Listen to young people's music or look at any of their movies. Look seriously at what they glorify and what they mock. I think you will be shocked.

"So, what's your point?" you may ask. Are these just the musings of a curmudgeon? I hope not. My point is that western civilization is a direct result of our Judeo-Christian beliefs. And this Judeo-Christian belief is one that looks beyond the clan or tribe and sees all men and women as our brothers and sisters. As Saint Paul tells us, *"There is neither Jew nor Greek, there is neither bond nor free, there is neither male nor female: for ye are all one in Christ Jesus"* [Galatians 3:28].

Christians should be able to see two good people – one liberal and one conservative – trying to solve the same problem based on their Christian beliefs, but coming up with different solutions. They should NOT see only that one is in their tribe and one is outside of it. In other words, all Christians should be able to respectfully listen to and be open to opinions which are not

of their particular group.

Sharing and respect for others, especially the weak, are an intimate part of both the Old Testament Law and the Gospel of our Lord Jesus Christ. Being aware of others and of their needs is a necessary part of being a good Christian. Pride, arrogance, self-centeredness and self-absorption are anathema to Christianity and should be treated as such. Therefore, if we are seeing the birth of a new barbarism, we can rest assured that Christianity is on the wane in our society.

We need to be aware of this for it helps us in our evangelism. We are now in a post-Christian world. We can no longer depend on a common framework or language. We cannot depend on others understanding why we act the way we do. And we need to be able to explain it when asked.

For many years, it has been hard to evangelize in California. This has been in part, a result of this area being "inoculated" against Christianity. Many people are taught just enough to mistrust Christianity without really knowing about what it truly is. But, there is hope. Today most of the young people haven't even received this inoculation. They have no knowledge of Christianity, and therefore are more apt to be open to its message.

We Christians are called to be a light to the world. We are to live good Christian lives so that others begin to see that there is something quite different in us. And part of what it means to be a Christian now is to be a beacon of Civilization, as well as a beacon of Christian love. And this means that we must show true Christianity by



The Vicar's Venue (continued)

acting civilized to those with whom we disagree.

It is our duty to show forth what it means to be Christian without being judgmental of others. We must welcome the young, regardless of their piercings and tattoos. And we must do this so that they may begin to see what it means to be truly Christian – being part of something much larger than a tribe; being one of God's children.

Of course, some will hate us for what we believe. They will deride us and call us names. Others will be attracted, and God willing, come to love our Lord Jesus Christ. But ultimately, all of this is in God's hand. And with God's help, we can preserve both our faith and our civilization as we move forward in this uncertain time.

May God grant you all peace and strength. Amen.

The Rev. Canon Michael Penfield
Vicar-General of the ACW



Parish News

Upcoming Clericus 2017

The Anglican Convocation of the West will be holding their annual Clericus in Mesilla, New Mexico, **April 18th through the 20th**. Registration forms can be obtained from the Convocation's web sight. Our guest speaker will be the Right Reverend Stephen Scarlett who was at our Synod held in Reno, Nevada. The good Bishop will be speaking on spiritual formation and evangelism.

Please have the proper registration forms to our Vicar General by **March 18, 2017**. Fees can be paid either in advance or at the time of registration.

Please make checks payable to "The Diocese of the West," as our "dba" has not yet been established.

This promises to be an excellent Clericus. We hope to see you all there!

Upcoming Synod

The Missionary Diocese of All Saints will be holding their 2017 Synod in Ocean City, Maryland in March. Since this is our first Synod in the MDAS, Vicar General Michael Penfield is calling on all our churches to attend. Additionally, **the Anglican Convocation of the West will be holding their Meeting of the Convocation at the same time and the same location.**

The Synod is March 23 through March 25. Our meeting will be the morning of March 23. This means that those members of the Convocation





Upcoming Synod (continued)

who will be attending need to **arrive by the evening of March 22.**

Please notify Gloria Dzambo at Holy Trinity Cathedral of your intention to attend our meeting. Registration and fees need to be received **by February 19, 2017.**

Please notify **Vicar General Michael Penfield** of either your intention to go or NOT to go by February 28th.

We hope to see you all there!



Parish News (continued)

The Old Testament Prophets

(The third in a series of short articles on the prophets)

Some of the most astounding prophecies in scripture are found in the Book of Daniel. There we find the words the angel Gabriel spoke to Daniel predicting the precise day Jesus would enter Jerusalem in glory, and an outline of end-time events.

Daniel, a Jew in exile with his people, and servant in the court of the king of Babylon, studied the writings of Jeremiah. It became clear that the

propheesied seventy years of servitude to the kings of Babylonia would soon end. (Jeremiah 25:12-14) Daniel began praying for his people. The angel Gabriel interrupted his prayer and spoke a remarkable four-verse prophecy (Daniel 9:24-27).

It is critical to understand the particulars of this amazing prophecy, already partially fulfilled. The four verses include: 9:24 - the grand scope of the prophecy; 9:25 - events of the first sixty-nine weeks of years, to include the time of Jesus' triumphant arrival in Jerusalem; 9:26 - the interval between the sixty-ninth and seventieth week of years, the period where the "great and terrible" Day of the Lord.

It is important to understand the phrase "weeks of years." Well understood by the people at the time, it pertains to the Sabbath of the Land required by Mosaic Law. Harvested land was to lay fallow every seventh year, resting just as humans were instructed to rest on the seventh day. Israel's failure to observe this law caused God to send the nation into captivity under the Babylonians (Leviticus 25:4-5).

The seventy weeks of years (seven days x seventy years) spoken of by Daniel equals 490 Jewish calendar years of 360 days each. Four hundred and eighty-three years (the first sixty-nine weeks of years) have passed. History is now positioned in an interval preceding the start of the seventieth and final week. The beginning of that seven-year period (one week of years) will mark the end of the Church Age.

The focus of Daniel 9:24 is on "your people and





Parish News (continued)

upon your holy city.” That is, the people of Israel and Jerusalem, not the Church as some scholars argue. The scope of the complete prophecy includes a series of events that must take place before Christ returns...” to finish the transgression and to make an end of sins, and to make reconciliation for iniquity, and to bring in everlasting righteousness, and to seal up the vision and prophecy, and to anoint the most Holy. (9:24)

The prophecy is mysterious to many and greatly misunderstood by others, but an understanding is basic to comprehending the Book of Revelation and the Second Coming. Will the events of the final week occur as Daniel prophesied? The test of any prophecy is the accuracy of its fulfillment. The first sixty-nine weeks of years occurred exactly as Daniel foretold, to the precise day!

The fulfillment of his visions concerning the “Messiah the Prince,” in chapter 9, warrants careful consideration of the apocalyptic foresight outlined in later chapters.

It is rare to find mention of immortality and resurrection in Hebrew Scripture, with rewards for the righteous and punishment for the wicked. Yet, we find in one of the many visions in Daniel’s prophecy: “Many of those who sleep in the dust of the earth shall awake, some to everlasting life, and some to everlasting shame and contempt.” (Daniel 12:2)

The Jewish people failed to heed Daniel’s writings and prepare for the appearance of the Messiah. In His final week on earth, Jesus rebuked them for not understanding the full meaning of

Daniel’s prophecy and applying it to Him (Luke 19:41-44). As He looked over the city from the Mount of Olives, Jesus wept and foretold the terrible times that must come upon Jerusalem, the temple, and the people for their failure to understand Scripture and the time of His visitation.

David Cole, St John’s Anglican Church, Boerne, TX

Parish News (continued)

Sin is no longer trendy. If you tell people who don’t go to church, namely, the majority of Americans, that they are sinners, they will likely laugh and note your backwardness. Sin may have been part of their grandparents’ world, but that was long ago.

Most of these nice people will admit they are not perfect. But they fail to see any theological implications to this. They will assert they are doing the best they can, and believe that is pretty good. End of discussion, except to mention they can’t stand intolerant church people who judge them with some very fallible standards, and are hypocritical besides.

Sin has not diminished, of course. But a new generation is unaware of what it is about. Indeed, in a different way, the old generation was unaware too. This relates to what many churches taught, and still teach about sin. Sin as discussed in American churches has generally been specific, referring primarily to sexual issues, including abortion and homosexuality, but with drinking added by some. Gambling and missing church used to be prominent, but have faded. Trendy churches have adjusted, and rarely mention sin



Parish News (continued)

at all. Non-trendy churches often retreat, and try to live as if it were still the 1950's, content to limit themselves to reaching the mostly elderly folks who can still relate to the old generation's stereotypes of sin.

In church, many would define the Ten Commandments as the best statement of what constitutes good Christian behavior and conversely what is sinful. Few suggest keeping the entire Law, or have even read it, although some use it selectively to bolster moral imperatives to which they are committed.

The problem is that the Ten Commandments are open to more than one interpretation. Jesus, who is not frequently consulted on this, has a radical view which scandalized many of his contemporaries and might startle many of ours. The view goes in two directions:

1) No one can keep the Law, or even the Ten Commandments. Those who claim they can, do so only by defining it so their behavior can fit. But for Jesus, it is very all-encompassing. To be angry breaks the commandment "Thou shalt not kill." To have lustful thoughts is to commit adultery. Loving your neighbor includes loving your enemy. The list goes on, our failure is clear (see Matthew 5:17-48).

2) Two Commandments are basic, defining the others; you shall love God and you shall love your neighbor (Matthew 22:36-40). When questioned about the latter, Jesus tells the story of the Good Samaritan, which teaches that everybody is your neighbor. "On these two commandments depend the whole Law and the Prophets." Love God and neighbor perfectly, and you have kept the Law. Fail to love God and

neighbor, you have kept the other laws in vain.

If you want to take Jesus seriously, understand that sin is defined as failing to achieve perfect love. The New Testament word translated as "sin" literally means "missing the mark (hamartia)," as in shooting an arrow and not hitting the bull's eye. The bull's eye is perfect love and you have failed to achieve it. Therefore, only the forgiving love and grace of God can heal and absolve you.

My impression is that few, in or out of church, live by that. The views I hear are mostly along the lines of trying to do your best, hoping to achieving a greater number of good deeds than bad ones, so that on balance, God will approve of you (if you are convinced of that, Buddhism is for you, not Christianity). "She/he was a good person," to summarize a hundred funeral sermons I have heard.

But it isn't true. The earth was created by the Lord entirely out of love. Goodness is entirely in achieving perfect love, since it is still the basic operating principal of the earth. And none of us achieve perfect love in a broken world. The harmony of earth's perfection has been broken by the rejection of love, nothing else. But nothing else matters if there is no love. Only the sacrificial loving act of the only one who can achieve it, can fix us, which is why it is called grace.

Where do we begin then, to help people recognize the unique purpose of love motivating the creation of earth, and of us? How do we convey that it is God's nature? How do we show that



Parish News (continued)

the Cross is there because we cannot fix this ourselves, that we are totally, helplessly, radically dependent on the grace that flows from it?

We probably need to start with a moratorium on the word “sin” until it washes out of the popular consciousness that it isn’t about sex, taboos or drinking, or judgmental hypocritical Puritans who condemn others while ignoring their own failings. Using the New Testament concept of “missing the mark” would do. Modern man does understand that. It should include the Matthew 25 understanding that not helping those in need, that having avarice, greed, usury, and coldheartedness, is missing the mark, as is ethnic prejudice, violence, arrogance, self-righteousness and indifference. To be a poor steward of the Lord’s earth is also a prominent failing seen by the modern environmental movement, as well as by Jesus.

The irony here is that the children of this world often have a better handle on what is wrong with it, and better priorities on what needs fixing than the children of the Church. For instance, the environmental movement, despite some of its fringe crazies, cares about the Lord’s earth, even if some haven’t recognized who created and owns it. Surely Christians should be in the forefront of protecting God’s creation, and proclaiming the ultimate purpose, in God’s love, of the stewardship to nurture it.

We are coming soon to the watershed summit between Epiphany, the conclusion of the Nativity cycle, and the three (neglected) “gesimas” which begin the preparatory flow through Lent to Easter. There is no better moment to reflect

on the human condition. The circumstances of mankind’s failure rise anew every morning in a profusion of dysfunctional behaviors. The term for them is unimportant. Accurately recognizing the reality and enormity of them is very important. Fallen man, and the global and personal consequences thereof, is as real as the evening news. To gloss over the immensity of the failure is to live in dangerous denial. To realize the failure of both mankind and self is the beginning of the journey, through the Cross, to the Resurrection joy of Easter, the solution prepared in love for us.

The Right Reverend Winfield Mott



Hint of Humor



Prayer Requests

Pray for those who have suffered as a result of recent storms in our country.

Pray for peace and unity in our country.

Pray for those being persecuted for their religious beliefs.

Pray for those confined to hospitals and nursing homes and those caring for them.

Pray for the Bishops and leaders of Christ's Church.



Parting Words



“Our prayers may be awkward. Our attempts may be feeble. But since the power of prayer is in the One who hears it and not in the one who says it, our prayers do make a difference.”

- Max Lucado

© MYBIBLE.CO