



The Shepherd's Staff

*Newsletter of the
Diocese of the Western States*

May 2019

The Right Reverend Donald M. Ashman

A Sermon for Easter Day

One night a man came to the house of Mother Teresa in Calcutta and told her that there was a family nearby with eight children that had not eaten for days. So, the old nun took some food and went. When she arrived, she saw the faces of little children disfigured by hunger. There was no sorrow or sadness in their faces, just the deep pain of hunger. She gave the rice to the mother, who in turn divided it into two portions, and went out, carrying half the rice with her. When she came back, Sister Teresa asked her, "Where did you go?" She gave a simple answer, "To my neighbors; they are hungry also." Mother Teresa said that she was not surprised that the poor woman had shared her rice because poor people are usually generous. But she was surprised that that the woman knew her neighbors were hungry. As a rule, when people are suffering, they are so focused on themselves, they have no time for others.

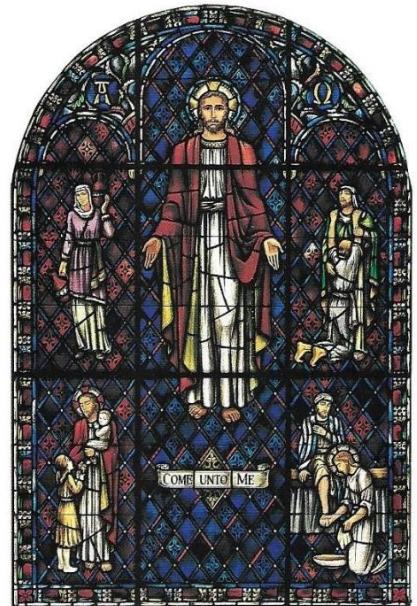
Easter cannot be separated from Christ's own public ministry, the events of Holy Week or the Ascension and Pentecost. They are all expressions of the unity which is God's love; the acts of Christ's Royal Priesthood which were not for himself but for his brothers and sisters. And four words kept racing around my mind when I read Mother Teresa's testimony: hunger, poor, generous and suffering. We almost always think of hunger in a physical sense (I'm hungry today) but hunger can also have a spiritual meaning such as a hunger for truth or a hunger for God. Just as physical hunger disfigures the faces of those children, in like manner spiritual hunger disfigures our hearts and souls. So, whether we are aware of it or not, we have a hunger for God that must be filled.

And the first step toward filling that hunger for God is poverty; not lacking money or possessions, but poverty of the spirit which really means humility; not thinking too much of ourselves. To have poverty of the spirit is to be like Jesus who raised Lazarus from the dead; who healed the sick and crippled out of compassion; and who willingly died for our sins without a murmur of protest. Jesus taught us that poverty of spirit means breaking the chains of materialism, status seeking and selfishness. Oh yes, and on Easter, his resurrection was not about what he or his Father did for him but about what he and his Father did for us.

And the second step toward filling that hunger for God is generosity. Mother Teresa said that poor people are usually the more generous. So, it follows that people poor in spirit and humble are generous. People who give of their time, treasure and talent are also the happiest people I know. I know a priest who, every Lent, gives of his time by calling an old friend or acquaintance and just talking. And I submit to you that the mite box is a symbol of treasure more powerful than the checkbook. And how many of us can say we have used our talents to help others; and this one often involves time as well.

Jesus was our example. Look at our altar window (at right). Jesus in resurrected glory, with his outstretched hands, invites us to take the time to talk to the outcasts (perhaps people we don't like) as he did with Samaritan Woman at the Well. He tells us to forgive the unforgivable as the Father forgave the Prodigal Son. He asks us to imitate him, the Lord of all, who washed the feet of his disciples. And he commands us to make time for children; and that means our spiritual children as well.

To suffer usually means to feel physical or emotional pain but it has an older meaning: to endure; to hang in there; or, in a theological sense, to hunger or to hang in there for God. Easter is a commemoration of that hunger for God, that endurance in the Faith: that Christ is risen. Easter is our celebration of the Christian verity: that Jesus Christ, true God and true man, prophet and priest, rose bodily and gloriously out of his grave and forever destroyed death and opened the gates of everlasting life. Easter is when we openly and unashamedly confess that, by our baptisms we are born again, and, by our own deaths we become inheritors of eternal life. Easter is the Queen of Feasts from which the Christian religion takes all its meaning and perspective. This is the day which the Lord hath made. Indeed, we will hang in there! We will rejoice and be glad in it.



+dma

Something to Think About

I once heard a wag exclaim, "I went to an Anglican Church once; it was full of old people and their parents." So many times, I have looked out at my aging parishioners and thought, "How I wish for the addition of younger families and children. Without them, how will we survive?" In my locale, our small church lives in the shadows of several very large Evangelical Churches. They are filled with young thriving congregations. The other day it occurred to me that they are not influencing our culture as much as the post-modern pop culture of our nation is influencing them. They are not houses of solemn worship but auditoriums and stages of entertainment, complete with rock bands, light shows, baristas in coffee niches, stage drama, and hype aimed at an audience that expects to be entertained. The worship, if we might even call it that, is experienced on a selfish emotional level. When not fulfilled, they proclaim that they are "not being fed."

But where are the elderly in those churches? Those who do not want the rock bands and light show. Those that seek to worship God in the beauty of holiness in the solemn liturgy of the 2000-year-old formula of the orthodox catholic church. They want to receive the Sacraments; hear the word of God preached to them. They are kicked to the curb. Another result of our present culture where the old and dying are viewed as a burden and having no value. We warehouse them in institutions where they so often are, for the most part, left to await their death. Yes, most of our continuing Anglican Churches are attended largely by elderly Christians. But do we ever consider that as priests of these churches we are exercising a ministry established by our Lord to this very special flock? We have been given the honor and privilege to enter their lives at a time their life on earth is running out. They live at the end of their years as people whose bodies are failing, many carry the emotional scars and pain inflicted by family, friends and a broken world; of unfulfilled hopes and dreams; of loneliness; Loss of a spouse and close friends, perhaps even the dreaded news from a doctor they have contracted a disease giving them a very short time to live. This is our charge. It is not just a ministry to them but to Christ Himself. I pray he will fill my church with his elderly and grant me the grace and wisdom to love and minister to them. +SDM

The Easter Vigil at the Parish of Saint Mark Portland



Upper Left, Blessing the New Fire
Center Left, Singing the Exultet
Lower Left, Litany of the Saints

Upper Right, Putting on Incense
Center Right, Blessing the Font
Lower Right, Kyrie and Gloria

Easter at Saint Luke's Redding



Flowering the Cross at Saint Peter's Oakland



Easter Dove Release at Church of Our Saviour Los Angeles





Left, Father Weber and acolytes on Easter Morning at St. Ann's Palo Alto; Right Saint Patrick's Westcliffe on Maundy Thursday

Anglican Church Women Notes

May is here already, and the blessed season of Easter is underway. Please remember to take your Lenten Boxes to your church, have the treasurer count the contents of the boxes and send a check for the total amount to Gillian Golden, Provincial ACW Lenten Chairman, P.O. Box 558, Selma, OR 97538. The proceeds benefit St. Joseph's Seminary Student Support, and participating parishes are remembered at the altar of St. Joseph of Arimathea Chapel. Maybe clergy from YOUR parish will be able to attend the Synod because of your support!

Speaking of Synod don't forget to buy your tickets for the ACW Drawings! We have a variety of items, and tickets are only \$2.00 each, with the proceeds going to support the Bishop Morse Youth Camp. See your church's ACW for the brochure, fill in tickets with your name, church and phone number, give the money and the tickets to someone who will be going to Synod, and maybe you will be a winner! This is such a great cause – we need to support our young people, who are the future of our church. We also have a drawing for an overnight stay for two, including tax, parking and breakfast at Lafayette Park Hotel & Spa, a \$340 value for only \$5.00 a ticket! The winner can stay any time between May 15, 2019 and May 31, 2020, so what are you waiting for? (make sure you put your name on both sections of the ticket, as the tickets are not numbered)

Seminary Summer Session

Plans are currently underway for the Seminary Summer Session. The primary purpose of the Saint Joseph's Summer Session is to assist men to prepare for ordination as deacons and priests in the Anglican Province of Christ the King – and to help deacons and priests continue to grow in their skills and vocations. The fees are the same as last year and some scholarship money is available, but to allow more students to attend the lectures and practicums at distance, we will make use the Zoom platform which we have used successfully for Seminary classes all year. One of our goals this year is to create the beginnings of a video library so that priests and deacons will be able to access visual instructional materials whenever they need.

(right, St. Joseph's Chapel, Easter Day 2019)



A Sermon for the Institution of Father Scott Herb

St. Bartholomew's WA

Father Scott Herb, your new rector, has just vowed some pretty serious promises and has prayed for those graces that none of us, by nature, may possess. Only by the grace of God. This is a sacred and holy moment in the history of this parish, and a giant step in this man's life of service for Christ. In fact, Fr. Herb is to stand in the place of Christ in this sanctuary, and I know he is humbled by the weight of it. That is good. It humbles us all. How dare we even attempt it?

In the final two prayers that he just offered, he first admitted that he is not worthy that God should come under his roof. That's a familiar phrase that we say ourselves just before receiving communion. It's borrowed from a Roman centurion who wanted Jesus to pray for his ailing servant's healing. Christ was willing to come, but the soldier knew the Messiah's prayers were enough, and besides, the Italian wasn't worthy of His visit. This man under authority recognized in Jesus a power from above Himself that would insure Christ's words would get done. And for that confession Christ said of him that he had the greatest faith in all Israel. Authority flows down. None of us is born with it, nor can we possess it in and of ourselves.



None of us is worthy. The inadequacy of any man wearing these vestments must now be obvious to the members of this parish, I'm sorry to admit. We come in clothes that anyone could buy from a catalog, yes even these shirts and collars, and we dress ourselves up in priest's garb, as holy shepherds, as a godly royalty.

We read our liturgies, offer the prayers, move our hands

meaningfully, read our sermons, play the part—but is anyone worthy of the honor we pretend to take to ourselves? Hardly. Yet it is our sacred honor, and our divine call to answer, and somehow to accomplish. Somebody has to. And God has called us. The technical term of Rector means a priest who leads, applicable to an Anglican priest in charge of a parish church. But a priest—beyond his administrative rights and obligations—what is it that he does? What makes him a priest?

Evangelicals will argue with our ordering men called 'priests' because all Christians are a royal priesthood. That's certainly biblical. I agree. But if I ask them what a priest is, I get blank stares. They start defining a pastor, a minister, an evangelist, or teacher, and of course, all of those things describe a priest's life. But the priest is unique in that he also offers the sacrifice that God has required on the part of the people of God. That sacrifice takes a lot of shapes and comes at many different times of all our lives. And the first sacrifice he offers is himself. In this, he is no different than any of you. St. Paul enjoins us all to "present your bodies as a living sacrifice, holy and acceptable to God, which is your spiritual worship." Rom 12:1 That's universal to all the people of God. For a priest, it's more so.

A priest baptizes our babies, and old folks as well, like 90-year-olds who have put this off. A priest at the font represents Christ and moves the invisible spiritual exchange that initiates every Christian into the Body of Christ through the washing away of sin, the indwelling of the Holy Spirit, and a spiritual rebirth, all in the Name of Father, Son and Holy Ghost. A priest prays these things, pours the water, makes a cross on the forehead, and enters our names into the books of the church.



A priest teaches the faith to both young and old. He learns how to express biblical truths so that everyone may grasp them and own them, even repeat them. He wants every soul to know enough of the Bible in order to catch him in any serious mistake, and humbly call him on it. That's what I tell my Bible students. Know enough to be able to catch any of my errors. And it's a priest's job to teach them.

A priest counsels and leads people in their life choices and decisions. Before a marriage, a priest spends time making sure this man and this woman are going to make a good commitment, fill the roles of man and wife in the righteous fear of God. And then he solemnizes their matrimonial vows by leading them and witnessing the marriage.

A priest presents mature candidates for confirmation by his bishop. He aids in a young person's taking the vows of baptism upon themselves, once they've achieved an age and understanding where they may no longer affirm their parents' religion, but embrace their own. He prays with and for his people, for strangers, for loved ones of his flock, for the sick, the aged, the suffering, the destitute, and for our hurting world. A priest prays as you also pray, but sometimes his prayers represent more than his own soul's cry.

A priest preaches the truth of the Gospel of Jesus Christ. It's not enough to tell us what the words are, or that history was being written, but what this means to us and how we are to live it out. And what he preaches, a priest needs to live himself. A priest hears confessions and pronounces the Lord's absolution. This is a sacrament that is not practiced among us often enough. If you've never given a priest your confession, you ought to make an appointment, before Lent is over, and find out how relieving it is that an everyday man in holy orders both understands every grimy detail, but has answers for each, and consolation, along with the forgiveness of God that is assigned to priests by Christ Himself.

A priest stands at an altar, offering up the bread and wine in the reenactment of Christ's last supper. Every occasion of the Holy Eucharist is like a spoke on a wheel whose center is that upper room and the twelve apostles with Christ at the table. A priest today stands offering bread then wine, with the words of institution and the manual acts of taking, breaking, lifting, and finally eating and drinking and administering the blessed sacrament. Communion is the quintessential priestly act, standing there in the place of Jesus, In Persona Christi, in the Person of Christ. When he gives you a wafer, offers you the cup, it's our Lord's hands in the priest's hands, giving Himself through a servant empowered to act on His accord. It's our Lord's words in the priest's words, our Lord's eyes in the priest's eyes, and our Lord's love in the love of a priest.

A priest visits the sick, often anointing them, often seeing them rise healthy again. But sometimes they meet their appointment with God instead, and a priest then comforts the bereaved and buries our dead. But not dead in truth: Jesus said it. Whosoever liveth and believeth in me shall never die. Jn 11:26
A priest is a priest not only to a finite membership of one parish, but is a priest to the whole city, even the region where he resides. Whatever God assigns him to insert himself into is his realm, his flock, his cure, and he represents the parish for the world. He is supposed to be active.

In my time in Chico, I have started and led a pro-life group, been a member of our hospital's bio-ethics committee, led pastors' groups, suicide prevention, and started and served in a police chaplaincy for 20 years. The people of our town see me as their priest, but that's what a priest does.

We stand in the place of Christ against what is evil in our day. We can't do everything; we have to get our assignments from the Boss. And when we are relieved of duty, we step down. But a priest is ordained for life and beyond, as Christ was and is in the order of Melchizedek. We offer the sacrifice of our lives, our time, our love, our knowledge, our souls, the Mass, with all the seven sacraments, to our Lord and to you. It's what we do.

I have had the honor of very briefly heading up this church as an interim priest-in-charge. In a month I already got myself fired, perhaps you'd say replaced. I am overjoyed. In taking this burden, I knew I was not worthy, but was appointed to stand in His House, twice to serve at His holy altar.

Fr. Herb just prayed, as again I commit to God, our service in body, soul and spirit, praying He will fill our minds with God's Law, our spirits with the genius of His Spirit, our hearts with His will, that we might be God's instruments to promote the salvation of His people and in all that we do, to set God's true and lively Word before all people.

That much and more have I vowed before, and do again. But not as a bishop – the bishop's vows are different. These are the prayers of a priest, and today you have one at St. Bartholomew's. My prayer is that Fr. Herb will live out his life here among you, share your joys and your griefs, learn deeply your lives and loves, join in the everyday miracles and once-in-a-lifetime divine appointments that tell us we're living in the narthex, the waiting room of a banquet hall further up and further in where the feasting goes on forever.

My prayers for St. Bartholomew's and its new rector, Fr. Scott Herb, are to live up to the Persona Christi. None of us is worthy of it, but he is called and God makes up the difference, and is present in His priests to do and enact His most holy will.

+PFH

- † Father Robert Ponec wants to express to the Diocese that he is humbled and honored to acknowledge that the Diocese has donated over ONE THOUSAND DOLLARS to the Nebraska flood Relief fund, with checks coming in nearly every day. Both churches and individuals have opened their hearts and wallets to this devastating disaster here in the Midwest, and he is thankful. However, bridges, dams and highways continue to collapse. THANK YOU, THANK YOU, THANK YOU.
- † Thank you to Father Bart Dellinger who is assisting at Saint Mark's, Victoria and to Deacon Mike Ruffino who travels many miles to take care of his newly founded mission of Saint Chad's in Colorado Springs and Saint Patrick's in Westcliffe seventy-five miles to the south.
- † Remember the Youth Camp, Sunday, June 30th to Friday July 5th. The location is at Warm Beach Camp & Conference Center, 20800 Marine Drive, Stanwood, WA 98292. The theme this year is *Keeping the Faith*. The fee is \$350.00 per person (adjusted for families). After June 1st, contact Bishop Ashman ASAP as space may be taken. Scholarships are available and as always, applications will be kept confidential. Please contact Bishop Ashman directly if you know of a camper that needs assistance: 818-749-8139 or bishopashman@gmail.com. And a THANK YOU to the ACW and the parishes who help fund our campers!!!

Dear clergy and parish leaders. I need your help. I need news of what is happening in your parishes and, even better, pictures. Please, O please help the *Shepherd's Staff* inform the Diocese about the activities of all our parish families. It may not mean much to you, but your news and photos mean a lot to others, especially the more isolated and smaller parishes.

+dma