



The Shepherd's Staff

*Newsletter of the
Diocese of the Western States*

December 2021

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But Seek Ye First His Kingdom and His Righteousness

On Trinity XV and Thanksgiving Day, the appointed Gospel is the *Lilies of the Field Gospel* which is so appropriate for Americans who spend so much time worrying and fretting about the future. How true it is that we (foolishly) worry about our lives, about what we eat or drink and about what we wear; oh yes, and about all those creature comforts to which we have become enamored. Moreover, we have had to deal with another pandemic (one of many down through the historical record) and its inward turning fears that cause so many people forget that someday we shall all die but that our primary duty is to seek God's Kingdom and His Righteousness. In theological perspective, Covid is simply one more test of where we choose to put our loyalty: Mammon or God.

This first article in the December *Shepherd's Staff* is a twofold appeal. The first is for our parishes. All our parishes have all been hit hard financially by the effects of the pandemic, the moving van, and the hearse. So I am asking (no make that begging) every parishioner to dig a little deeper and give a little more of their treasure to their parish. If you have moved away, send a check anyway. If you have fallen behind on your pledge, write a check as best you can. If your parish has reached out with zoom services, seek the Kingdom of God by signing on. We are what we give. I know of one parish where the priest sends linens to be laundered by a former parishioner who moved away but still wants to help.

Second, we all know that in the past the Diocese has put out calls to monetarily assist parishes, clergy and families suffering everything from fires to floods. So I believe that it is high time that we create a **Diocesan Almoners Fund** to help our Diocesan family. Thanksgiving and Christmas are supposed to be a time when we are not only grateful to God for all that he has given to us (materially and spiritually) but also to share of that abundance with our brothers and sisters. In my parish I no longer have a discretionary fund but, when I know of someone in need, I go to the vestry and (discreetly) let them know about the problem. Then the vestry votes for the requested (whatever they can) funds and I ask the treasurer to transfer money to the recipient. Only the treasurer and I know the identity of the person in need.

So in like manner, I am inviting Diocesan-wide support for this project. I am asking parishes, vestries, and individuals to prayerfully consider giving to the Diocesan Almoners Fund. The funds collected will be put into a Diocesan Almoners Fund account and overseen by the Diocesan bookkeeper and the Board of Directors of the Diocese. Clergy of the Diocese will send any requests to the San Francisco Office where the Bishops of the Diocese will evaluate them based on merit and funds available. So please consider writing that first check ---- now. And by the way, we may have a slow start, but that isn't the point, is it, because the real point is that we seek His Kingdom and His Righteousness.

+dma

The Church of Our Saviour, Santa Barbara



Dark and Cold is the Night

*Dark and cold is the night
High above, a star shines bright
Far down below in the stable small
A young woman cradles the hope of all
She rocks her child to sleep
While angels vigil keep*

*He is Lord of the earth
Yet he had a humble birth
No silken sheets to caress his form
Only some hay to keep him warm
His mother holds him tight
She guards him in the night*

*Angels appear in the skies
Glory bursts on shepherds' eyes
Hastening back to Bethlehem town*

*Finding the manger and kneeling down
The love of God for all
Rests in a child so small*

*Gifts from over the sands
Carried in the Wise Men's hands
Gold is the gift for a mighty King
Frankincense for worshiping
And myrrh...to mark his death
His mother holds her breath*

*Dark and cold is the night
High above a star shines bright
Far down below in the stable small
A young woman cradles the hope of all
She rocks her child to sleep
While angels vigil keep*

(Mary M. Isaacs, copyright 2018)

Episcopal Visitation to Saint John the Baptist, Omaha

On Friday and Saturday, November 12th and 13th, the Bishop visited Saint John the Baptist Parish in Omaha NE. He granted a license to the Reverend Mr. Theodore Powell and had a dinner meeting with the vestry before celebrating the Eucharist on Saturday. By the way, Saint John's has a magnificent music program and the mass was sung to the George Oldroyd setting of 1938, *Mass of the Quiet Hour*.



left to right, Osiris Teamer, Susan Powell, Deacon Powell, Joyce Jefferson, Deacon Reno, Louise Reno, Deb Ponec, Nick Behrens (not shown Jeffrey Spencer)

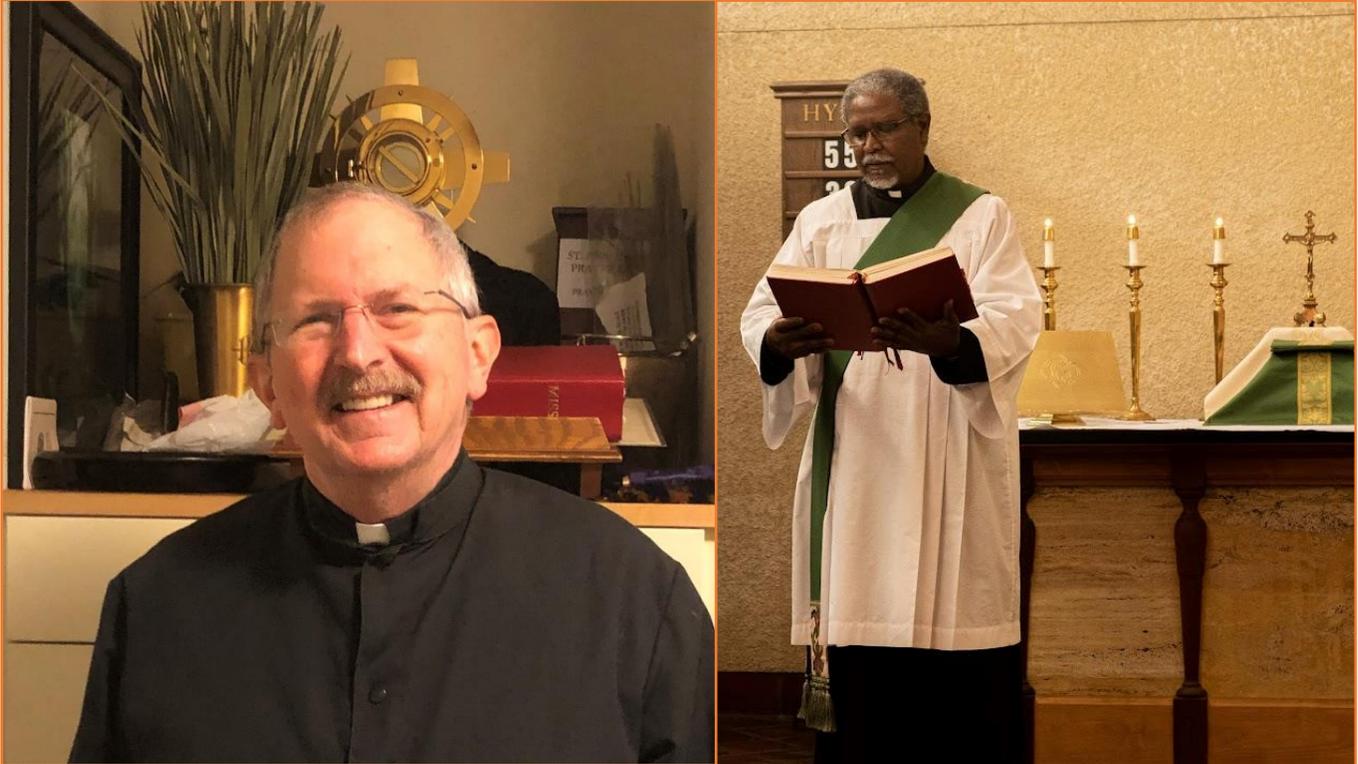
Happy Ninetieth Birthday

On Sunday, November 14, St. Joseph's Chapel in Berkeley celebrated parishioner Roberta "Bobbie" Kettler's 90th birthday with special prayers by Dean Napier (below right) during the liturgy and a festive cake during the coffee hour. Bobbie came to St. Joseph's with the Marin parish, St. Mark's Larkspur, accompanied by Lucinda Smith (below left) and Nina Gladish. Bobbie has been a faithful presence ever since. She often explains that she has been a "lifelong Anglican." Happy Birthday, Bobbie - we love you!



Saint Joseph of Arimathea Seminary

Bishop Schultz's Fall Semester Comprehensive Prayer Book Class is winding down and will end on December 14th and resume on January Tuesday, January 11th, 2022. Bishop Ashman's History classes (both sections) will also end on December 14 and resume on January 11th, 2022. Bishop Ashman's Greek and Latin classes will end on December 10th and resume on January 7th, 2022. The Provost, the College of Bishops and the Board of Examining Chaplains are delighted to announce that Deacons Glenn Karcher (below left) and Franz Longworth (below right) passed their written and oral examinations on November 8th. They will (Deo volente) be ordained to the Sacred Order of the Priesthood at Saint Peter's Oakland on Saturday December 18th at 10:00 a.m. in the morning. Make your plans to be there. It is especially important for Diocesan priests (who are able) to attend and join in the laying on of hands.



ACW Notes December 2021

Happy New Year! Here we are at the beginning of a new church year, and our future looks bright, despite the gloom and doom that surrounds us from the media. At 10:00 am on Saturday, December 18th, at St. Peter's Church Oakland, two new priests will be ordained. Deacons Glenn Karcher and Franz Longworth have worked hard to reach this point and are known and loved by many of us. On behalf of all members of Anglican Church Women, Diocese of Western States, I offer our congratulations and our prayers. Know that we will be behind you to assist wherever we are needed. Please also keep those who are studying for the Diaconate in your prayers. They are devoting so much of themselves, their time, and their lives to this end. We thank Almighty God for these men, and for all our bishops, priests, and deacons.

On a more mundane note, December will bring notifications of ACW dues to all the churches. Please remember that these dues are mandatory and should be paid before the end of January 2022. Churches will also be receiving order forms for Lenten Mite Boxes.

Wishing all of you a very blessed Advent and Christmas season.

Gillian Golden, DWS-ACW President

Sermon For Advent Sunday, 2021

One unique feature of Anglicanism are the Seasonal Collects of Advent and Lent which are ordered by the rubrics to be read every day during each season. Although the Prayer Book owes a huge debt of its thought and content to the old Latin and Sarum rites, this daily repetition (from the 1662 Prayer Book on) is found in no other religious tradition. The Advent Collect is based upon verse eight in Saint Paul's Epistle to the Romans, chapter thirteen: Owe no man anything, but to love one another: for he that loveth another hath fulfilled the law. So many Jews in Jesus' day and so many Christians in our time don't understand that the quintessential point of Jesus' Good News is Love. And the Greek verb that is used (agapan - ἀγαπᾶν) describes a special kind of love: not a love of friendship; not a carnal love; not romantic love, but a love that is the essence of God, the pure love of Charity. And so this collect was chosen to bring home this special kind of love which the Christ Child will bring.

I remember vividly that Archbishop Morse used to quote Fyodor Dostoevsky (from the Brothers Karamazov) "What is hell? I maintain that it is the suffering of being unable to love." A person does not have to put on a clerical collar to mingle with his fellow human beings who are already in hell. One of my favorite Twilight Zone episodes a Nice Place to Visit, is a story about a thief and robber named Henry Francis "Rocky" Valentine, who is a loveless, scared, and angry man. While robbing a jewelry store, he is shot and killed by the police and, as he awakens, he is greeted by Pip, an overweight man in white suit who supplies "Rocky" with everything he wants. He lives in luxury. He wins at gambling. He is surrounded by gorgeous women. He gets bored and even robs banks. But finally his boredom gets the best of him and he shouts at Pip, "If I had known that heaven would be like this, I would have wanted to go to the other place." With a fiendish grin, Pip responds, "This is the other place! This is hell!"

Thus one of the themes of Advent is for us to sincerely work on eliminating all traces (as much as we are honestly able) of our "Rocky" Valentine personalities. May we consider verses twelve and thirteen: The night is far spent, the day is at hand let us therefore cast off the works of darkness, and let us put on the armour of light. Let us walk honestly, as in the day; not in rioting and drunkenness, not in chambering and wantonness, not in strife and envying. Let me continue by saying that I too am guilty. Like all of us, I find myself sliding down that gentle and slippery slope to hell as I smugly think that I have never committed the listed offenses. The best analogy is killing a frog in boiling water. If the water is boiling, the frog will jump out but if the water is tepid, the frog will relax as the heat rises and boil to death.

What Saint Paul meant by rioting was doing what is knowingly irritating to our brothers and sisters. Consider drunkenness. The ancients drank wine at least two meals a day but the wine was watered down – sometimes ten parts wine to one part water. So what Saint Paul meant by drunkenness was a loss of self-control and self-respect, or the losing the ability to live in righteousness and charity. By chambering, Saint Paul meant a person who takes his pleasure in what he wants to the neglect of his duties and responsibilities to God and his neighbors. And by wantonness, Saint Paul meant a person who is shameless to the point where he no longer cares what others think.

But there are two more negative characteristics that are harder for us to rationalize away – if we are going to be brutally honest. What Saint Paul meant by strife was the act of stirring up discord especially for one's own benefit. (Consider Proverbs 20.3: *It is honorable to back off from a fight, but fools jump right in*) Finally, by envy Saint Paul meant a malicious and resentful awareness of an advantage or possession enjoyed by another person coupled with a desire to possess the same advantage or possession. And so we come full circle back to "Rocky" Valentine, his inability to love, his implacable desire to cause pain, and take what did not belong to him. Finally safely ensconced in hell, "Rocky" got everything he ever lusted for (and more) but then – too late – he learned that God punishes us by giving us exactly what we want.